Information literacy in United Kingdom schools

Article Sidebar

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Main Article Content

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Abstract

This paper reviews the evolution of information skills and information literacy (IL) work and associated research in UK schools over the past thirty years as reflected in the literature. A brief report is then offered of a recent small study of library-based IL work in primary schools in England, using structured focus groups of teachers and library assistants and telephone interviews with Heads.

The remainder of the paper reports on the IL aspects of the first major surveys of UK post-primary school libraries and what librarians do for more than twenty years. It draws on an activity survey of library staff in 1,044 schools in the UK, conducted through a combination of peer interviews with an e-survey, across a range of post-primary schools. A set of questions was asked about the preferred term used in the school for IL, the extent of learning support by library staff, and the distribution of IL efforts across student years. These replies were then compared with responses about management supervision and about librarian-generated planning to show that these are both influencing factors in IL work. Further questions were asked about the types of IL work undertaken by library staff – from supporting IL efforts of teachers to conducting lessons in the library or classroom and preparing guidance for students. Respondents then identified the phases of the IL cycle on which they concentrated their efforts and the main activities which they engaged in when collaborating with teachers. In presenting the results, comparisons are made between replies from professionally-qualified librarians and other categories of respondent.
Three models of IL intervention in schools are then presented, drawing upon activity descriptions contributed by survey respondents (including those interviewed). These are characterised as:

- Sporadic opportunism
- Systematic development
- Strategic orchestration

A brief comment is made on the limitations of the survey and some conclusions are offered, relating to the growing gap between ‘the best and the rest’, the implications of declining school library budgets at all levels, and the difference that a professionally-qualified school librarian can make to IL work in the school.

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Every school must have a Special Educational Needs Co-Ordinator (SENCO), who is responsible for overseeing the support of pupils with SEN. An Education, Health and Care plan (ECH) is given to children and young people who are considered to have complex needs.

[2]. If a family feels that their child is not receiving sufficient support, they may take their local authority to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal to appeal any decisions the local authority have made on a child's support. History. RBP. Criticisms. Underfunding.