Managing Public School Libraries in a Changing Environment

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Overview

It is quite obvious that communication facilities and technology are fast encroaching the bulk of our society and made it possible for libraries to expand their sphere of activities. However, this has added to the complexities. Many of these have become large and complex organizations presenting a challenge to library managers. Managing libraries is a highly specialized and complicated job. Librarian in such environment should have a managerial ability of a high order, and possess skills and adequate knowledge to solve problems multidimensional in nature.

The key management issues that my paper would deal with are on the realities on the fate of public school libraries in the country. In addition, I will also be discussing about the IFLA/UNESCO School Library Manifesto on the Role of the School Library in Teaching and Learning for All (IFLA, 2006) as well as the Philippine School Library Standards (DECS, 1998). Moreover, issues that deal with innovation and the new information landscape will also be discussed.

Situationer: The State of Philippine Libraries & Information Centers

As cited from the paper of Vernon R. Totanes (2006) entitled, "Money and Leadership: A Study of Theses on Public School Libraries Submitted to the University of the Philippines' Institute of Library and Information Science" that the biggest challenge facing public school librarians in the Philippines today is the thought that there is no money to pay for the improvements that need to be made and government does not consider public school libraries a priority in allocation of scare resources. Here are some of the findings presented in the paper in terms of:

1. Funding

   ▪ the government has allocated almost 20% of its annual budget and is one of the countries in SEA that allots the greatest portion of its budget to education;
   ▪ 90% of education budget is spent on salaries and benefits alone and only 1-2% on textbooks and virtually nothing on libraries and laboratories.

2. Library Conditions

   ▪ Are not conducive to effective library service as required by modern education;

- Books are merely accessioned, but neither classified nor cataloged;
- Unbalanced or proportionate distribution of books;
- The housing conditions provided for the library are poor and furniture and equipment are inadequate;
- The library is not open long enough for students to use it the fullest extent;
- Opening the library is only a matter of "if time permits" for the librarian;
- Some schools do not even open their libraries at all;
- Library instruction is given but is inadequate, disorganized, and has no definite place in the curriculum; and
- The librarians have not had any training in library work.

On another study of C. M. Nera (1999) on "The Role of Academic & Research Librarians as Agents of Change" wherein the subjects of the study were librarians working in developing and developed libraries in the country's colleges and universities. With this, I have just included some of the findings that enumerated some of the factors that hindered the successful implementation of the library programs and services in some developing libraries in terms of:

1. Library Administration
   - The school administrators' lack of interest and support.
   - Frequent changes in library administrations and inadequate library development plan.
   - Approval of macroplan is delayed.
   - Complacency of head librarian and lack of imagination.
   - Lack of funds for development.
   - Lack of better computer to initiate automation.
   - Lack of cooperation among academics departments.
   - Cost cutting.
   - The officer-in-charge of the library is not a LIS graduate.
   - Limited education of top school administrators of the real essence of libraries and librarianship.

2. Personnel/Staff
   - Administrators indifference towards library work.
   - Frequent changes in staffing.
   - Little knowledge of the computers, the Internet and CD-ROM.
   - Inadequate library staff.
   - Lack of funds for professional development.
   - Slow, improper, selection of staff and recruitment.
   - Not enthusiastic to take graduate studies.
   - Lack of qualified librarians.
   - Cost cutting.
   - Undedicated support staff.
   - Limited funds and time in the implementation of some programs and activities.
   - Library staffs are not willing to pursue higher education.

3. Collection Management
   - Obsolete books which are still needed for comparative research.
   - Financial constraints and limited budget.
   - The faculty and the library book committee not supportive.
   - Lack of appreciation and awareness for new materials in the library.
   - Library materials too expensive.
   - Lack of cooperation among library staff.

- Limited funds and escalating cost of materials.
- Limited budget to book acquisitions. Trade bibliographies were only the selection tools depended upon.
- High cost of materials.

4. Organization of Materials
   - Lack of tools.
   - Lack of full time staff in the cataloging section.
   - Lack of funds to conform to new trends and to meet the need of clientele.
   - Lack of better computer for automation, LAN or OPAC.
   - Disorganized materials.
   - Maintenance of library materials taken for granted.
   - Lack of space for creative organization of materials.
   - Cost cutting.
   - Comprehension of where books be classified left much to be desired, resulting to materials misclassified or misplaced.
   - No full time catalogers due to hiring of additional staff.

5. Physical Set-up
   - Limited space.
   - Re-location and frequent transfer of location.
   - Lack of building for anew library.
   - Lack of budget for renovation.
   - Little improvements / no improvement at all.
   - No provision for expansion.
   - Library as a multipurpose facility.
   - Cost cutting.
   - Limited funds for some additional furniture and some renovations.
   - Lack of funds and library fee was low.
   - Very limited space for an increasing population.

6. Services/Programs
   - Lack proper orientation of teachers, consequently influences students' attitudes toward the library.
   - Library is not accessible.
   - Staff not customer oriented/focused.
   - Lack of budget for CD-ROM, Internet and OPAC.
   - Lack of modern facilities for multimedia and networking.
   - Coast cutting, resistance to change, no support from the administration.
   - Lack of time.
   - Programs and services are neglected due to lack of time for present staff to handle work.
7. Financial Management
   - Budget constraints.
   - Budgeting is solely done the by the administration.
   - No specific budget given-confidential.
   - Library fees are not exclusively for books and periodicals.
   - Too much red tapes.
   - Cost cutting.
   - Library budget depends on library fees collected.

- Lack of funds and no full control of the library budget due to centralization of financial system.
- Request budgets for budget release until budget officer declares no more budget.
- High cost of materials and few benefactors.
- No budget at all.

8. Automation & Information Technology
- Automation is not priority.
- Budget constraints, unstable library administrations and slow action.
- No hardware available and softwares are too expensives.
- Librarians' little knowledge on automation and IT.
- Library staffs are not knowledgeable in operating the computer.
- Inadequate workstations for students.
- High cost of hardwares because you have to update.

Library Standards for School Libraries

There are several standards that deals with school libraries but for this forum I will be just discussing two important standards— 1) IFLA/UNESCO School Library Manifesto : The School Library in Teaching and Learning for All; and, 2) 1998 DECS School Library Guidelines.

The IFLA/UNESCO School Library Manifesto : The School Library in Teaching and Learning for All in which recognizes the salient role of the school libraries to citizens' education and life-long learning. The school library provides information and ideas that are fundamental to functioning successfully in today's information and knowledge-based society. The school library equips students with life-long learning skills and develops the imagination, enabling them to live as responsible citizens. Thus, urging governments, through their ministries responsible for education to develop strategies, policies and plans which implement the principles of this Manifesto.

The school library is integral to the educational process. The following are essential to the development of literacy, information literacy, teaching, learning and culture and are core school library services:

- supporting and enhancing educational goals as outlined in the school's mission and curriculum;
- developing and sustaining in children the habit and enjoyment of reading and learning, and the use of libraries throughout their lives;
- offering opportunities for experiences in creating and using information for knowledge, understanding, imagination and enjoyment;
- supporting all students in learning and practicing skills for evaluating and using information, regardless of form, format or medium, including sensitivity to the modes of communication within the community;
- providing access to local, regional, national and global resources and opportunities that expose learners to diverse ideas, experiences and opinions;
- organizing activities that encourage cultural and social awareness and sensitivity;
- working with students, teachers, administrators and parents to achieve the mission of the school;
- proclaiming the concept that intellectual freedom and access to information are essential to effective and responsible citizenship and participation in a democracy; and

- promoting reading and the resources and services of the school library to the whole school community and beyond.

Then, on January 22, 1998 the Department of Education Culture and Sports (DECS) issued DECS Order No. 6, s. 1998 which shall be known as Guidelines on the Implementation of the School Library Policies and Programs. This guideline clearly stipulated that every private and public school or institution shall maintain a school library or libraries with adequate collection and materials in accordance with the minimum standards, which shall include:

1. a basic collection of well selected relevant books to support the core needs of the technical-vocational education curricula; and
2. such additional specialized collections as may be necessary to meet the requirements of the various courses of study and major programs offered by the school.

Furthermore, school libraries should have a collection of instructional materials that conform to expressed and anticipated requirements of the teaching-learning process and the special mission/goal of the school. The collection should include materials with cultural and recreational values to stimulate teachers' and pupils' interest and develop reading and inquiry as natural habits of life.

There are five (5) components of a functional library namely:

1. Physical Facilities. School with an enrollment of 500 should have libraries with a floor area of at least 72 square meters.
2. Librarian & Support Staff.
    a. Teacher-Librarian ratio: If a school has an enrollment of 500 or less – 1 librarian; 501 to 2000 – 1 full time and 1 part time; 1001 to 2000; 2001 and above – an additional one full time librarian for very 1000 additional enrollees.
    Qualifications : For secondary level, BSE major or minor in LIS; at least 15 units in LIS; license.
3. Programs and Services. Should include library orientation during the opening of classes and library lessons as part of the curriculum.
4. Collection. Minimum number of encyclopedias (1 set), dictionaries, plus magazines, newspaper and professional books for teachers and librarians.
5. Sources of Funds. Library funds shall be 5 – 10% of the school funds (based proportionately) as released by the Division Office.

The school library has long been recognized as an integral part of any school system. It plays a vital role in the total instructional program at all grade levels, and provides students and teachers with access to the world of knowledge. The school library is not only a source of materials necessary to support the basic curriculum of the school, but also provides resource materials for enrichment in every area of the students' interest.

The New Information Landscape

L. David (1998) had said that, "the information society is already part of many lives and at the heart of many economic activities. If we use fax/e-mail we have a toe in the Information Society. If we surf the World Wide Web we have a foot in the Information Society. If we work, learn and communicate with colleagues through a network, we are in the Information Society."

We are now in the era of technology-driven world wherein libraries are now employing technology to deliver new services and provides link to the vast sources of information in a networked environment. The introduction of multimedia information resources and networked information systems are affecting the basic role of the library in acquiring, storing, providing access and disseminating information.

Giron (1998) opined that the new environment allows us to forecast some of the challenges and opportunities that the revolution will present to libraries, librarians and users. As the electronic exchange of information in digital format becomes dominant in the library world it will create opportunities for revolutionary and immensely productive new models of research, instruction, communication and work.

Libraries are at a point where their future is not yet determined. What are the factors that will determine what their future looks like? What will be the consequences of these factors be? And how shall we cope with them. Responding to these issues, Tiefel as cited by Giron (1998) proposes the following:

1. teach capabilities and deficiencies of electronic information
2. place strong emphasis on research
3. work with public library librarians to provide continuity to students' pursuit of lifelong learning
4. be flexible and be able to adjust to change
5. be prepared to respond to a more diverse clientele
6. develop systems to make information more useful and easily used
7. provide document delivery
8. de-emphasize acquisition and increase interlibrary cooperation
9. emphasize user assistance
10. develop artificial intelligence applications for libraries and
11. provide more instruction to ensure information literacy

The rapid development and deployment of information and communication technologies have had a profound impact on libraries. The new technologies have not only changed the way information is generated, organized, stored and distributed, but more importantly, they have become indispensable tools for teaching, learning and research.

Managing Challenges of Change

It has been said, "change is the only constant." This cliché reminds us of Ranganathan's "Five Laws of Library Science," one of which is "library is a growing organism"—it is evolving and changing from mere depository of printed records but nowadays it is an avenue for accessing the networked information.

In the midst of this new environment, the challenges of library managers is judging the pace of change, striking the right balance and the inherent tension between tradition and transformation (Corrall, 1995). However, Claraval (2005) proposes two (2) major challenges of change in libraries and information centers are:

1. **Access to Information**. Information technology remains the driving force behind the process of change. People will be exposed to a range of new technological challenges and opportunities in the digital age which will dramatically change the information

giving function of most libraries. There are emerging professional roles to be assumed by librarians in a networked society with information increasingly being in a digital electronic format. Thus, information services will be intensely client-centered and librarians must develop a new sensitivity to client needs.

2. **Professional Role of the Library/Information Professionals**. Technology is far ahead of the information literacy education. Few users of today's libraries are effective and efficient users so that no matter how sophisticated interfaces and search engine become in the future information access systems, people will still need to be educated regarding their use.

The Teacher-Librarians Challenges for the Future

Librarians are dedicated to maintaining the importance and relevance of the library as a place of intellectual stimulation and a center of activity in the society. Teacher-librarians in school setting are responsible for leading the school community in meeting the challenges of the new information environment. As practiced, the teacher-librarian is responsible for selecting, acquiring, disseminating and tracking information resources in multiple formats. This job may include database searching, inter-library loans, monitoring Internet news groups or maintenance of a computerized library information system.

Roulston (2007) cited in his paper that teacher-librarian is facing at least five major challenges for the future:

1. The first of these is the role change **from warehousing to consulting.** As schools change from passive learning environments into active ones, the role of the librarian has to adjust as well. School restructuring requires that the librarian ventures from the library to collaborate and connect with teachers and administrators. The addition of technology into the learning environment enhances information retrieval and offers the librarian a new entrée into the classroom curriculum. New, more student-centered teaching methods demand the support of information resources and training in their use. With networks linking all areas of the modern school, the best place to access information may no longer be within the walls of the traditional library.

2. The second challenge for the teacher-librarian is in the change from **developing collections to accessing information.** As more and more teaching material is made available in electronic formats, school libraries find themselves lagging behind in print acquisitions. Librarians look more to online and other electronic sources to meet the information needs of students and teachers. Access to information, whether by CD-ROM, Internet, online database, video, fax, microfiche or traditional print is overtaking ownership of information as an evaluation benchmark. Acquisitions and selection criteria take on an entirely new meaning when considering access to online services.

3. The third challenge for the new teacher-librarian is the extending of his or her role to that of **information center manager.** The information explosion has created far more information than one school library could possibly contain. The librarian is responsible for locating, acquiring, disseminating and tracking information resources of many types. As well he or she manages the budget and evaluates and selects new materials for purchase. In teaching students and teachers to be discriminating users of information the librarian must also teach ethical use of the materials retrieved. Copyright and plagiarism become significant issues when digital copies may be seamlessly integrated into student work. The teacher -librarians are often the only people in a school with any training in these legal issues. This means they play an important role in the development of access

policies and acceptable use agreements. All of these tasks require managerial expertise equivalent to that required of corporate information center managers.

4. The fourth role and challenge for the teacher-librarian is not losing sight of the fact that he or she is **always a teacher.**

5. Lastly, the one major challenge for the teacher-librarian an even greater challenge may be -**where will they find the money?** This is the fifth and final challenge. As tasks grow in libraries the need for support staff increases. Some of the traditional tasks such as database searching and catalogue maintenance which was once the duty of the professional will now have to be handed to the paraprofessional under the supervision of the teacher librarian. The increase in staff as well as the increased supervision will add to already stretch library budgets.

Other Issues in Managing Public School Libraries

1. **Recruitment, education and retention of librarians**. Majority of the school libraries in the country were managed by individuals who has no training or background in library management and librarianship in general. The need to find qualified personnel for libraries is a core issue of the future.

2. **Support of Administrators/Principals**. School administrators determine school library media program quality as much as librarians do because they influence or control the library and librarians under their supervision. Collection size, currency, service hours, staff size, and the employment of full-time qualified librarians and adequate support staff all are tied to the principal's budgeting decisions. As important as money is, however, it's not the only measure of support. Equally important is the principal's role in creating a school environment where student library use and faculty/librarian interaction are valued and promoted.

3. **Funding Support**. Considering the current state of the economy, librarians face the possibility of reductions in funding that could have deleterious effect on library programs, salaries, and resources. Libraries budget is always at stake and most of the time a less priority in budget sharing or appropriation. How can libraries sustain its services if there is no available fund to support its program and services?

4. **Impact of Information Technology on Library Services.** Librarians or information managers are aware that an appropriate institutional balance needs to be maintained between traditional library materials and services and those services represented by instructional information technology departments. Though it is important, though difficult, to maintain technological currency in the face of decreasing resources, rising costs, and differing views about the funding priorities of the agency.

Conclusion

In the context of Philippine situation, there are several undeniable realities that contributed to the fate of public school libraries in the country such as lack of funds, inadequate and insufficient book collections, lack of space and equipment, lack of qualified personnel, and the question on the leadership of those in power. We can not deny that these realities hindered the very tenets of library service. In all sectors of the society, the library plays a vital role—the intellectual and economic development of the people as well in developing an information-rich society.

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