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School library staff perspectives on teacher information literacy and collaboration

Dr. Christine McKeever, PhD Graduate, School of Education, Ulster University. Email: christinemckeever@hotmail.com Twitter: @ChristineVedder

Dr. Jessica Bates, Course Director, Library and Information Management, School of Education, Ulster University. Email: j.bates@ulster.ac.uk Twitter: @Jessica_Bates

Dr. Jacqueline Reilly, Head of the Doctoral College (Belfast/ Jordanstown), Ulster University. Email: j.reilly@ulster.ac.uk Twitter: @JackieReillyDC

Abstract

Pupils need to develop information literacy (IL) skills in schools in order to be active members of a skilled workforce, for lifelong learning and digital citizenship. However, there has been little focus on the extent to which this happens in a classroom setting and on information competencies of teachers. As part of a broader study of teachers' knowledge and perceptions of IL, librarians in schools in Northern Ireland were interviewed. Findings reveal low levels of collaboration with teachers. Recommendations are made regarding how to overcome challenges involved in developing teachers' IL so that they can better support learners.

Keywords

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1. Introduction

The term Information Literacy (IL) is one that may be unfamiliar to many teaching professionals as it is more often associated with and used by those in the field of Library and Information Science. Since the term 'IL' was first used in the 1970s, library and information professionals have been interested in the concept, and have further defined it over the years. Zurkowski (1974, p.6) described an information literate person as 'someone who had learned the skills and techniques required for utilising the wide range of information tools available'. In the 1980s, Kuhlthau (1987) defined IL as a combination of traditional literacy skills and computer skills. Definitions have since evolved to include more references to technology as advancements have been made and information has become more available through a wide variety of resources, and many also now refer to the experience of the individual. In 2004, The Chartered Institute for Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) approved the following definition: 'IL is knowing when and why you need information, where to find it, and how to evaluate, use and communicate it in an ethical manner' (CILIP, 2011). Although many definitions now exist, they all revolve around the same ideas of being able to access, use and communicate information effectively.

IL has an increasingly significant presence in the school library sector. As Herring (2011, p.2) stated: 'IL skills should be part of each student's learning and the focus in schools should be on how students can use IL skills to enhance their learning'. Promoting and developing these skills is essential in modern knowledge-based societies. With so much information available at our

fingertips through smartphones, tablets and laptops, students need to have the skills to enable them to access, use, understand and share this information. Developing these IL skills in pupils will not only benefit them throughout their education, they will be able to use them in their everyday life and in the workplace (Smith, 2003; Reed & Stavreva, 2006; Klebanksy & Fraser, 2013; Kimmel et al., 2014). A pre-requisite for pupils to develop effective IL skills is strong teacher competencies with regard to information handling (Laverty et al., 2008). However, where research has been undertaken in a school context, teachers have been found to lack confidence and skills to efficiently retrieve and evaluate information as part of their professional research and practice (Williams & Coles, 2007). There has been no study to date on the IL skills of teachers in Northern Ireland (NI).

This research builds on a previous study on the IL skills of Sixth Form school leaving students[1] (McKeever, 2012), which included interviews with three teachers. Findings indicated that participants did not fully understand the concept of IL, they lacked time in the classroom to teach the associated skills and they assumed others were teaching these skills. This highlighted a need for further research in the area of teachers' IL. Pupils cannot be expected to develop these skills if their teachers lack knowledge and awareness of IL and are not teaching IL skills or embedding them within classroom practices.

Doyle (1999, p.23) proposes that 'Teachers are the most critical key to student attainment of IL…They must become information literate themselves'. Ideally there would be a whole school approach to the development of pupils' IL skills (Williams & Wavell, 2006; Church, 2008), which should not be the responsibility of the school librarian alone (Johnson, 1999). Rather, teachers and librarians should support one another in providing instruction and the school principal should encourage this collaborative approach, whereby what is taught in the classroom could be complemented and reinforced in the library (and vice versa). Writing about the university context, Floyd et al. (2008) state that 'Information education … at its best, is a collaborative effort between librarians and faculty' (p.368).

The context of the school library and the role of school librarians in the UK and in NI must be considered. In their report 'The Beating Heart of the School', the Libraries All Party Parliamentary Group (LAPPG) called for every child in the UK to have access to a good school library (LAPPG, 2014). There is, however, no statutory requirement for school libraries or professional school librarians in the UK or NI, although in NI there is a requirement for a school library service (LAPPG, p.7).[2] Due to this lack of requirement and limited funding, the majority of school library staff members in NI are employed as library assistants, rather than as professional school librarians. In a NI context, the most recent statistics available indicate that in 2002, there were just 29 professional librarians working in NI schools, which translates to 12% of the total number of school library posts (Starrs, 2002, p.46). The most recent statistics on the number of school libraries or school librarians in the UK show that 58.7% of school libraries are run by a professionally-qualified school librarian (CILIP, 2010). Of the librarians who participated in this research, four of the sixteen were employed in professional posts.

The current research was conducted as part of a wider study, which included a survey of teachers, interviews with teacher educators, and interviews with school librarians and sought to explore the following research questions:

- How much do secondary school teachers know about IL and how information literate are they?

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[1] In Northern Ireland children enter secondary school in Year 8 at age 11. Sixth Form consists of two year groups – Year 13 and Year 14. In this article 'Sixth Form' or 'school leaving students' refers to students aged 16–18 who are in their final two years of secondary school.

[2] The School Library Service in Northern Ireland provides support for school libraries in the form of resources, loan collections, project packs and reading group materials. Members of staff can help advise school librarians on selecting appropriate materials for children and young adults and can also provide more general information on current trends in children's and young adult literature. The School Library Service also provides resources for teachers.

- How strong a presence does IL have in initial teacher education courses in NI?
- What do teachers think about IL in the curriculum?
- Are teachers teaching IL skills?

This paper focuses on the first question from the perspective of school library staff, as they were able to provide insight into teacher–school librarian relationships and the extent to which teachers engage with the school library in relation to IL.

2. Literature review

The importance of IL in schools has been the topic of many research studies over the past three decades (Griffin, 1981; Hopkins, 1987; Herring, 1996; Williams & Wavell, 2001; Williams & Coles, 2003; Jackson & Mogg, 2005). In response to a 1983 report which found that American education standards were falling, the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science in the United States produced a paper which defined information skills and identified problems with their development. In this paper, Mancall et al. (1986, p.20) state 'Information management skills instruction is essential if students are to exert control over school-related and lifetime information needs'. As a result of this and similar articles, IL standards were developed for pupils (in schools) in the US.

In a UK context, little has been done to develop IL as a feature of teaching and learning in schools, despite the work of school librarians over the past 30 years. Streatfield et al. (2011, p.6) note that although school librarians have been working on these skills 'this work has never been consolidated at a level that made it a consistent feature of teaching and learning in schools'.

The majority of research on IL has been conducted in the higher education sector. Prominent trends in this research have included the teaching of IL skills and their incorporation into the curriculum, particularly at university level (Rader, 2002, p.1). The smaller number of studies carried out in schools has tended to focus on the information search process (Kuhlthau, 1991; Moore and St George, 1991), the development of models of IL (Herring, 1996) and the skills of students (Fitzgerald, 2004; Latham & Gross, 2007). The topic of the IL skills of teachers has been the subject of less frequently researched studies.

A review of the few studies that have explored the IL skills of teachers reveals conflicting evidence on the topic. Some found teachers to be aware of the concept and to possess the associated skills but to be unsure of how to teach pupils these skills; Moore (2002) suggested that teachers were aware of the importance of IL but unsure of how to promote it in the classroom. Merchant and Hepworth (2002) noted that the teachers who participated in their study were information literate but that this was down to personal interest rather than any training they had received and they were not transferring these skills to their pupils. Probert (2009) found that some teachers had good understandings of the concept but tended to associate it with other kinds of literacies such as reading or computer literacy, that few teachers reported doing anything to help develop their pupils' information skills and assumed they already had good skills. Others have reported that teachers have little understanding of IL and are therefore unable to teach the associated skills. Williams and Coles (2007) found that teachers thought of IL as a relatively new concept and that they lacked the confidence to teach these skills. Korobili et al. (2011) reported that the concept was 'still unknown' amongst teachers and that the teachers in their study were providing IL skills instruction but were doing so poorly. Smith (2013) found that teachers were insufficiently prepared to teach IL skills and were confused by the term. A common feature of this literature is that regardless of whether teachers possess knowledge and understanding of the concept or not, they are not providing effective IL skills instruction. It is necessary to note that the majority of the existing research on teachers and IL has been conducted from a library and information perspective and therefore focuses on the views of those from this sector. The few examples of research from outside of the LIS sector have reported similar findings (Asselin & Lee, 2002; Lee et al., 2012).

A considerable amount of research has been conducted on teacher–librarian collaboration and there are several studies demonstrating positive effects on learning and instruction. Kuhlthau has conducted several studies (1994, 1997, 2003, 2007) exploring how teachers and librarians can work together to guide pupils' learning. Kuhlthau et al. (2007, pp.53–55) recommended that students should be guided by a team consisting of two teachers and a school librarian when they are working on enquiry based projects and noted the benefits of this kind of collaboration – the merging of the subject knowledge of the teachers and the IL skills of the librarian. Others have noted the positive impact of teacher–librarian collaboration (for example, Chu et al., 2011), but it has also been acknowledged that there can be significant challenges to inter-professional collaboration (Latham et al., 2016).

However these studies tend to be published in Library and Information Science literature and are therefore not widely disseminated or readily accessible to teachers, which may go some way to explaining why school librarians still seem to struggle to form collaborative partnerships with teaching colleagues. Mokhtar and Majid (2006) emphasised that this kind of collaborative relationship is necessary and beneficial to both the teachers and librarians, resulting in shared knowledge and expertise and synergies between what is done in the classroom and in the library, which in turn could increase use of the library. Their findings indicated very low levels of collaboration, with 72.3% of teachers saying that they had never collaborated with their school librarian. The majority of teachers did not consider their librarian to be a collaborative partner, with 75.0% saying their own resources were adequate, and 39.1% saying they thought their librarian was not sufficiently qualified. This study also found that 56.3% of teachers said they were too busy to collaborate, or that collaboration took up too much time.

Davies (2012) researched teacher–librarian collaboration in NI, finding that the majority of the school librarians were involved in what she described as 'lower end types' of collaboration, referring to Montiel-Overall's (2005) models of collaboration (these models are described in section 3). Davies surveyed 199 school library staff members and received 115 responses. Many of the participating school library staff were coordinating with their teaching colleagues by communicating informally and by organising events, with an even larger proportion co-operating by preparing resources for teaching colleagues. Davies identified lack of time and motivation among teachers as the main barriers to teacher–librarian collaboration, as well as the status of the librarian. Many participating librarians reported that they were considered as someone who simply looked after the library, rather than as a collaborative partner. Other barriers to teacher collaboration are highlighted by Carpenter and Linton (2016).

Mertes (2014) focused on teacher–librarian collaboration in relation to IL instruction specifically in the US and concluded that teaching IL skills is a highly complex task. She interviewed four school administrators and a head librarian, held a focus group with a group of six students, surveyed 30 teachers and interviewed 11 teachers. The findings indicated that teachers considered IL to be important, but that more effective collaboration was required for the instruction to be fully effective. Mertes noted that three quarters of teachers reported collaborating with their school librarians, although the levels of collaboration were not described, and that the majority of teachers were teaching IL implicitly. She noted the differences between experiences of IL in the classroom and in a library setting and recommended that school librarians consider the complex nature of providing IL skills instruction and recommended they communicate with teaching colleagues in order to develop a shared understanding of the concept and plan various aspects of this kind of instruction collaboratively (pp.172–177).

Collaboration with librarians and highly developed IL skills have been found to have a positive effect on teacher practice. Van Ingren and Ariew (2015) highlighted the importance of IL skills for teachers for their professional practice, particularly research based practice. Based on the work of Floyd et al. (2008), who designed a collaborative workshop for faculty and academic librarians which focused on helping preservice teachers to access high quality resources, Van Ingren and Ariew aimed to further develop this idea. They found that such collaborative workshops benefit preservice teachers and that they needed this kind of help when attempting to research a topic but that the workshops also served to introduce the idea of connecting research to teaching practice.

The work of the Scottish IL Group merits consideration, as it led to the development of an IL framework at governmental level and a national strategy. In response to the growing problem of students' lack of IL skills, Crawford, Irving and others worked to create a national framework and successfully petitioned for the more prominent inclusion of IL skills on the national curriculum in Scotland (Irving, 2011). Similar work has been carried out in Wales, which now also has a national IL framework in place (Head & Jackson, 2011). Frameworks such as these can be used by teachers both to assess the IL skills of their pupils and as a basis for IL skills instruction.

Overall the literature demonstrates that although there may be inconsistent research evidence on teachers' understandings of IL and individual levels of IL skills, there is nevertheless consistent evidence that teachers are not teaching these skills effectively. Moreover, despite research indicating that IL skills instruction and teacher collaboration with librarians have a positive impact on both pupil learning and professional practice, librarians are still struggling to be accepted by teachers as collaborative partners in education.

3. The theory of teacher–librarian collaboration

The benefits of collaboration on pedagogy, overall practice and student achievement have been documented in the existing literature (Lance, 2002; Wolf, 2004; Montiel-Overall, 2005; Kuhlthau et al., 2007). Shrage (1990, p.40) defined collaboration as 'the process of *shared creation*: two or more individuals with complementary skills interacting to create a shared understanding that none had previously possessed or could have come to on their own'. Referring specifically to collaboration between teachers and librarians, Russell (2002, p.36) noted that 'The teacher brings to the partnership knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the students and of the content to be taught. The (librarian) adds a thorough understanding of information skills and methods and how to integrate them'.

This is consistent with constructivist learning theories, which propose the idea that knowledge and skills cannot be directly transferred from the teacher to the student but that learning is dependent on how information is experienced and understood (Terwel, 1999; Palincsar, 1998). A constructivist view of learning is applicable to teacher–librarian collaboration as partnership can offer a different approach for teachers and school librarians and hence arguably a new, more active, way of learning for students. By working together, teachers and school librarians can plan the content and teaching of sessions which could enable them to bring their individual knowledge and expertise to the process. By collaborating, these professionals would be taking a different, integrated approach to the teaching and learning process and could potentially provide a new learning experience for students (Fulton, 2003).

Montiel-Overall (2005) explored the theory behind teacher–librarian collaboration and created models reflecting the various stages involved. Her first model is Model A: Coordination, defined as 'a collaborative effort that requires low levels of involvement between teacher and librarian' (p.35). She explained that to coordinate means to organise and synchronise and noted that working together in this way is common for teachers and librarians as they frequently do this when planning events and activities for students.

The second model is Model B: Cooperation. This occurs when the two professionals work together more closely and each teach their specialist area: 'Teacher and librarian cooperate on lessons or units of study by dividing tasks…goals and objectives are developed independently although joint instruction may be involved' (p.36).

Montiel-Overall's third model is Model C: Integrated Instruction. This occurs when teachers and librarians become involved with one another and more committed to what they are working on: 'This model involves thinking together, planning together, and integrating innovative learning opportunities that reflect teacher's and librarian's expertise in subject content and library science curricula in order to improve students' understanding of instruction' (p.35).

The fourth model is Model D: Integrated Curriculum. This occurs when teachers and librarians work together right across the curriculum. Montiel-Overall explained that this type of collaboration would be characterised by both professionals meeting regularly 'to integrate IL and content through joint efforts that involve co-thinking, co-planning, co-implementation, and co-evaluation across the curriculum' (p.38). Finally, she emphasised the need for principal support and time to be devoted to this kind of working partnership. This final model of collaboration is similar to what Head (2003, p.50) describes as 'deep collaboration' or effective collaboration and contrasts to 'functional collaboration'. Similar to the behaviour described in Model D, Head noted that deep collaboration occurs when individuals move beyond the more basic stages of working together and develop a collective understanding and shared knowledge.

The theory supporting teacher–librarian collaboration suggests that when both professionals work together in this way, the learning experience is enhanced for the student and teaching practice is transformed (Kuhlthau et al., 2007). Montiel-Overall's models demonstrate the different levels of collaboration and what is required for a partnership to be considered as fully collaborative.

4. Research methods

As part of the larger study, sixteen school librarians from schools across NI were interviewed. This study was conducted in line with the ethical principles outlined by the university and ethical approval was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee, School of Education, Ulster University. The purpose of these interviews was to obtain understanding of the perspective of school librarians on teachers' knowledge of IL. Insights into teachers' use of the library, any IL skills instruction provided by teachers or librarians and the nature of their own collaboration (if any) with the teachers in their schools were also sought.

The sampling strategy was designed to ensure an inclusive rather than a representative sample as post-primary schools from each of the different school sectors in NI were included. There are 210 post-primary schools in NI located within five Education and Library Board areas (these were replaced by a single Education Authority in April 2015). Twenty-one schools reflecting each of the school sectors in NI were selected across the Education and Library Board area; this included different types of grammar, secondary and integrated schools.[3]

Table 1: Overview of school types included in the sample

School type/ Education & Library Board Area	North Eastern	Belfast	Western	South Eastern	Southern
Maintained secondary		1	1	1	1
Controlled secondary	2			1	1
Controlled Grammar		1	1		
Voluntary Grammar	1	1	1	1	1
Integrated	1	1	1	1	1
Irish Medium		1			

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[3] There are six secondary school types in Northern Ireland. Controlled schools are managed by the Education Authority and the school's Board of Governors. Although originally Protestant schools, these schools are now for children of all faiths or no faith (although pupils attending these schools still tend to be predominantly from Protestant backgrounds). Voluntary Grammar schools are mainly Catholic schools and are run by the school's Board of Governors. Maintained schools are Catholic schools and The Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) is responsible for them. There are also a number of Integrated Schools and Irish Medium schools.

Only schools with librarians or library assistants were included in the sample, as the focus of the study was to explore the perspective of school library staff. Schools of various sizes and in urban and rural settings were included but due to the geographical placement of schools in Northern Ireland, there were more schools in urban than rural areas. Co-educational and single-sex schools were also included. Of the schools contacted, three declined the invitation to participate in the study and one did not respond. A set of alternative schools had been selected in advance to be used in the event of refusal or non-response but eventually it was decided that saturation had been achieved so interviewing stopped after interview sixteen.

The interviews took place in January and February 2015. Although referred to as school librarians, not all of the interviewees were in professional posts or had a professional qualification. Five were qualified librarians, three of whom were in professional posts. Of the sixteen, four were employed as school librarians and twelve were employed as library assistants.[4] One interviewee was in a professional post despite not being qualified and had been promoted into this position on the basis of experience. Three participants had been in post for between one and five years, seven had been in post for six to nine years and six had worked in their current role for ten or more years. Eight of the librarians had previous library experience prior to their current post and three had previously worked as teachers. There were fourteen female and two male participants. The profession is similarly female dominated. A CILIP survey indicated that the workforce composition of UK Library and Information Professionals was 78.1% female and 21.9% male (CILIP, 2015).

Table 2: Overview of background/experience of school library staff members

Interviewee details:	Years in post		
	1–5 years	6–9 years	>10 years
Gender	Female: 3 Male: 0	Female: 6 Male: 1	Female: 5 Male: 1
Title of post	School Librarian: 0 Library Assistant: 3	School Librarian: 1 Library Assistant: 6	School Librarian: 3 Library Assistant: 3
Qualified	School Librarians: 0 Library Assistants: 0	School Librarians: 0 Library Assistants: 1	School Librarians: 3 Library Assistants: 1
Previous experience	Yes: 1 No: 2	Yes: 2 No: 5	Yes: 5 No: 1

A copy of the semi-structured Interview Schedule can be found in the Appendix. Questions aimed to elicit information on the views of school library staff members on teachers' knowledge and awareness of IL, teachers' use of the library, if any IL skills instruction was taking place and the extent of their collaboration with the teachers in their schools.

Data were analysed both manually and with the use of the computer software programme NVivo. The participants' responses were audio recorded and notes were taken during the interviews. Immediately after each interview, initial notes were made on particular areas of interest and possible emerging themes; this would later inform thematic coding. Data analysis began as soon as the first interview was completed. The interviews were transcribed as soon as possible after they took place; these transcriptions were examined individually, then collectively and they were manually thematically coded at first. The manual thematic coding involved micro-analysis of the responses provided by respondents and this consisted of a line-by-line examination of the data. Categories were initially identified by open coding, and then links between the categories and sub-categories were determined by axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Through further examination of these categories and sub-categories, a number of themes and sub-themes emerged from the data. Following manual coding, the data was then entered into the computer software package

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[4] In Northern Ireland 'School Librarian' is a professional post and 'Library Assistant' is a non-professional post.

NVivo; this helped manage and organise the large amount of data obtained from these interviews. The software also further assisted with thematic coding as it allowed specific codes to be assigned and searches to be performed. Transcriptions were examined several times during the data analysis and this software was used as a way of checking no data was missed during the manual coding of the data.

5. Findings

5.1 Understanding of IL and the provision of IL skills instruction

The librarians were asked questions which aimed to determine the extent of their own knowledge of IL. Their knowledge and understanding of the concept was assessed by their ability to provide a definition similar to the widely accepted CILIP (2011) definition. All but two of the interviewees had a good working knowledge of IL; they were able to provide examples of when these skills would be needed, and could describe examples of pupils in their schools demonstrating IL skills as well as examples of pupils lacking IL skills. Both of the interviewees who had little or no knowledge of IL were unqualified; one was a former teacher who had taken the role of library assistant a year previously in a school where no one had been in charge of the library. The other interviewee had held her position for almost eight years, and until recently had been managed by a teacher who had responsibility for the library.

The librarians were then asked if they provided any IL skills instruction in their current role. Two categories of instruction were identified in the data; explicit instruction was that which was clearly identified and presented as IL instruction while implicit instruction was whenever skills associated with the concept were covered but were not identified as being IL skills. Three quarters of the sample reported that they provided implicit skills instruction and in every case this took place in the form of skills being taught during library inductions with pupils who were new to the school. Only two participants provided what was considered as explicit instruction; one held IL classes with sixth form pupils and the other spent the first four weeks of term providing instruction to new Year 8 pupils. Two of the librarians reported that they provided no IL instruction. These participants were unqualified, and had demonstrated little or no knowledge of the concept. Class visits to the library in their schools were also entirely teacher led.

5.2 Collaboration with teachers

Three kinds of working relationship between the librarians and the teachers in their schools were identified from the interview data; non-collaborative, semi-collaborative and collaborative. These resemble three of Montiel-Overall's (2005) models: Coordination, Cooperation and Integrated Instruction.

The first kind of relationship identified from these data was classified as non-collaborative. Similar to Montiel-Overall's Coordination model (Model A), the librarians described working with teachers to organise and plan events in the library, for example, class visits where the instruction would be provided independently by either the librarian or the teacher with no communication between them relating to the content of the visits. Also included in this category were participants who described their collaboration with their teaching colleagues as being restricted to providing resources or performing basic practical library tasks, such as issuing books. Seven of the sixteen participants described this kind of collaborative relationship with their teaching colleagues.

The second kind of relationship identified was classified as semi-collaborative, similar to Montiel-Overall's Cooperation model (Model B). Librarians who described working with their teaching colleagues to plan some aspect of class visits, for example, the content and/or the delivery were included in this category. Other features of this semi-collaborative working relationship included sharing tasks during the class visit such as handing out worksheets and so on, but working on tasks with pupils separately and providing instruction separately. This was considered as a mid-range level of collaboration, given that it involved working together towards a joint goal. Eight of the participants described this kind of relationship.

The third type of relationship identified was collaborative. This type is similar to Montiel-Overall's Integrated Instruction model (Model C). Librarians who described fully collaborating with their teaching colleagues over the content and delivery of class visits and merging their knowledge and areas of expertise to improve instruction were classified as being collaborative. Just one of the sixteen participants described a relationship with teaching colleagues which could be classified as fully collaborative, similar to Montiel-Overall's Model D: Integrated Curriculum. This librarian explained that she participated fully in the planning, design and delivery of class visits with the Head of the English department and other English teachers, and noted also that IL skills are included in the programme of class visits. This was the highest level of collaboration found between librarians and teachers in this study. Just one participant described this kind of relationship.

Table 3: Working relationships identified between school library staff members and teachers

Non-collaborative	Semi-collaborative	Collaborative
Features: • the library staff member and teacher organise class visits to the library. • instruction is provided by one or the other, never both. • there is no collaboration over content of sessions in the library. • resources are asked for and provided. • practical duties performed.	Features: • the library staff member and the teacher work together to plan the content and delivery of the class visit to the library. • the work is divided. • each provides their own instruction, this is not done jointly.	Features: • the school library staff member and the teacher work together closely to design the content of the class visit to the library. • they work together to deliver the session. • they merge the teacher's subject knowledge and the librarian/library assistant's library and information management knowledge to design activities which will reflect both.
Similar to: Montiel-Overall's Model A: Coordination Teachers and librarians organise events and activities in the library.	Similar to: Montiel-Overall's Model B: Cooperation Teachers and librarians work together on lessons and divide tasks. Each teaches their area of specialisation.	Similar to: Montiel-Overall's Model C: Integrated Instruction Teachers and librarians work together to connect their separate areas of expertise to improve the students' understanding of instruction.

5.3 Feelings of exclusion and low status

Many participants reported feeling excluded by the teachers in their schools in various ways. Six of the sample said that they thought if any of the teachers in their schools were doing anything in terms of IL skills instruction, they were not including the librarian in this. One participant noted: 'They (teachers) could be doing something in terms of IL instruction but if they are I am not a part of it.' Another said: 'They maybe are providing guidance on how to research online or something but I am not a part of it if they are'.

Three of the librarians mentioned that they were not invited to any staff meetings in their schools. One librarian, who had described a semi-collaborative working relationship with her teaching

colleagues, nevertheless stated: 'I don't get invited to their meetings or anything. There really is a "them" and "us" culture between teachers and non-teaching staff.'

Four of the participants reported that they felt undervalued or ignored by their teacher colleagues. One participant, who was a former teacher and had a non-collaborative relationship with her teaching colleagues, said: '…if you're not a teacher, you're not regarded as highly'. Another who described having a semi-collaborative relationship with teachers stated: 'They just don't see me as useful; they don't see how I can help them'.

Six librarians provided examples of attempting to promote IL in their schools in different ways without success. One participant who was a former teacher and had a non-collaborative working relationship with her teaching colleagues provided the following example:

'I don't really have any proper computers in here…As a result I have lost the Sixth Form really too, they tend to go elsewhere now [to study] and I can't promote IL using the computers in here. I reported this to the Senior Management Team and I had the statistics to back it up but they just don't see the problem.'

5.4 Views of how teachers understand and incorporate IL in their practice

The librarians were asked if any of their teaching colleagues had ever asked them about IL or anything related to the concept. The majority (ten) answered 'No'. The other six said teachers had asked them about IL skills or related skills, and unsurprisingly this was more common when relationships involved some form of collaboration. A librarian who had a semi-collaborative working relationship with her teaching colleagues said: 'Yes, some would ask me to show the kids different IL skills, like how to access information, how to reference it, how to narrow searches online…' Another librarian who also had a semi-collaborative working relationship said: 'The English department have mentioned IL to me, they have mentioned the various associated skills such as skimming, scanning…they actually said IL.'

Participants' views of their teaching colleagues' knowledge and awareness of IL were also explored. One librarian thought teachers were aware of IL and the importance of the concept, while three others (including one former teacher) said they did not think the teachers in their school were aware of the concept. Two more librarians said they thought that their teaching colleagues would not know the name of the concept and four (including two former teachers) reported that they thought teachers would be aware of the skills associated with IL but would not know the name for them. One of these former teachers said:

> Teachers know about the skills – do you know skimming and scanning are required skills in English? Teachers know these skills are important but they do not know the name for them, the terminology – 'IL'. They don't know there is a connection between these skills and the library, they haven't made that link and I don't think they have thought about IL. Once they have been made aware of what IL is they will realise the importance…Even talking to you about this throughout this interview, it is all just slotting into place for me now.

Four participants said that they could not comment on teachers and IL as they had never discussed the concept with the ones they worked with.

Eight of the librarians, including two of the former teachers, mentioned that they thought teachers were too busy to focus on IL or to collaborate to provide any skills instruction. The theme of pupils being 'spoon-fed' also emerged, with five participants noting that they thought that teachers did the work for pupils, rather than encouraging pupils to study and research independently. One said: 'Independent research seems to be less and less important. The teachers sit and do everything for their pupils.' Four participants thought that teachers focussed more on obtaining good grades rather than developing their pupils' IL skills, one commenting that: 'For teachers IL is far down the priority list – they're not worried about them learning to be information literate, they're just trailing them through exams'.

6. Discussion

When it came to answering the wider research question of how much post-primary school teachers know about IL and how information literate they are, the analysis suggested that the majority of the participating librarians thought that their teacher colleagues lacked knowledge and awareness of the concept; the majority said they had never been asked about IL or anything to do with it, and thought teachers did not know the phrase 'IL' or that these skills had a name. This finding is similar to those from studies by Korobili et al. (2011) and Smith (2013) who found that teachers were not familiar with the concept. Williams and Wavell (2006, p.56) also found that the many of the teachers who participated in their study were not familiar with the term and that IL was a 'relatively new' concept for them. Nine of the librarians, including three who had formerly been teachers, said they believed that teachers were not aware of the phrase 'IL' or that there was a name for this set of skills. Ten years after the Williams and Wavell (2006) study, it would appear that IL is still a relatively new concept for teachers.

The majority of librarians (ten) said their teaching colleagues had never asked them about IL or anything related to it, and of these, six described non-collaborative relationships with the teachers in the schools they worked in. Six participants reported that teachers had asked them about IL or related issues, four of these librarians had described semi-collaborative relationships with the teachers in their school, suggesting that collaboration facilitates discussion of IL between teachers and librarians. It is important to note however, that it was only in one case that the teachers actually used the phrase 'IL'; in other cases teachers had instead asked about skills associated with the concept.

Several other themes emerged which may help explain teachers' lack of knowledge and awareness of IL. Teachers' lack of time emerged as one of these themes and was suggested as a barrier to the provision of IL skills instruction. Half of the participating librarians, including two of the former teachers, said that they thought teachers did not have the time to focus on this kind of skills instruction. One librarian said she actually avoided asking teachers about collaboration as she did not want to add to their workload. This finding is in keeping with existing research (Williams & Wavell, 2006; Probert, 2009; Korobili et. al, 2011; McKeever, 2012) which has reported that teachers felt they lacked the time to provide any IL skills instruction, and were constrained by timetables and heavy subject content.

The theme of 'spoon-feeding' – teachers providing information for their pupils rather than encouraging them to source it for themselves – also emerged during these interviews and may help to explain why the concept of IL has not received much attention from teachers to date. Five participants, including one former teacher, thought that the teachers in their schools were doing work for their pupils instead of encouraging them to study and research independently. This finding is similar to those of Merchant and Hepworth (2002) and McKeever (2012), who also found that teachers admitted to providing information for pupils rather than asking them to search for it independently. If teachers are providing this information and doing this work for their pupils, their pupils do not need to develop their IL skills to conduct independent research. Teachers are therefore less likely to see the need to teach these skills.

A number of participants (four) thought that teachers focused on ensuring their pupils obtained good grades rather than developing their IL skills. Bucher (2000) maintained that some educators did not consider IL skills to be important as pupils are not explicitly assessed on them. As IL is not explicitly referred to in the curriculum or overtly assessed, the content of the curriculum can be considered as part of the problem. The target-driven nature of schools must be also be acknowledged however, as there is pressure on teachers to obtain good grades and it can be argued that teachers are not focusing on these skills or including them in their teaching as they are not prioritising them. A recent report from the Chief Inspector for schools in NI referred to the focus of schools on their positions in league tables (BBC, 2016). IL is now internationally recognised as an essential competence in education, employment and society (Corrall, 2008, p.26) and given the importance of these skills as lifelong learning skills, they must have a more significant presence in school curricula.

To help answer the wider research question of whether teachers are providing any IL skills instruction, findings demonstrated that the majority of librarians in this study were engaged in lower level collaboration or no collaboration at all with teacher colleagues. No participant provided even a single example of teacher–librarian collaboration in providing IL skills instruction. These findings are similar to those of Mokhtar and Majid (2006) and Davies (2012).

Only one librarian described having a fully collaborative relationship with her teaching colleagues and this was the only example of what could be considered as best practice; the librarian had worked with the Head of English to decide on the content of the class visits and these included skills associated with IL, although not explicitly referred to as IL skills. The importance of support from school Principals or Heads of Departments has been documented in the existing literature, with both Montiel-Overall (2005) and Probert (2009) stating that this is necessary for effective collaboration and IL skills instruction.

These findings show that in the majority of cases, teachers and librarians are not collaborating to provide any IL skills instruction. In instances where teachers do assist the librarian in delivering class visits, they leave the librarian to provide any 'library' kind of instruction. Others have made similar discoveries; Merchant and Hepworth (2002) noted that the teachers in their study were not teaching IL skills to pupils. Probert (2009) found that few teachers reported doing anything to help develop their pupils' IL skills. Korobili et al. (2011) noted that the teachers in their study thought that the school librarian was responsible for providing IL skills instruction and McKeever (2012) also found that there was an assumption others were providing this instruction. These findings are similar to those of Mokhtar and Majid (2006) who reported low levels of collaboration between teachers and librarians. They suggested that teachers worldwide struggle to recognise the school librarian as a collaborative partner in education, an idea also expressed by Kuhlthau et al. (2007) and Chu et al. (2011).

The lack of collaboration also had the effect of causing librarians to feel excluded, undervalued and ignored. Without being asked or prompted, many librarians referred to experiencing these feelings in different ways. Montiel-Overall (2005), Mokhtar and Majid (2006) and Davies (2012) all discussed these issues; Montiel-Overall noted that being treated as equal was necessary when collaborating. Davies found that many librarians felt regarded as a caretaker of books rather than a collaborative partner and that many were not invited to attend meetings. As noted above, Mokhtar and Majid found that the teachers in their study did not view their librarian as a collaborative partner and one of the reasons provided for this was due to the librarians' lack of professional qualification. This raises the issue of the professional status of the librarian. The context in NI must also be taken into consideration here, as it is in this context where there is not a statutory requirement for a professionally qualified school librarian that school library staff members are not being viewed by teachers as equal partners.

7. Conclusion

So where do we go from here? With mounting evidence that IL is critical for pupil learning both in and beyond the classroom, that teachers have a role in developing pupils' IL skills, and that teachers themselves need to develop their own competencies, there is evidence to suggest that teachers need support for this. There also need to be cultural and policy shifts where developing IL in teachers and pupils is valued and where school library staff, who in many cases are professionally trained and educated in IL, can effectively contribute to the process through collaboration with teaching staff. This, therefore, is a call for greater intra-school collaboration so that a shared knowledge base regarding IL can be developed. This does not mean re-inventing the wheel, which is particularly important due to the pressures on their time that teaching staff members are under. Models, templates and guidelines exist for bringing IL more fully into the classroom and on a regional level, NI can learn from the policies in Scotland (http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/informationliteracy/) and Wales (Head & Jackson, 2011) regarding IL in a school context.

This research has provided insight into the views of school library staff on their teacher colleagues' knowledge and awareness of IL. Suggestions for further research include further investigation of teacher–librarian relationships, a thorough examination of the NI Curriculum to map where IL comes through in subject specifications and in cross curricular strands, teachers' views and implementation of the NI Curriculum, the role of the school librarian and school library provision throughout the UK, IL in early years education and in the primary school sector, teacher practice relating to IL skills instruction and a thorough assessment of the levels of teachers' IL.

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Appendix: Interview Schedule (school library staff)

Interview Schedule for the School Library Staff Interviews

Background information

1. How long have you worked here in this School Library? Have you worked in other libraries?
2. What is your job title? Are you a school librarian or library assistant?
3. Do you have any library (or other) qualifications? What are they and where/how did you study for these?

Information literacy training

4. What is your understanding of information literacy? What about in regards to recognising a need for information/knowing how to find/evaluate/use/communicate information? To what extent do you think recognising information literacy is important and why?
5. Can you tell me about any information on information literacy (or anything related to it) you have ever received? Can you describe it?

Information literacy instruction in the library

6. How are pupils introduced to the library and familiarised with it? What is your role in this?
7. How do pupils make use of the library facilities? Do you hold class visits? Are they useful, in what ways? What is your role in these visits, how much input do you have in them? When and how often would pupils come to the library?
8. Do you provide any information literacy skills instruction? Or is information literacy part of any other instruction you provide, does it feature in library inductions for example?
9. If you provide information literacy sessions, are they general or subject specific? What is the content? Would you like to do more? What would you like to do?

Information literacy in the NI Curriculum

10. What are your views on information literacy and its place in the NI Curriculum?
11. To what extent has it been promoted in this school?

Teacher–Librarian Collaboration

12. How do you liaise with the teaching staff? What is the nature of this relationship – do you collaborate or who decides what needs to done? Do any of the teaching staff ever approach you for help? If so what kind of help and how often would this happen?
13. Which departments use the library the most and least and why do you think this is?
14. Do you liaise with any other staff? Do any other staff ever approach you asking for help with anything? If so can you describe this?

Opinions of teachers and IL

15. What do teachers ask you about? Have any of the teachers ever asked you about information literacy? Do they ask you about anything that might relate to information literacy?
16. How do you think teachers generally view information literacy? Do you think they consider it to be important?

Conclusion

Do you have anything else you would like to add? Do you have any questions for me? Thank you for taking the time to meet with me and for participating in this study.