School Librarians' View of Cooperation with Public Libraries: A Win-Win Situation in Hong Kong

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Abstract

The purpose of the research was to explore the collaboration between public libraries and schools in Hong Kong from the perspective of school librarians. Three school librarians were interviewed (semi-structured), and their responses were thematically analyzed. Collaboration between public libraries and the three schools was well received and supported by the principals at their respective schools. The three school librarians considered inter-lending to be a top benefit, as well as access to electronic resources. A goal was further collaboration with public libraries. In return, the school librarians were committed to promoting public library services through engaging in educational activities with teachers and students. Furthermore, outreach activities were a significant focus for collaboration. The study of public library and school library collaboration in Asian countries is largely missing from academic dialogue, especially studies focusing on collaboration in a large metropolis like Hong Kong. Through in-depth interviews and qualitative analysis, this paper is intended to fill the research gap in this particular area of study.

Introduction

School-public library collaboration is not a new concept (Cherry 1982; Czopek 1995; Douglas 1990; Fitzgibbons 2000; Harper 2014; Nesi 2012; Oestreich 1994; Sager 1992; Shannon 1991; Smith, Shea, and Wu 2014; Tameem 1988; Vincelette and Queen 2012). In the last three decades, there has been discussion in the field of public librarianship to explore further possible methods of achieving successful collaboration with schools. For schools facing budget constraints, the opportunity to use resources available through public libraries has made collaboration even more beneficial (Abram 2011; Smith, Shea, and Wu 2014). Collaboration not

only adds value to school library services but also allows for greater opportunities for public libraries' resources to be used more effectively and widely.

Although some studies have been conducted on this topic in Western countries, little discussion about the collaboration between schools and public libraries has been documented in Southeast Asian countries. The research for this exploratory paper aims to find out how schools utilized the resources provided by the Hong Kong Public Libraries system and how this use of public library resources affected the work of school librarians.

Literature Review

Discussions concerning school-public library collaborations can be traced back to the late nineteenth century (Harper 2014). Early collaborations were carried out in the form of academic support. Schools provided advance notice to the public libraries, and the latter made the requested resources available for students. Collaborations between schools and public libraries were historically based upon a shared interest in providing specialized services for students such as assignment assistance, readers' advisory, and informational resources. Alternatively, in rural areas, joint-use libraries shared by schools and the public have also been successful, such as those in Australia and New Zealand in the 1990s (Bundy 1998).

Collaboration has since expanded to what Meghan Harper has identified as at least three core areas of school-public library collaboration, namely: facility-based services, outreach services, and specialized services for individuals with special needs. According to Harper, the effort made by schools to encourage students to use the facilities of the public library falls within the category of "facility-based service" (2014). This kind of collaboration requires classroom teachers or school librarians to take the initiative and devise public library-related assignments or encourage students to use the services of public libraries. Public libraries' outreach services include taking proactive steps to promote their resources and services to educators. The third area, as it concerns individual special education needs, is out of the context of this paper.

According to Stephen Abram (2011), school-public library collaboration can also be recognized in terms of both simple and complex strategies. Abram identified six simple strategies and six complex strategies that could be employed to enhance collaboration between school and public libraries. Abram suggested the following simple actions school librarians can take:

1. Provide links from the school library homepage to the local public library's website.

2. Promote the public library summer reading program.

3. Run public library card membership campaigns.

4. Become familiar with the resources in the local public library.

5. Host visits from public library staff.

6. Organize field trips and/or walking tours at a local library branch.

Through implementing these six simple strategies, school librarians can foster a strong partnership with public libraries as well as provide various ways for students to expand their education by taking advantage of available public library resources.

While simple strategies serve as effective first steps to engaging in a strong relationship between schools and libraries, complex strategies involve in-depth planning for long-term collaboration. Abrams suggested the following actions:

> 1. School librarians could conduct training workshops on curriculum for local public librarians.

> 2. School and public librarians could collaborate on planning homework-helper sessions at the public library and get teachers involved, if possible.

> 3. Both school and public librarians could conduct tactical training for one another to build skills by drawing on the expertise of both types of librarians.

> 4. School and public librarians can work together to develop a wide-area strategy to tie public and school library cooperation to standards and to share the tasks involved with helping students meet those standards.

> 5. School librarians can pilot events that include the classroom and both libraries.

> 6. School and public librarians can plan and hold joint author events.

As opposed to the six simple strategies, which could be run on an ad hoc basis, the six complex strategies proposed by Abram require advance planning and organization, with specific aims to facilitate students' information needs in particular areas and maintain sustainable collaboration between schools and public libraries. Although the ways in which schools and libraries have developed cooperation over the years has changed, the basis of collaboration is still founded upon the mutual interest in serving the shared patron base of students (Harper 2014; Vincelette and Queen 2012). Through closely shared educational initiatives and effective activities, public and school librarians can foster lifelong public library patrons while supporting learners as they develop skills to meet standards (Nesi 2012). Through strong cooperation, both schools and libraries can promote strong reading habits among the junior patrons and, ultimately, promote lifelong reading in the community (Abram 2011). Schools facing budget constraints can avoid some expenditures by using public library resources (Vincelette and Queen 2012). This relationship then, in turn, provides a boost to the usage of resources at public libraries. As technology continues to change the ways in which we acquire information, joint programs between schools and libraries will be key to enhancing the information-literacy skills of students (Serantes 2006).

Daniella Smith, Misty Shea, and Wei-Ning Wu confirmed that such collaboration achieved positive results in the United States. Their quantitative survey of 265 public librarians focused on resource sharing from the perspective of public librarians (2014). Recently, Jenna Kammer and Denise Moreland interviewed libraries in a rural area of the Midwestern United States and indicated that such collaboration has been affected by systematic and regional constraints (2020).

Similar studies on this topic from perspectives of school librarians' in Asia, especially in metropolises like Hong Kong, are largely missing.

Research Questions

This study explores the extent of resources available to Hong Kong Public Libraries that support school librarians, and how those resources are used to promote literacy and support students' education. We further examined the factors affecting their collaboration practices. The following research questions guided this study and provided the framework for the design of the study.

Research Question 1: What are the aspects of collaboration between the Hong Kong Public Libraries and local school librarians?

Research Question 2: What are the roles and perceptions of school librarians in their collaboration with the Hong Kong Public Libraries?

Methodology

RESEARCH METHOD

Semi-structured interviews were conducted because this study was intended to be exploratory and to reveal richer and more diversified information than responses to a questionnaire could provide. Qualitative interviews can be used to explore the underlying reasons for the observed actions and decisions. Paul D. Leedy and Jeanne Ellis Ormrod explained that interviews are the most-productive data-gathering technique, especially for qualitative research (2013). In particular, one major advantage of semi-structured interviews is that they facilitate probing and ensure that crucial information is not omitted (Neuman 2009). This research method also enables participants' attitudes and opinions to be fully expressed in their own words, and allows space for a variety of—and sometimes even contradictory—viewpoints. In addition to allowing respondents to articulate answers based on their own understandings, such natural and free conversational interviews also enable maximum flexibility for more-open, spontaneous, and instant exchanges of ideas without any preconceived expectations on the interviewers' side. More importantly, follow-up questions can be used to clarify participants' answers and verify participants' responses and researchers' own understandings immediately (Lo et al.). A further advantage of a semi-structured interview is that it confines the scope of answers so that the information gathered from interviewees can be compared in the process of further analysis. Therefore, a qualitative approach to data collection and analysis was considered appropriate for the aims of this study.

PARTICIPANTS

Among the school libraries collaborating with our research team on reading promotion projects and internships unrelated to the research study (mostly primary schools in the Southern District of Hong Kong near the university), we asked for participants who had experience in collaboration with public libraries. Only three practicing school librarians from primary schools in the Southern District of Hong Kong with such experience agreed to participate in this exploratory study. Participation was voluntary. The participant consent forms and interview questions were reviewed and approved by the Faculty Review Board delegate according to the

guidelines of the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of Hong Kong. E-mails were written to the respective participants to seek permission to conduct the interviews, explain the purpose of the study, outline the approximate length of the interviews, and so on. Permissions were also sought for digital voice recording of the interview sessions.

All three interviewees were experienced school librarians who had been working in the field for ten to seventeen years. One interviewee (School Librarian C) was a full-time school librarian who was not involved in regular classroom teaching. The other two interviewees combined their responsibilities as school librarians with required classroom teaching, ranging from twenty-one to twenty-four classes in every three-week cycle of instruction.

DATA COLLECTION

The face-to-face interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format and were fluid in nature. All participants were asked the same set of open-ended questions (see the Appendix) to maintain a level of consistency amongst the data, though additional questions were asked as needed to get more details about responses. The idea was to elicit common themes amongst the participants' answers. The interviews, each approximately forty-five minutes in length, were conducted over a three-week period by the first author. Once recorded with the interviewees' permission, interviews were then transcribed, and common themes were identified by the research team as described in the next subsection.

The opening questions were related to interviewees' length of service and job responsibilities, as well as about student success in general. To provide a context for participants' responses about collaboration with public libraries, participants were also asked questions about their perceptions of the importance of the school library and the role of the school librarian. The rest of the questions dealt with the participants' attitudes about and experiences with school-public library collaborations.

THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Thematic analysis is a technique to "analyze data in accordance with commonalities, relationships, and differences across a data set," and it is intended to search for aggregated themes within data (Gibson and Brown 2009, 2). This exploratory study was designed to compare the accounts of interviewees, investigate the similarities in how they used public library resources, identify the differences in selecting public library resources, and find out the factors, if any, that influenced them on using public library resources. By analyzing the themes of interviewees' responses, we aimed to solicit information in a systematic way that could help construct a framework for future studies and research.

Data Analysis

PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE OF SCHOOL LIBRARIES

The traditional rote-learning paradigm and the "teacher-centered" approach to education have been gradually replaced by inquiry-based learning, which is also happening in Hong Kong (Lo and Chiu 2015; Chu 2009). School Librarians A and B both emphasized that school libraries played an important role in supporting teachers, as well as encouraging independent learning and thinking amongst the student community, thereby expanding the motivation for inquiry-based learning both inside and outside the classroom. For example:

> School Librarian A: "The main role of the school library is teaching support. So the library should provide teachers with the relevant information to support teaching, and further to supplement textbooks with enriched information, allowing students to explore extra related knowledge."

> School Librarian B: "The school library should mainly provide resources to support teaching, such as providing books required to supplementary textbooks and thematic bibliographic references to the students for extended reading as requested by teachers. The school library even cooperates with teachers from different subjects to run all kinds of activities together to engage students into self-exploration of a rich variety of knowledge."

Besides, School Librarian A considered that school library resources and its services could expand students' knowledge beyond textbooks' limited scope, a view that is in line with that of Janette R. Hill and Michael J. Hannafin (2001). The conducive learning environment of the library, along with its collections and resources, provides an important space for students to develop strong research skills and foster active independent learning habits that they can apply to individual study outside of their classroom. School Librarian B shared a similar view:

> School Librarian B: "We want to motivate them [students] to develop reading habits early. I believe this must bring benefits to their future. I also hope that through a variety of activities to make them subject to peer influence, … reading habits [can be deepened] school-wide. So I think school library collections should also take into account the needs of students in terms of leisure reading in addition to curriculum needs."

School Librarian C thinks that the school library should function as a place to support the formal curriculum and to provide the resources for independent study, a perspective that is in line with the view of Donna Shannon (2002). All three school librarians think the school library plays an important role in supporting other classroom teachers to source, select, acquire, and organize educational materials and other resources.

INSIGHT INTO THE ROLE OF SCHOOL LIBRARIANS

All three interviewees agreed that the school librarian plays an important role, though their opinions on how that role can be enacted were slightly different. Besides supporting teaching,

School Librarian A emphasized that the school librarian has a main role in organizing and guiding reading activities for students, that is, that the ultimate goal of a librarian is to cultivate literacy and strong reading habits in their students (Moore et al. 1999). School Librarian A also pointed out, to become a key player in fostering strong research skills in students, "librarians need to support other teachers in their teaching needs, while coordinating, promoting and leading student reading schemes."

School Librarian B focused on the role of promoting reading amongst students. His concerns were that if students did not develop a reading habit at an early age, it might be difficult for them to acquire a strong reading habit later in life. Conversely, School Librarian C, because of the need for strong cooperation and communication between teachers and librarians, focused more on the school librarian's role in the preparation of teaching and reference materials.

USE OF INTERLIBRARY LOAN AND OTHER PUBLIC LIBRARY RESOURCES TO SUPPORT SCHOOL TEACHING AND LEARNING NEEDS

Both School Librarians A and B said that when school libraries lacked adequate resources, a "block loan" (borrowing a batch of books for their school library) from the local public libraries was the most useful form of collaboration that provided strong support for students' project-based learning. The interview results revealed that both School Librarians A and B regarded the Hong Kong Public Libraries system as an important source of both printed and online resources, especially for students' inquiry/project-based learning for subjects such as liberal studies, healthy living, etc. When teaching large classes, multiple copies of the same title are in high demand. As a result, the block loan services offered by local public libraries ease the school libraries' financial burdens; the school libraries can avoid buying multiple copies of some titles. School Librarian C also found block loans beneficial for thematic studies and reading promotion.

Besides traditional interlibrary loans, School Librarian C also found electronic resources, such as the public library systems' Multimedia Information System that provides access to e-books, e-periodicals, and videos, very useful for teachers and students. School Librarian A had similar views and further elaborated:

> School Librarian A: *"I absolutely agree that electronic resources of public libraries can provide additional resources for schools. For example, I find the public library in each district has set up a 'regional cultural and history resources corner' (CHRC) to archive some local cultural and historical information, such as old photos and old newspapers. When students [need to] look for information [in that] area, I will propose [they] look for it first at public libraries. … Electronic books and databases are very expensive, and school libraries can hardly afford them."*

ADVANTAGES OF USING LOCAL PUBLIC LIBRARY RESOURCES, FACILITIES, AND SERVICES IN THE SCHOOL CONTEXT

During the interview, School Librarian A highlighted that the use of print and electronic resources provided by the local public libraries could undoubtedly save school libraries the expense of purchasing their own digital collections. Furthermore, digital resources allow the

same titles to be shared amongst students in different locations, regardless of whether they are accessing these titles within the school campus or from home. For example:

> School Librarian A: "I treasure the public libraries' resources provision for schools. … The public librarians select some appropriate books [and block loan to us] according to my request. … If we do not use the resources of public libraries, we simply cannot provide enough information for teachers and students. So I think the cooperation between schools and public libraries is very important."

> School Librarian B: "School libraries face budget constraints. The use of public library resources for school libraries provides a very convenient solution. Often, I just needed to provide a topic to the public libraries, and their librarians will choose the right books and block loaned [the books] to us. This greatly reduces our work, and the quality of teaching will not be affected upon resource cut at school."

PROMOTING PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICES TO STUDENTS

Successful collaboration is never a solo effort and requires the commitment of all parties. For public libraries, promotion by school librarians on their behalf serves as a boost to patrons' knowledge and usage of the public libraries' educational resources and services (Bundy 2002). For example, School Librarian C found herself as "a bridge between the stakeholders of her school and the public libraries." Through active involvement in the activities in public libraries and a strong connection to public library staff, she was able to educate her staff and students about the resources available at public libraries. School Librarians A and B elaborated further:

> School Librarian A: "I introduce the public library services to students, including [the public library system's] regulations, etc. This enables students to understand more of public libraries, and encourage them to use public libraries more with their parents and friends. I encourage students to participate in reading programs in school as well as in public libraries. I teach students to understand [how] the classification scheme in the local public libraries works, so that they can easily find books they need in public libraries. I think public libraries are promoting lifelong learning. When students leave school, public libraries will be their most common place to acquire information, and, therefore, knowing public libraries well is really important.

> "From time to time, public libraries will e-mail or mail promotion to me about their events and invite schools to participate—[events] such as Teen's Reading Club, meeting writers, seminars, etc. I encourage students to participate, and I hope that through participation in these activities, we can work together to promote students' interest in reading."

> School Librarian B: "In class, I recommend to students about public library services and resources. I also teach them the regulations and usage tips of public libraries. ... If I found [public library] activities suitable for them, I would encourage them to participate. In particular, I would recommend them to participate in 'Youth Book Club,' because students can read the same book together with others from different backgrounds and different grades. This is a very invaluable opportunity to share their reading experience. And the local public library, each year they have different themes and book recommendations. Students can read the works of different authors all together under the

scheme. The public library has set aside some participation quota for students so that they can enroll more easily."

ACTIVE COLLABORATION ACTIVITIES

To provide effective outreach and develop strong working relationships with schools, public libraries in Hong Kong hold many events. All three school librarians expressed very positive attitudes towards this kind of outreach and encouraged their students to participate in the student ambassador program described below. These events include:

Teacher Librarian Meetings – These meetings provide updates about public library services and provide opportunities for school librarians to discuss and plan for collaboration with public librarians, such as block loans, visits to public libraries, and even public librarians' visits to schools. School Librarian A opined that "this is a very good platform."

Library Student Ambassador Program – This program invites Grade 4 and 5 students to participate. Public libraries provide two days of training to the students. This experience not only provides a chance for the students to become familiar with the work of public libraries but also to learn more about information retrieval and usage. Upon completion of the training, students can serve as interns in their school libraries. Both school librarians A and B expressed the opinion that "this program is very good as students understand the operation of the public library, and also strengthen students' sense of belonging to the school library."

SUPPORT FROM SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

All three interviewees considered that their school principals fully support the work of the school library and collaborations with public libraries. School Librarian A said the principal understood that the school's library resources were limited and encouraged the school librarian to strengthen her cooperation with the nearby public library branches. With the cooperation of her principal, School Librarian A implemented a twenty-minute reading session every day to promote literacy development, which often involved books from block loans of public libraries. School Librarian B emphasized that his school principal agreed that the school library was an important resource for education and encouraged him to further cooperate with public libraries for sharing resources. In addition, School Librarian C would gather information regarding students' individual academic performance, especially in language and arts, to support the importance of the school library. With the permission of the principal, this information was used to gain support from teachers of all subjects. Thus, the school library gained more autonomy in the collaboration with public libraries. These findings are in line with the work of Lo et al. (2015) that shows how school principals' support is a vital factor in the success of school library policies.

OVERALL EXPECTATIONS IN STRENGTHENING COLLABORATION

Concerning participants' expectation of collaboration with public librarians, School Librarian A expected that collaboration could lead to expanded sharing of resources. School Librarian B hoped that public libraries could be encouraged to arrange even more activities for students.

School Librarian C expected school-public library collaboration could stimulate more and better communication between school librarians and teaching staff, thereby providing an invaluable resource for teachers looking to aid their students with educational and research goals. To support teaching staff fully, school librarians themselves should be aware of the needs of all subjects and pass on such information to public librarians.

Discussion

INTRODUCTION

In this section, we discuss our findings in the context of our research questions:

Research Question 1: What are the aspects of collaboration between the Hong Kong Public Libraries and local school librarians?

Research Question 2: What are the roles and perceptions of school librarians in their collaboration with the Hong Kong Public Libraries?

ASPECTS OF COLLABORATION

In the interviews, the three interviewees touched on the following services in the school-public libraries collaboration: (i) block loans; (ii) electronic resources; (iii) reading program; (iv) meet-the-author activities; (v) preparation for project assignment such as using the Cultural and Historical Resources Centre; (vi) student ambassador program; and (viii) teacher-librarian meetings. The above-listed services fall into two categories: collection support and outreach activities.

Collection support was in the form of public libraries' block loans to the schools and providing students with access to digital resources the schools could not afford.

Most of the collaborative activities fell squarely within the second category, outreach services, as described by Harper (2014). As two of the school librarians said that they would introduce public libraries in their library lessons while public librarians train student ambassadors to help school libraries, it appeared from this study that outreach-oriented activities are a dominant form of school-public library collaboration. This is also in line with the trend as identified by Alexandra Yarrow, Barbara Clubb, and Jennifer-Lynn Draper (2008) on the provision of culture-based activities by libraries, archives, and museums.

In terms of Abram's collaboration strategies (2011), it seemed that most of the time, school and public libraries collaborated by using simple strategies without advanced or sustainable planning. The communication or collaboration focused on the usage of public libraries materials, that is, knowing the resources in local public libraries. Educational talks such as "meet-the-author" were arranged, and schools wishing to take part had seats reserved for them. Simple strategies from public libraries that open the lines of communication can encourage every school to participate in school-public libraries collaboration. The main advantage of simple collaboration strategies are the benefits to the school communities, whether through social programs, like library internships for students, or supporting education and information literacy goals for the student community as

a whole (Jarrett, Sullivan, and Watkins 2005). However, public library services that are not tailored for a particular group of students may not necessarily address all the needs of the schools.

ROLES AND PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL LIBRARIANS IN SCHOOL-PUBLIC LIBRARY COLLABORATION

In the context of school-public library collaboration, the three interviewees shared similar views that finding additional resources outside their schools was essential to address information needs stemming from the goal to promote voluntary reading and inquiry-based learning amongst students (Lo and Chiu 2015). Furthermore, the positive impact of collaboration between schools and public libraries can foster strong research skills in individual students, nurture the curiosity of young enquiring minds, and provide motivation to take learning outside the classroom (Small, Shanahan, and Stasak 2010).

For schools, the opportunity to enhance student education without incurring significant costs remains a major advantage of collaborations with public libraries. As the focus on student education outcome has remained at the center of school-public library collaboration initiatives over the last century, School Librarian C has used students' academic performance to support library policies, including the collaboration with public libraries.

In this study, the three interviewees emphasized that they were aware of the resources of public libraries by participating in teacher-librarian meetings or maintaining contact with the public librarians.

One interesting finding about the role of school librarians in school-public library collaboration was that every one of the school librarians interviewed appeared to be the person who determined which type of collaboration happened. However, it seemed that they were just choosing among the wide range of services provided by the public libraries instead of proposing their own. This finding poses a question whether the form of collaboration was, in fact, significantly influenced by the school and its school librarian or by the public libraries.

It should be noted that although the three interviewees positively agreed collaboration was useful, their decisions on selections of services were different. School Librarian A focused on physical materials. Although School Librarian B expressed appreciation for having access to public library resources, School Librarian B emphasized fostering a climate of reading by encouraging students to participate in public libraries' book clubs and other reading-related activities. School Librarian C, though also appreciative of access to public library resources, was concerned about communication and getting information from public librarians.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study provided a glimpse into the current practices amongst three school librarians in Hong Kong. Each shared their own experiences and practices in terms of how such school-public library collaboration benefits learners or complements their own school libraries' services and collections, thereby adding value to the school libraries' services and functions to their own school libraries with no additional costs and minimal additional demands on school library staff.

Traditionally, joint-use libraries are typically successful, and perhaps the only choice for rural areas with tight budgets (Pellen and Miller 2014; Bundy 1998). However, in Hong Kong, public libraries are well-funded, professionally managed, and well-received by the public. In addition, the territory is small and densely populated, with very few remote areas. Therefore, traditional joint-use libraries are not directly applicable and not the government's policy. Due to the expertise and scale of public libraries in Hong Kong, public libraries have been taking the lead to offer services for schools, such as providing print and electronic services as required by the majority of schools (Kong et al. 2018). Because the public libraries are at better locations and open for much longer hours and on weekends, they can extend library services to teachers and students beyond what normal schools can accommodate. Yet, for the next level of tailored services for better engagement and more effective use of resources, extensive planning and consultation is required and considerable efforts should be made by both parties.

In Hong Kong school librarians continue to meet the educational needs of their schools by carefully selecting information that effectively supports teaching and learning. School librarians must continue to work proactively to source the necessary resources from public libraries and disseminate that information to students and staff. This collaboration cannot be successfully carried out if school librarians do not take active steps to liaise with public librarians, build a strong network, and keep lines of communication open. In other words, school librarians serve as a bridge between schools and public libraries in key educational initiatives.

The limitation of this study is the small sample size: only three practicing school librarians working for schools located in the Southern District of Hong Kong. No quantitative survey was carried out. Besides, amongst this small community of school-public library collaborators, very few of them agreed to take part in this interview study. Although the results cannot be used for generalizing across the practices, attitudes, and opinions amongst the school library community across the region, this study offers a glimpse of the possible methods and their inherent advantages found in collaborations between school and public libraries. We are collaborating with the Hong Kong Teacher Librarian Association to disseminate the results of this exploratory study to more school librarians. We hope that school librarians who are not already collaborating with public librarians will initiate contact with their local public libraries. We also hope that school-public library collaborations, once started, will progress from simple to more-complex collaborations such as those recommended by Abram (2011).

Secondly, findings might be geographically biased towards collaborative efforts carried out between schools and the public libraries located in a single district. The perspectives and activities described here may not be applicable to describing the collaborations between schools and public libraries in other regions, as public libraries in other districts may adopt different approaches or strategies for school-public library collaborations. However, the research reported here provides a strong basis for developing pragmatic hypotheses and designing further questionnaires in the next phase of research by other researchers and us.

Thirdly, while all three interviewees had either participated in meetings held by public librarians or directly communicated with public librarians, it will be of further research interest what factor(s), if any, influenced school librarians' selections of public library services in general.

Last but not least, though public and school libraries were recently closed during the COVID-19 pandemic, the rich electronic resources available helped students study and satisfy their information needs while sheltered at home and engaged with online learning. We are interested in studying the planning of collaboration between public and school libraries under disasters and

health alerts (Chiu et al. 2010), as well as the information needs of students under such situations.

Conclusion

To summarize, this study focused on some school-public libraries collaborations carried out by a small group of school librarians in Hong Kong. The major advantages of school-public library collaboration lie in the "win-win situation" (as highlighted by School Librarian C) achieved by both schools and public libraries. The strong establishment of the public libraries funded and management by the Hong Kong Government in terms of budget, services, and availability has been providing much support to schools. Schools can utilize traditional inter-lending resources as well as electronic resources at any time. Furthermore, school librarians help to promote public library services, resources, and activities to students and teachers, providing a boost to patron usage of public libraries. Although the three school librarians expressed some differences on the means for engaging libraries in collaboration and the role to be played by school libraries, the overall value of library school collaboration was well recognized in these three schools.

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Appendix – Interview Questions

1. How many years have you served as a teacher librarian?

2. Are you a full-time teacher librarian or do you have teaching duties in the school? If yes, how many teaching hours you are responsible for?

3. What "banding" (tier in Hong Kong) of the school and students, and what other information (such as academic/extra-curricular awards or competition results) indicate the trend of the school's achievement during the past five years? (Note: We assumed that good reading habits would be reflected in either academic or extra-curriculum activities.)

4. How important do you think school library support is to the teaching staff members and students, in terms of teaching, learning, and information and recreation needs?

5. How do you see the role of school librarian?

6. Have you explored any alternative ways to support the information needs of teaching staff and students, such as the block loan services or remote access to electronic resources of HKPL?

7. What type of public library services have you used or introduced to your students? Have you organized classes for students to help them use the public libraries' resources, both inside library or remotely from home?

8. Do you agree that both printed and electronic resources of public libraries can provide additional resources to your school library when facing the tightening budgets nowadays?

9. What's your expectation from the public libraries if collaboration occurs?

10. Does your principal support the school library as an important resource for educational activities? How do you seek your principal's support for your collaboration with public libraries?

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