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## ABSTRACT

A search of two major English language databases, Library Literature and LISA (Library and Information Science Abstracts) for 1990-2000 was undertaken for the latest reports pertaining to literacy, including major surveys, evaluation studies, manuals on libraries and literacy, and recent major national or regional literacy movements that involved libraries. Although an attempt was made to obtain materials on literacy and libraries in other countries, mainly documents from IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions) and UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) were located. This paper reports the results of the survey. Topics covered include: a brief history of literacy; major national and international studies of adult literacy; the role of international agencies; national and international literacy and reading campaigns; book access and funded projects; libraries and literacy historically and currently; evaluation reports; and guidelines for libraries involved in literacy. The bibliography lists 52 monographs, 19 World Wide Web sites, and 129 articles. (MES)


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### Libraries and Literacy: A Preliminary Survey of the Literature

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#### Background

A search of two major English language databases, Library Literature (U.S.) and LISA (Library and Information Science Abstracts, U.K.) for the dates, 1990-2000, was undertaken for the latest reports pertaining to literacy including: major surveys, evaluation studies, manuals on libraries and literacy, plus recent major national or regional literacy movements that involved libraries. The search could only be characterized as cursory, mainly English-language based, and selective for materials available from a local research library or from interlibrary loans. Though an attempt was made to secure materials on literacy and libraries in other countries, mainly documents from the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) and the the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) were located. Published reports from the U.S., the U.K, and Canada dominated this literature. Several documents were found only on the world-wide web through web home pages of literacy agencies or governmental organizations.

Though no attempt was made to define literacy for this search, almost all the publications included some type of definition. Historically, in the U.S., literacy has been defined in terms of years of schooling which has constantly increased, from three or more years of schooling in 1930 to having completed eighth grade in 1960. By 1992, the definition used in the U.S. National Adult literacy Survey included: "...using printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential." An increasingly sophisticated and differentiated scale of literacy skills have been

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identified in several major studies. In these recent studies, adult literacy was broken down into three scales including; prose literacy, document literacy, and quantitative literacy; these scales have a 500 point basis which allows five major breakdowns of levels of literacy (Adult Literacy, 1993; Literacy, Economy and Society, 1995). Types of literacy have been expanded to include family literacy (or intergenerational literacy), and information literacy - often including computer literacy (much of which was not considered relevant to the current search). Literacy among specific groups of people has sometimes been the focus, such as that of the language minority community (Constantino, 1997, IFLA, 1999), the blind (Leach, 1992), the poor (Ventruelle, 1998), the labor force (Sum, 1999) and families (Thomas and Fisher, 1996). However, most of the studies and reports focus on the adult illiterate which usually includes those 15 or 16 years of age and older. Some interesting trends in the 1990s has been the movement toward family literacy and special consideration of women in literacy programs in recognition of gender inequity in literacy rates. Another trend in literacy activities has been an increased focus on the learners' needs and preferences through establishment of New Reader (learners) Advisory Groups, inclusion of learners on Literacy Advisory Groups and in local and regional forums on literacy activities, providing a voice for the learners themselves especially in community-based programs.

Several centers of literacy have been established, such as the National Literacy Secretariat of Canada and the Literacy Resource Centre in Ottawa, Canada, the National Literacy Institute (U.S.), the International Literacy Institute at the University of Pennsylvania in the U.S. sponsored by UNESCO; and the National Center for Family Literacy in Louisville, Kentucky (U.S.); and many web sites of these centers and other literacy -related organizations were found. (See list of web site with Bibliography). Several manuals and workbooks which describe library literacy programs have been written. Though before 1990, there had not been many country-wide surveys of literacy in general, nor much attention to evaluation and research studies relating to literacy, that has begun to change as will be noted later in this paper.

Several books discuss the role of libraries in literacy including Salter (1991) and Weibel (1992) in the U.S., and Scheel (1989) in Canada. There are several manuals for developing literacy programs in libraries such as Quezada's guide for small and medium-sized libraries (American Library Association, 1996) and the Literacy Tool kit: A Resource for Libraries (Regina Public Library and the Saskatchewan Library Association, 1996). National efforts at establishing policy for literacy programs and libraries are found in Quigley, developed for the Canadian Library Association (1995) as a result of a summit on libraries and literacy.

Most of the journal articles centered on national or local literacy and reading initiatives, and campaigns such as the U.K.'s National Year of Reading (Attenborough, 1998, 1999) and their Reading Is Fundamental project, with a focus on access to books for school children. Many efforts in the U.S. have focused on youth, reading, and book access including: Reading Is Fundamental, and a series of family literacy projects such as Born to Read, a program for babies and their parents; the Bell-Atlantic/ALA Family Literacy projects starting in 1989, and California's Families for Literacy program begun in 1988 (Monsour, 1993). More on some of these projects will be found in a later section, and much more can be found in the items in the attached bibliography. Articles on literacy covered many parts of the world: most of the English-speaking countries, France, and several developing countries such as India, Malaysia, Peru, islands in the South Pacific, and several African countries and regions. Most of that information is not reviewed in this paper.

## A Brief History of Literacy

According to Kaestle (1991), "very little evidence is available about the extent of literacy before 1850 except that provided by people's ability to sign such documents as marriage registers, army rolls, and wills. " In Europe, the literacy rise between 1850-1900 was rapid, for both men and women due to national consolidation, state intervention, and wider male suffrage along with expanding capitalism and establishment of school systems. In the U.S., literacy rates in colonial British America were quite high, and America's rise to nearly universal white literacy was earlier than Europe's. By 1850, the rudimentary literacy rates of white men and women, self-reported to the U.S. Census, were nearly equal. In 1979, only .6 percent of all persons fourteen years of age and older reported that they were illiterate, but this equaled nearly one million people (Kaestle). As early as 1930, the term, functional literacy gained popularity, usually defined as the ability to read at the fourth or fifth grade level. As the definitions of literacy have changed, there have been few studies of literacy on a national level until the 1992/93 Adult Literacy Survey in the U.S.

Bramley (1991) commented that during the 1960s it became very apparent that, in both Britain and the U.S., there were adults in society with severe literacy problems. What followed were the literacy campaigns of the 1970s and the 1980s. The adult education movement and the term adult basic education (ABE) has tried to focus on the academic skills needed to function in society (reading, writing, spelling and handwriting, and basic numeracy). Later, the concepts of social and life skills (coping or survival skills) became part of ABE. Educational opportunities centered around these concepts. Bramley presents the role of public libraries in Britain and the U.S. in both the early literacy and the later adult basic education programmes. He believes that these literacy campaigns sparked the incentive for the emergence of public library services to ABE students and also to the educationally disadvantaged. Literacy needs and services through public libraries are presented not only for ABE programs but for those with special educational needs including racial and ethnic groups (African Americans in both the U.S. and Britain, the Hispanic communities in the U.S., Asian communities in Britain, and groups with physical disabilities).

In the 1970s the U.S. Office of Education commissioned the Adult Performance Level study, to establish what was meant by functional literacy, including relating levels of academic competence to economic achievement. Three levels were established with only one level being established as less than functionally literate. Until the 1960s it was assumed that the introduction of compulsory, full-time education had led to the elimination of illiteracy. Suddenly it was recognized that this was not true, first in the U.S., and then later in Britain. This led to several waves of literacy campaigns and advocacy. Also in 1973, the Russell Report in Britain concerned itself with adult education and adult literacy. In May 1974, the British Association of Settlement and Social Action Centres (BAS) published a document, *A Right to Read: Action for a Literate Britain* after two million adults were identified with literacy problems. A series of TV programs were introduced by the BBC for adults with reading problems. An Adult Literacy Resource agency was established in 1975, to allocate funds to local bodies for literacy purposes. Later the Adult Literacy Unit was established with Education and Science. Britain has in the 1990s established a National Curriculum, trying to ensure all would have a "good basic education."

In the U.S. a similar pattern can be found but occurring a bit earlier. Evidence of a large number of illiterates was found due to the large number of non-English speaking immigrants in the 19th and 20th centuries; and later,

during the two world wars, an alarming number of registrants in the armed forces were found to be lacking literacy skills. As part of the literacy movement in the U.S., voluntary organizations continue to make a substantial contribution to teaching literacy skills, especially Lauback Literacy International (LLI) and the Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA). Lauback, a one-on-one teaching method for adults, began in the 1930s in the Philippines (though established as a formal organization by Frank C. Lauback in Syracuse (NY) in 1968; while LVA began in Syracuse (NY) in 1962 through the Church Women United. The role of federal and regional governments in each country is very important in literacy efforts. Early on in the U.S., efforts were tied to employment issues such as with the Economic Opportunity Act in 1964. In 1966 the Adult Basic Education Act (ABE) was approved as part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and the establishment of a National Advisory Committee on ABE. In 1969, the Right to Read Campaign was started; and in 1974, the National Reading Improvement Program. The general population was startled and perhaps stimulated to action by the stark picture of illiteracy in the U.S. presented by the well-known writer and educator, Jonathan Kozol, in 1985 by his book, *Illiterate America*. Consequently, Congress authorized the Department of Education in 1988 to address the need for information on the extent of adult literacy. Finally through many efforts, the National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) was designed and conducted in 1992 (Adult Literacy, 1993).

The 1990s have seen a major response by the U.S. government concerning the literacy problem. For example, at the 1989 National Governors' Association, one of the six national education goals listed was the following:

By the year 2000, every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

Congress passed the National Literacy Act of 1991, "to enhance the literacy and basic skills of adults, to ensure that all adults in the U.S. acquire the basic skills necessary to function effectively and achieve the greatest possible opportunity in their work and in their lives, and to strengthen and coordinate adult literacy programs." In 1993, a report from the U.S. Office of Technology Assessment described the current patchwork of programs that provide adult literacy education, suggesting that even the governmental programs had led to greater fragmentation of efforts. This report analyzed the ways technology (computer software, interactive video, and multimedia) can expedite in an efficient way literacy training. Though the authors felt the technology had great potential, they found only about 15% of programs utilizing such technology. Some advantages of the use of technology included:

- reaching learners outside of the institutional setting both in recruiting and retaining learners through sustaining motivation
- using learning time efficiently through improved curriculum and individualizing instruction
- meeting staff development challenges
- enhancing assessment and evaluation
- streamlining administration and management
- augmenting funding and coordination

Though libraries are listed in the report as one of nine providers of literacy, only one example of a specific library literacy program was noted. The report strongly recommends more funding to encourage public and private partnerships to bring technology to literacy training.

The book trade has been closely associated with campaigns for national literacy, including an intensive effort with the Coalition for Literacy which was mainly an informational and marketing campaign to expedite literacy training. The Coalition was administered by the American Library Association. Private foundation monies have been and continue to be important. Workforce literacy needs have brought the business community into the various efforts and coalitions.

### **Major National and International Studies of Adult Literacy**

A study of literacy was conducted in the U.S. in 1992, the National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS), sponsored by the National Center for Educational Statistics in the U.S. Department of Education (Adult Literacy in America, 1993; also see Kirsch in Smith, 1998). This was a very major study in terms of methodology and population studied. Trained staff interviewed nearly 13,600 individuals aged 16 and older during the first eight months of 1992. All had been randomly selected to represent the adult population. Another 1000 adults were surveyed in each of 12 states to look at state-level results comparable to the national data. Also, 1100 inmates from prisons were interviewed to ascertain information on the literacy of the prison population. Over 26,000 individuals were surveyed. This study developed the methodology later used in the international literacy survey; with the three scales (prose, document, quantitative) used to define levels of literacy.

The study made connections between literacy skills and social, educational and economic variables. For example, "where one is in the literacy distribution is strongly associated with the likelihood of living in or near poverty" (Kirsch). It was found that there was a relationship between literacy and employment status: individuals with more limited literacy skills are less likely to be employed, less likely to work full-time, less likely to be professionals, managers, and technicians but more likely to be "laborer, assembler, or involved in fishing and farming," or in "craft, or service jobs."

In general, a clearer view of why so many U.S. adults demonstrated limited English literacy skills was presented including the following profile of those with lower literacy skills:

- 25% who performed at the lowest level were immigrants
- nearly 2/3rds of those at the lowest level did not complete high school
- 1/3 of those at the lowest level were over the age of 65
- 19% had some visual difficulty
- 12% had some type of health condition that kept them from participating fully in daily activities.

African-American and Hispanic adults were disproportionately represented in the lowest two levels of the NALS. Yet, perhaps the most interesting results included these:

- ½ of American adults performed at the two lowest levels of literacy proficiency
- 21-23% (40 to 44 million of the 191 million adults) were at the lowest of five levels of literacy.
- 25-28% (50 million people) were in the next higher level of literacy.
- educational attainment was associated with literacy proficiency

Many of the definitions and levels of literacy in this study were used as the

basis for a series of international literacy surveys. Internationally, a series of studies of adult literacy in countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) were conducted between 1994 and 1999. The first International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) was published by the OECD and Statistics Canada (Literacy, Economy and Society, 1995). The survey included interviews and tests of representative samples of adults aged 16 to 65 in the following countries: Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United States. For the first time, the literacy and numeracy of adults in different countries can be profiled and compared. The survey provided pertinent information on the economic performance and strength of each country, and the information needed to improve literacy. The survey used large samples of adults (ranging from 1500 to 8000 per country) in Europe and North America during 1994 in a uniform test of their literacy skills using the same methodology and scales of the National U.S. Adult Literacy Survey. The IALS also followed the procedures of the 1989 study by Statistics Canada, another national assessment of adult literacy, which was the first study to assess literacy in a valid and reliable way across language and culture (English and French).

Building on these two major studies of the U.S. and Canada, the Educational Testing Service on behalf of the U.S. Department of Education and Statistics Canada joined with the OECD, the UNESCO Institute for Education in Hamburg, and the Commission of the European Communities to encourage national governments to participate in the study. The Canadian results were published also separately in *Reading the Future: A Portrait of Literacy in Canada* (1996). Warren Clark has issued a report comparing three of the countries: Canada, the United States, and Germany (Clark, web report).

The first IALS study included data from the seven countries listed above. A second study included data collected from the following countries: Australia, New Zealand, Great Britain, Ireland and Flemish Belgium and the report presents comparative data from all twelve countries (Literacy Skills for the Knowledge Society, 1997). A third study included an additional eight countries: Chile, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Norway, Portugal, and Slovenia (Literacy in the Information Age, June 2000). There are now 20 countries in this international database with comparative data on literacy levels. According to a press release on the world-wide web regarding the final report (newly released, not available to the writer), the following conclusions were noted:

- The higher a nation's literacy skills, the more likely its population will work in better quality jobs, earn more and have healthier habits and lifestyles.
- There is a measurable, net return to literacy skills.
- Literacy proficiency has a substantial impact on earnings when other aspects of human capital, specifically educational attainment and experience, are taken into account. The higher a nation's literacy skills, the higher its economic output measured in gross domestic product per capita. For example, Canada ranked among the top countries on both gross domestic product per capita and prose literacy.
- No nation did so well in literacy attainment that it could be said to have no literacy problems. (Statistics Canada website:  
<http://www.statcan.ca/Daily/English/000613b.htm>)

Additional information on countries can be found in the UNESCO work on illiteracy gleaned from national reports done for Education for All Year 2000 (EFA), which provides data on 167 country reports. The UNESCO Institute for

Statistics prepared the report based on these country and regional reports enhanced by the Institute's global estimates and trends (Education for All 2000 Assessment, 2000). Two groups of persons have been used in the study: young adults (aged 15-24 years of age) and adults (aged 15 years and over). Because countries collected data in different ways (household surveys, school surveys, population censuses), resulting in differences in samples and frequency/recency of data collection, the report suggests caution in interpreting reported literacy rates, especially the very high literacy rates. Some of the findings and projections include the following:

- Four out of every five adults (aged 15 years and over) in the world are literate.
- Literacy rates have risen over the past thirty years, to approximately 79 percent in 1998.
- There were still some 880 million illiterate adults in the world in 1998 and:
  - two-thirds of them were women
  - more than 98 percent live in less developed regions
  - includes one in seven young adults.
- The adult literacy rate is the lowest in sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia (median rates of 57 and 58 percent respectively).
- Latin America, the Caribbean, the Arab States and North Africa have intermediate rates of 88 percent and 80 percent.
- The highest adult literacy rates are in East Asia and the Pacific (94 percent), and in Central Asia and Central and Eastern Europe (98 percent).

The report also points out the considerable inter-country disparities within each region. Significantly, for the majority of reporting countries, substantial progress was made in raising adult literacy rates over the decade, for example, a reported 21 percentage points in Bangladesh. Yet in some regions adult literacy rates dropped as in Honduras (from 27 percent in 1990 to 21 percent in 1998). Gender disparities in literacy only improved slightly over the decade though where the literacy rates are the highest, disparities are the lowest. Gender disparities remain high in South and West Asia, in the Arab States and North Africa, and in sub-Saharan Africa. It is important to point out that the statistical report not only included findings on young adult and adult literacy levels (and gender disparities) but also examined several core indicators that assess education overall but which are obviously related to literacy over the long-term such as enrollment in early childhood programs, educational levels completed plus expenditures and trained personnel related to the educational systems. This assessment effort is a follow-up on the UNESCO 1990 World Conference on Education held in Thailand in 1990, entitled Education for All (EFA) which set a global agenda for education and literacy with several goals including the reduction of adult illiteracy. This global agenda was part of the World Declaration on Education for All adopted at the Conference which was also part of the International Literacy Year of 1990.

For Asia and the Pacific, the task was assigned to the Asia-Pacific Programme of Education for All (APPEAL). Progress has been made in the Asia and Pacific area according to a UNESCO assessment of the region; from a literacy rate in 1960 of almost 40% to close to 69%, with the projected raise to 77% by 2000. Whether this has been met has not been ascertained. Yet, southern Asia has a rising number of illiterates in terms of absolute numbers even though the percentage has declined. Countries included in these studies included: Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam as part of the Asia-Pacific Programme of Education for All. (See website for Asia Pacific Library Database.) According

to a UNESCO Education News in Brief (UNESCO web site), a recent survey carried out in India, Nepal, Philippines and Thailand reveals their [adult education programmes] positive impact on personal development, women's empowerment and the economy. A UNESCO -E-9 initiative which began in 1993 included nine of the world's most populous countries (Bangladesh, China, Indonesia, India, Pakistan, Brazil, Egypt, Mexico, and Nigeria) and involved planning and management of literacy campaigns and efforts. A UNESCO News in Brief item (UNESCO web site) outlined some findings of "What Works in Asia in Literacy Campaigns" including:

- the need to involve the future learners and sensitize them to the usefulness of literacy
- that literacy classes be community-based and designed to improve daily lives
- NGOs have the know-how in mobilizing the community
- the need for attractive, relevant, and accessible literacy and post-literacy materials
- the need for libraries and resource centres
- sustained commitment and perseverance even as governments change

### **Role of International Agencies**

Several international agencies have been vitally involved in advocating for life-long learning and the acceptance that literacy is a human right. According to Rogers and McChesney in 1984, UNESCO "has played a key role in the promotion of books and libraries... (their) book development program ... Starting out primarily as a promotional program to emphasize the importance of books and reading, it has since laid even greater emphasis on action designed to provide technical advice, equipment, and materials, and professional training, and has above all stressed the need to develop national book policies."(p. 270).

The International Book Year stimulated activities in the world community for book promotion and UNESCO with a plan of action called Books for All. In 1980, UNESCO convened a World Congress on Books in London, with the theme, Towards a Reading Society, for the purpose of assessing progress in book promotion since the International Book Year,

UNESCO declared 1990 the International Literacy Year to continue public awareness of illiteracy and to encourage cooperation among countries in combatting illiteracy. In 1993, UNESCO published "Guidelines for Public Libraries Promoting Literacy," a project contracted through IFLA and its Section of Public Libraries. In 1994, UNESCO, in cooperation with the University of Pennsylvania's Graduate School of Education, established an International Literacy Institute in the U.S. for the purpose of providing leadership in research, development, and training in the broad field of literacy at the international level, with an emphasis on developing countries. They have published a CD-ROM and web site which provides an overview of literacy issues and practices, statistics, and innovative projects. (See list of websites.)

The International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) has had several workshops and pre-conferences on illiteracy: including work by the Section of Public Libraries in 1989 and 1990. Other sections have had workshops such as the combined efforts of the Sections of Children's Libraries, the Blind, Multicultural, and Public Libraries during the India IFLA Conference in 1992. IFLA continues to have an important role in connecting libraries with literacy. In 1994, a proposal was made for a new core program for literacy and reading promotion; in 1995, that recommendation was rejected but a working group on

literacy was formed to study the feasibility of such an initiative by IFLA. In 1999, the Final Report of the Working Group on Literacy was submitted to the IFLA Professional Board. The current work of the Section on Reading, including the papers at this program, are a follow-up to that work. The Section also sponsored a workshop at the 1998 IFLA Conference on Literacy and Reading Services to Cultural and Linguistic Minorities. The work of the International Reading Association is important to the field of reading and literacy also.

### **National and International Literacy and Reading Campaigns**

In both developed and developing countries there have been major attempts to promote reading and literacy through publicity campaigns which have involved libraries, library associations, the book industry, business, foundations, the media, and governments. Internationally there has been UNESCO efforts with both World Book Day (April) and International Literacy Day (September). Several countries have used these campaigns as the basis for their own national efforts such as Great Britain's free book vouchers in 1998 to children between 4 and 18 years of age still in school. These efforts are often well-funded and generate not only promotional materials but specific programs and activities in many school and public libraries.

In the U.K., their National Year of Reading (September 1998-August 1999), was a major effort administered by the National Literacy Trust which distributed funds for innovative projects that stimulate reading. Several pilot literacy projects were included and several book give-away programs were part of the efforts. Their theme of Read Me was extended to one of Read On as the project continues for three years. One of the main strengths of such campaigns is the networking that is involved and hopefully continues. Since 1989, the Canada Post has devoted some attention to literacy including the release of three literacy-oriented stamps and stamp sets, with proceeds going to literacy organizations.

In the U.S. there are two specially-designated weeks a year, Children's Book Week in the Fall and National Library Week in the Spring. National Library Week (NLW) has been strengthened in the last few years due to a great deal of promotion by the American Library Association with special activities such as the Night of a Thousand Stars (celebrity involvement in reading in each community). In 1991, the Year of the Lifetime Reader was sponsored by the Center for the Book at the Library of Congress, and funded by donations, with then First Lady Barbara Bush as honorary chair.

In Nigeria, since 1981, a Library Week is sponsored by the National Library and with help from the International Reading Association (Loho, 1991). In South Africa, the USIA, the READ Educational Trust (a 20 year old private NGO which tries to improve education, and provides access to books and libraries in the townships), and local organizations worked with ALA's Peggy Barber to establish a major reading campaign as a five year project beginning in 1995. These are simply examples in an area where almost all parts of the world have similar campaigns or join those of the international organizations such as World Book Day or the International Literacy Day.

### **Book Access and Funded Projects**

Though many of these projects become a part of the reading and literacy campaigns described above, they also have a life of their own in some instances. Several developed countries have established book donation

programs usually targeted at developing countries, such as Book Aid International in the U.K. (until 1994 known as the Ranfurly Library Service) which sends donated books by publishers and charities to more than 60 countries worldwide and especially targets sub-Saharan Africa. They also helped set up the Intra-African Book Support Scheme along with the African Books Collective to distribute African books overseas, to encourage African writers and publishers, and to work closely with World Book Day. The Canadian Organization for Development through Education (CODE) sponsors several projects as well as formerly served as chiefly a book donation program. Their projects have been predominantly in rural, isolated areas of Africa, usually with partners with other overseas organizations along with those in local communities. Their current target audiences include: children up to the age of fifteen, and adults with six or fewer years of schooling. For example, they initiated the Children's Book Project in 1991 to support the production and distribution of Tanzanian books especially books in indigenous languages. Most of their work has been in Africa and the Caribbean. Many other countries have similar international aid organizations, either private or governmental, such as the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) and the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA). Though Japan has also had similar projects, descriptions of their work was not found in the current literature search. The World Bank has made major contributions in many developing countries in the area of literacy and education.

The U.K. and the U.S. have the most documented reading and literacy initiatives in the 1990s, and many are governmental projects. For example, Reading Is Fundamental (RIF), backed by donations and started in the U.S. in 1966, is a project that provides free books to children through schools and grassroots community organizations. Today RIF cooperates with several other national initiatives including some of the following. The Prescription for Reading program has, since 1997, provided free books through health care providers at each child's health check-up until age 6 and has given away over 1 million books. Similar in purpose is the Born to Read programs, and Reach Out and Read, another book give-away program now in 43 states. Most of these projects were expanded when the America Reads Challenge was announced by President Clinton in 1997 for the purpose of having every child in the U.S. reading independently by the end of grade three, a program administered by the U.S. Department of Education. Several of the projects are partners with the National Center for Family Literacy and Head Start organizations. Most of the projects work with the American Library Association as well as with public and school libraries.

Examples of projects initiated by the book trade include: a project called All Books for Children, sponsored by three publishers (Disney, Harper Collins, and Scholastic) in cooperation with Starbucks Coffee Shops, to provide free books to Boys and Girls Clubs of America; another called First Book started in 1992, through a national non-profit organization with donations from several publishers and bookstores, giving "first" books to disadvantaged children; a national donation project called the Book Bank based on publisher donations and with foundation support; the Books for Kids Foundation, which provides books to day cares, shelters, and hospitals; and the National Children's Book and Literacy Alliance (organized by children's authors and illustrators). Every Child a Reader is a 1999 pilot project to distribute remaindered books to literacy groups and children's agencies. The National Education Association (a teachers group) sponsors an annual event to promote literature, Read Across America. The Newspapers in Education project, supported by local newspapers, the United Way, and other corporations, provides newspapers to classrooms at certain grade levels. Beginning in 2000 a PBS television series, Between the

Lions, will promote children's reading.

Reading Is Fundamental began in the U.K. in 1996, backed by corporate funding, and organized by the National Literacy Trust in London. Again RIF provides free books for young children to choose and own, to motivate reading. According to Blunkett (1998), U.K.'s Education and Employment Secretary, the country's National Year of Reading is part of a National Literacy Strategy to ensure that 80% of eleven-year olds reach the standard in English by 2002. Also, as part of the NYR, the National Literacy Trust was established including several literacy components. The Royal Mail along with television channels promoted the 40,000 adult literacy classes and development of information packs to help in literacy. The BBC television led a Books for Babies campaign. A BookStart project works through health visitors to deliver books and book information into the homes of nine-month old babies.

These are only a few examples from the literature of literacy and reading promotion initiatives but it does appear that book promotion for children and family literacy projects have been the focus of the 1990s in the U.S. and the U.K. Some apology should be made again for the many examples from the U.S., Canada, and the U.K. mainly because they appear to be more documented in the English language publications available to the writer.

### **Libraries and Literacy - Historically and Currently**

Libraries did become involved quite early in the adult literacy campaigns and activities though many were (and some still are) reluctant to do so. Both the Library Association in Britain and the American Library Association in the U.S. have played important roles - especially with school and public library involvement in literacy and reading. The access to adult literacy reading materials, the need for library education to include literacy program information, the need for studies and reports - all were major challenges that brought forth efforts and collaboration from the professional societies. Some early efforts included the establishment in 1924 of the ALA Commission on Library and Adult Education (Lyman, 1977).

The public library in the U.S. responded as early as the 1890s to the language and literacy needs of a large influx of immigrants, providing English and citizenship classes in many urban libraries. Lyman reported on a Reading Improvement Program begun at the Brooklyn Public Library in 1955 which was financed by a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York. Public libraries initially provided print materials to help in literacy activities. A focus on social responsibility and outreach was clearly delineated for public libraries during the 1960s and 1970s; literacy activities and an activist approach to users falls easily into the outreach focus.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, major efforts were made by a few libraries. Several efforts at federal intervention and federal aid mainly through the Library Services and Construction Act (LSCA) and the Title IIB of the Higher Education Act encouraged these efforts at the state level especially in public libraries. These efforts also showed the need for literacy training through state libraries, networks, and schools of library science. ALA was influential in promoting, and providing advocacy and training for literacy activities in libraries. In 1978, ALA's Office for Library Outreach Services (OLOS), the office charged with literacy activities, with a grant from the Lilly Foundation, conducted a series of workshops to train librarians in the techniques of establishing literacy programs

Public libraries realized the need for better easy-to-read print materials, the importance of providing space and resources, and sometimes even access to literacy training. Helen Lyman, a pioneer in literacy activities sponsored by public libraries, published two important books, *Library Materials in Service to the Adult New Reader* (1974), and *Literacy and the Nation's Libraries* (1977). By 1980, many libraries were providing the easy-to-read materials, accommodating literacy activities, encouraging staff involvement, providing referral services, and even financial resources. In the 1980s, ALA's activity and the stimulus of federal funding brought literacy and public libraries more to the forefront. ALA's work with the Coalition for Literacy beginning in 1981 allowed the combination of efforts by associations, advertising, the book industry, and literacy organizations, all coordinated by ALA's Office for Library Outreach Services and with the expertise of the Advertising Council Incorporated. This three year literacy promotion campaign highlighted the existence of widespread illiteracy, the resulting problems in society, and stimulated local efforts with recruitment and involvement including libraries. Statewide and local coalitions were formed; and a great deal of information and networking resulted. In 1984, the federal program of funding libraries, LSCA, was amended with a new title, the Library Literacy Program which gave more substantial monies to state and public libraries for their literacy efforts. Several states such as California, were especially successful in their efforts, with state-wide planning and major literacy grants from these monies.

In 1986, a major study funded by the U.S. Department of Education, and conducted by the University of Wisconsin-Madison's School of Librarianship, examined the literacy programmes of publicly funded libraries (Johnson, Robbins, and Zweizig, 1990; Bramley, 1991). Johnson (1987) produced a planning manual for the American Library Association which examined the public library's role in literacy activities and recommended the process of planning such services. The study found that though libraries are active partners in the national literacy effort, public libraries report the greatest involvement in all three literacy roles - collections, instruction, and support services. Over 25 percent of the libraries provided direct literacy instruction. Through a major literature search and questionnaire results they confirmed that public library literacy programs have the longest history. As early as 1963 public libraries were offering literacy services. In many of these libraries, the programs had become a part of "traditional public library services." Nearly 50 percent of the libraries reported involvement in literacy coalitions. State library agencies have the most consistent profile of literacy services than any other type of library in a "supporting role;" they are a key information source in literacy providers and the problem of illiteracy; they provide advice and guidance on the use of materials and development of services; and they offer continuing education on the topic of literacy and libraries. Historically, as a fiscal agent for the national LSCA funds, they administer monies for local literacy projects; and sometimes provide state-level funding as well for literacy. This study called for more research on the impact of literacy services and activities at the local and state levels including inclusion of some of the variables they identified as a set of community variables: percent for whom English is a second language, ethnicity, educational levels, and poverty levels. Despite not finding a direct relationship between level of literacy and these community variables, the researchers felt they should be explored further. The main relationship they did find was that between the level of literacy activity and the managers' attitudes toward library literacy services. They found that materials to evaluate literacy programs in public libraries were not available; this led to a major effort in that area, with the publication of the manual, *Evaluation of Adult Library Literacy Programs* (Zweizig, Johnson, and Robbins, 1990).

Salter (1991) provided a discussion of all literacy efforts in the U.S., in libraries and beyond libraries. This historical and descriptive overview of literacy efforts is still useful today. The White House Conference on Library and Information Services held in the U.S. in 1991 included literacy as one of three major issues, along with democracy and productivity, for discussion during the conference.

Though this brief review of literacy and libraries is primarily based on the U.S., similar efforts have been made by the U.K., Canada, Australia, and New Zealand according to much of the literature found.

### **Evaluation Reports**

Beder (1991) has synthesized many fragmentary articles and research which provide information about literacy and influenced both policy and practice. His book is helpful as a prelude to the work cited in this paper which is predominately post-1990. His chapter on "Outcomes and Impact" is useful for thinking about evaluation and assessment of literacy programs. His recommendations are based on theoretical principles which have been tested in several studies. Most importantly, he recommends:

- It is more useful to conceive adult illiteracy as being a social construction maintained by social forces than to view illiteracy as being a collection of individual deficits spawned by personal failure (stop blaming the victims).
- Because the great majority of those who are eligible for the federal adult literacy program do not participate, we need to differentiate service to meet the multiplicity of individual needs and provide new models of education to appeal to nonparticipants.
- The adult literacy program which adapts to local needs and conditions has been successful and should not be limited but rather maintain adaptive, pluralistic orientations.
- Though the social justification for federal involvement may be dictated by human capital outcomes, limiting literacy goals to this is not useful, but rather should include attention to individual goals and needs.

Some evaluation efforts of specific library literacy projects provide useful information on the issues and processes of evaluation such as Quigley's 1994 publication on the Vancouver Public Library (Canada) project. Other manuals on evaluation of library literacy projects were found: one by the New York State Library (*Evaluating Library Literacy Programs*, 1991).

Evans (1998) describes an evaluation process used for evaluating CODE's activities in Africa, a process developed by Gwynneth Evans and Raymond Genesse in the 1990s as a framework for identifying basic benchmarks and measuring progress. As noted before, CODE projects have been predominantly in rural, isolated areas of Africa, and include partnerships with overseas organizations and those in local communities. Retrenchment of funding from the Canadian International Development Agency in the early 1990s required CODE to close regional offices and form even stronger partnerships with local agencies. This necessitated the need for more results-based management and a framework of monitoring and evaluation. The process consisted of surveys at local sites of management committees and target audiences both as baseline data and outcome data. This helped establish profiles of library services in each community and provided information on the program's impact on reading behavior. All types of data were used: interview, quantitative (census data), use of libraries, reading habits, and level of satisfaction with library services. Consultants traveled to local communities and collected the data including

observational and anecdotal data. Using the benchmark data and information from many international studies of literacy, six key assumptions were used as the organizational and analytical framework:

- Literacy is a concept, a process, and a skill that has meaning in relation to the demand of the economy and society or individuals and communities.
- Literacy is a mode of behaviour, which enables individuals and groups to gather, analyze and apply written information to function in society.
- Communities have a responsibility for creating a culture of literacy for their members, if they value development.
- If literacy is to culminate in a print mentality, the importance of the oral tradition and the communal nature of learning in African society must be understood and integrated into the approaches and programmes of local groups.
- If libraries are to support the reading habits of their citizens, they must understand the information needs of their communities.
- Literacy assists citizens in taking advantage of the changes affecting all societies, as well as allowing them to safeguard their traditions and values.

According to Evans, the rationale for evaluation was the need to develop indicators which would allow the programs to assess their own performance. They also wanted to involve each project's African and Caribbean partners. This allows the communities to both know their own communities and to assess their own effectiveness. This allows them to plan and manage their programmes, and also puts them in a position to make their needs and successes known beyond their communities - perhaps for future funding. Their evaluation efforts made it very clear that community members are rarely involved in identifying their own needs, and one of the strongest needs is providing appropriate materials (i.e. information related to agriculture, health, and community development) in languages used by the people. Evans and Genesse applied this mode of evaluation and these assumptions to a literacy and libraries project in Peru, and found that several of the assumptions proved applicable. The Peruvian project dates from the early '70s with recognition of community needs - common languages, and cultural commonalities. CODE's aim and motto throughout the 1990s, "self sufficiency through literacy in the developing world" is at the core of their evaluation processes.

Several case studies of rural communities in Zimbabwe are presented by Moyo (1995) of projects sponsored by the Rural Libraries and Resources Development Programme (RLRDP) in establishing 42 rural school/community libraries (some in storerooms or unoccupied classrooms). Their emphasis on community involvement is obvious even though several organizations within Zimbabwe (Book Development Council, Library Association, National Library) serve as partners as do some international organizations including CODE (Canada). Specific outcomes of these efforts included: progress in academic examination passes, income-generating projects, and community-based meetings. Here, as in most of the projects in developing countries, one of the greatest constraints is the lack of reading materials; another is the need for more training on the part of library or literacy managers.

The work of Zweizig et al (1990) is the major evaluation tool developed in the U.S. for libraries and literacy. The manual introduces an overall process for evaluation and specific measures of relevance for literacy programs, beyond measures of student progress alone. The manual drew from previous work on public library planning and evaluation models commissioned by the American Library Association. Seven steps in the process include the following:

- Determine the target area (specific goal(s): what you want to accomplish (effectiveness) and/or how well you want to do it (efficiency)
- Set the target (measurable objectives)
- How will you know? (Types of measurement, assessment)
- Take a look (gather the evidence)
- How close are you? (Comparison with target and actual figures)
- So what? (Is it good enough? Should you reassess the targets? Analyze the reasons for not achieving targets)
- Rethink (need to refine the target, involve other constituents)

They recommend that a sample program profile should be developed with the kinds of information needed to understand the literacy level of the community, the current literacy efforts beyond the library, and the resources available to the library, such as space, personnel, collections, and equipment. Specific literacy program measures are suggested along with specific criteria for three areas of measurement: collections, support services, and instruction. In addition to these quantitative measures, some suggestions for other evaluation approaches are described including qualitative measures such as the degree of cooperation between the library and other service providers, and information from both tutors and learners. This work reflects current thinking on evaluation, the importance of outcomes especially to end users. Johnson (1987) pointed out the critical area of a need for evaluation of literacy programs - what differences do these programs make? This highlights the need for well-specified objectives for literacy programs so that they can be adequately evaluated including all aspects of the library's role in literacy, rather than limited to only the learner's progress, such as: collection development, support services, and adequacy of funding and resources.

More recently, much has been written about the need to break the cycle of illiteracy through generations, mainly through family and inter-generational literacy programs. Much of the literature has been devoted to family literacy projects including Library-based Family Literacy Projects (Monsour and Talan, 1993). These projects have been suggested as models for public libraries nationwide in cooperative work between libraries and other community agencies. The concept of partnerships in the joint coordination of each organization's resources and expertise led to the most successful projects. The authors feature these projects as ones that should be replicated and they tried to identify components of such projects that have led to their success. All of the projects developed individual evaluation plans for their libraries based on the specific goals for the project in the community. Included in the "lessons learned" are: team building, the difficulty and importance of recruitment, the need to plan for the different age groups of children including child care during tutoring sessions for parents, the importance of quality literature for sharing, the need for coalition building with other community agencies including marketing and publicity, the need for personal contact and follow-up, and the recognition of the public stake in family literacy including information and feedback to community leaders. Outside the library field, there is a great deal of work on both establishing and evaluating literacy programs such as the work by Bhola (1990). These are especially useful as librarians work with those in educational systems and community-based organizations who often do not see the literacy role and activities as part of public libraries. Also, in many developing countries, the lack of a strong public library system and the lack of books and reading materials especially in the indigenous languages means that some literacy projects must work without the institutional structure of libraries.

### **Guidelines for Libraries Involved in Literacy**

Several countries and organizations have worked on guidelines, some for establishing literacy programs in libraries, especially public libraries, others for a specific type of program, such as family literacy programs, and some for developing training guidelines for library workers (Scott, 1995). The most extensive ones to date appear to be those by UNESCO in 1993 under contract with IFLA and under the direction of Barbro Thomas: *Guidelines for Public Libraries Promoting Literacy*. This follows extensive meetings organized by IFLA concerning the role of public libraries in literacy work, and follows UNESCO's 1990 International Literacy Year. Following this work, a third revision of the UNESCO Public Library Manifesto was issued in 1994 after a long period of work. This Manifesto addresses functional literacy and the principle of human rights with open access for all.

Now that there are more studies of illiteracy around the world, more recognition of the need for individualized community programs based on local needs, as well as new models for literacy programs - including adult literacy, family literacy and workplace literacy projects - perhaps it is time for another try at guidelines for libraries and literacy efforts. There also appears to be a need for more international coordination of library and literacy efforts, as a clearinghouse of information and as a coordinator of potential funding sources, among other functions.

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