TEACHING INFORMATION LITERACY THE SMMMART B WAY

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ABSTRACT

From 2004 to 2006, the teachers and librarians of 22 Quezon City Public Schools participated in the project "Building Learning Communities through Libraries" under the auspices of ILFA ALP. The project aimed to teach teachers and librarians about their roles in enabling students acquire information literacy skills. The immediate outcome expected of the project was a guide for teaching and acquiring information literacy skills that was targeted to primary and secondary school students. During the first year of the project the teachers and librarians were introduced to different information literacy models and initiatives in the region after which five teacher librarians were tasked with developing a model to be used in the 22 participating schools. The model was tested and revised several times until a final model called SMMMART B was produced. The model was presented to the teachers and librarians of the participating schools in the second year of the project. To test the applicability and effectiveness of the model, copies of the guides and posters were distributed and used in five schools. Informal interviews of teachers and librarians indicate that the guide is being used. The project recommended the production of more copies of the guide to reach a wider population of students and a follow-up study after one year to determine its impact on the students of participating schools. The survey instrument to evaluate the effectiveness of the guide will be developed by teachers and librarians in the participating schools.

Keywords: Information literacy; SMMMART B; Public School Libraries; E-Libraries; Teacher-Librarian Partnership

INTRODUCTION

In Philippine public schools, "at least 10 percent of the total public high school population or more than 1 million students are classified as non-readers" (Keh, 2003). This probably stems from the practice of mass promotion in the elementary school to accommodate the increasing student population in schools with almost a constant number of rooms and teachers.

Although the curriculum provides for developing information literate students, the inability to read, the absence of textbooks and library materials in many schools prevent students and teachers in achieving the objectives of the curriculum. In Quezon City, the Mayor, Mr. Feliciano B. "Sonny" Belmonte, Jr. embarked on a program to upgrade the collection and facilities of eleven selected school libraries (Gatpolintan 2004). The eleven libraries were equipped with computers and given substantial budgets to develop their collections. The project was dubbed "SB" E-Library to mean "Smart Builders" representing the role of the librarians as the builder of the collection and the libraries as builders of information and knowledge. (Ventura 2004).

The initiative aimed at improving the facilities, collection and staff knowledge and skills in library management. However, it failed to include in its program the training of teachers and librarians in the 'what, why, where and how' issues of information literacy (Abid 2004) and the development of reading skills. This paper describes the objectives,

activities and outcomes of the IFLA ALP project "Building Learning Communities through Libraries."

OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

The project "Building Learning Communities through Libraries" envisioned the growth of information literate communities through school libraries by teaching the children how to access and use information. It aimed to create a model that could enable teachers, librarians and parents to teach information literacy to their students/children so that they could become lifelong learners.

Specifically the project aimed:

- To develop an introductory teachers and librarians guide, and a students covering the "why, what, where and how issues" of information (Abid 2004) literacy development in school children. The guides were aimed at librarians, teachers, students, officials and staff in schools and the parents of the students.
- To test the effectiveness of the guide in the eleven selected pilot public school libraries in Quezon City.
- To measure the impact of the guide on the librarians, teachers, officials, students, and staff of the school, and parents of the students.
- To identify individuals and groups in the community willing to commit resources to the schools library.
- To promote the love for reading and lifelong learning through the use of the guide and participation of key players in the community.

Target Group

The primary beneficiaries were the librarians, teachers, officials, students, and staff of the school, and parents of the students in the 11 schools where the guide was pilot tested. The eleven schools included in the project are:

1. Esteban Abada Elementary School
2. Judge Juan Luna High School
3. E. Rodriguez High School
4. Novaliches High School
5. Rosa L. Susano-Novaliches Elementary School
6. Lagro High School
7. Juan Sumulong High School
8. Quirino High School
9. Don Alejandro Roces Science and Technology High School
10. Ramon Magsaysay (Cubao) High School
11. Doña Aurora A. Quezon Elementary School

THE PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES

The project activities comprised several phases over a two year period.

Year 1 Phase 1

A planning workshop involving selected teachers and librarians from target schools, individuals in the communities around the schools, government officials, foreign participants, and the staff of the Rizal Library, Ateneo de Manila University was held on 13-14 April 2005 to:

- identify individuals who will be involved in the development of the introductory guide
- obtain agreement to participate and commit resources
- develop common guidelines and/or tools for the development and use of the guide.
- map out a schedule of activities
- identify content, methods and strategies

The two-day workshop was attended by a total of 21 participants comprised of school principals, librarians and teachers of the 11 SB-E Schools of Quezon City, and three observers. Two lecturers gave presentations to enlighten the participants about information literacy. The lecturers were part of the working group of the *Regional Workshop on School Library Services in Southeast Asia 9-11 September 2003, Bangkok.*

The workshop presenters on 13 April 2005 were:
- Mr. James Henri, Associate Professor, Division of Information and Technology Studies, Faculty of Education, University of Hong Kong who gave a talk about "Information literacy development in school children: the why, what, where, and how" and "Understanding IFLA: a guide for beginners."
- Dr. Diljit Singh, Associate Professor, Department of Information and Library Science, Faculty of Computer Science and Information Technology, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia who gave a talk on "Information Literacy in Malaysian Schools"

On the second day of the workshop, 14 April 2005, the participants were grouped by type of school to discuss what they have learned and how they could work towards achieving the objectives of the project. Resources were committed and the schedule was mapped out. By the end of the workshop, the principals were able to present their proposals for the draft content for the "Information Literacy Guide."

Observations

It was apparent that the teachers and librarians and principals were not familiar with the nature of information literacy, their role in teaching the skill, and the importance of IL to lifelong learning. Many of the participants still equated information literacy to computer literacy. It is possible that they were so used to teaching textbook knowledge and measuring learning in terms of scores obtained from objective type tests that information literacy was never part of the learning process although the syllabus was designed to teach information literacy skills.

The major accomplishments of workshop 1 were:
- The teachers realized that information literacy is not information technology
- The teachers/librarians became aware of their role in teaching information literacy skills directly to the students and indirectly to the parents.

Year 1 Phase 2

A draft introductory teachers and librarian guide covering the "why, what, where and how issues" of information (Abid 2004) literacy development in school children was developed. The measuring instrument to determine the effectiveness of the guide as a tool in developing literacy in school children was scheduled for development but was deferred until the guide was finalized.

Two external critics, Ms. Zarah Gagatiga, high School librarian of the Xavier School and Mr. Von Totanes, fculty of the University of the Philippines School of Library and Information Science were invited to review the draft guides. The draft guide covered the following key questions (Abid 2004):

- Why? (Rationales for information literacy)
- What? (Definitions)
- Where? (Curricular and institutional locations)
- How? (Issues of pedagogy and practice)

The critics found the content of the guide acceptable but they found the format and the presentation to be too formal for a school library. They wanted a format that was easily understood and not formidable to the user. A comic format was even suggested. They recommended a complete make over of the format of the guide. They suggested making the student's guide as straight forward as possible and one that will lend itself to self-study. The writers prepared a new draft guide and the critics conducted a second review.

Observations
The teachers and the librarians were still in the lesson plan style in making the guide. They found it very difficult to make a self-learning guide. More exposure to models of Information Literacy was thus deemed necessary.

Year 1 Phase 3
A follow-up workshop involving the participants in the first workshop was conducted to introduce several IL models to the participants to guide them in their review of the IL guide prepared by the writers. The second workshop was held on 31 January, 2006.

The workshop presenters were:
- Mr. James Henri's, Associate Professor, Division of Information and Technology Studies, Faculty of Education, University of Hong Kong, who talked about the" Information Literacy Workshop in IFLA 2006 in Korea."
- Dr. Diljit Singh, Associate Professor, Department of Information and Library Science, Faculty of Computer Science and Information Technology, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, who gave a talk on "Recent Information Literacy Initiatives in South and Southeast Asia."
- Mrs. Lourdes T. David, Director, Rizal Library, Ateneo de Manila University, Quezon City, Philippines, who discussed the "8 Ws model of information literacy" and 'Mind Mapping" and its application to the Information Literacy process.

On the second day of the workshop, the teachers, principals and librarians worked on honing their IL skills by producing posters, reports, etc about their chosen topics. They were asked to use mind mapping in identifying their sub-topics and the Rizal Library in searching for information. In the afternoon, the participants presented their reports. The workshop agreed to use the 8 Ws as a model in preparing the IL guides and to make the student's guide a self-learning tool.

Observations
At the end of this workshop, it was clear that the participants already understood the meaning of Information Literacy. The exercise excited them and enabled them to use

the skills learned in identifying instances when IL could be applied inside the classroom and outside. The writers were also excited to revisit the guides that they had prepared.

Year 2 Phase 4

The student's guide was redesigned to make it into a self-learning tool. The teacher's guide was edited to provide teachers with some background information about IL and the contents of the student's guide. A poster was also produced to serve as a ready reference tool for the library users and students in the classroom. Table 1 presents the SMMMART B Model prepared by the Teachers and Librarians.

Table 1: The SMMMART B Model

STEPS	Asks yourself questions such as:	Explanation
Step 1 S--Simplify	• What am I suppose to do? • What do I know about this topic?	This step enables you to **THINK and FOCUS!** In SIMPLIFYing, consider your interests and previous knowledge about the topic to narrow down your research.
Step 2. M --Mind map	• What other ideas are associated to my topic? • How are the concepts related to one another?	This step enables you **to ORGANIZE YOUR THOUGHTS!** For this step you could make a graphical representation of your ideas. In mindmapping your write down all related ideas and link them to one another.
Step 3. M-- Make sure you check all sources of information	• What resources will answer my information need? • How and where will I locate them? • How do I record what I find?	This step enables you to **SEARCH!** After writing down the topics and ideas that are related to your topic, you can start gathering the information you need. Ask your librarian for possible sources of information and ways to cite them. When you find useful information, record the information and the source accurately.
Step 4. M--Measure Relevance	• Which of the materials I have gathered are relevant to my topic? • Which of the materials I have gathered will I use? • Are the sources reliable?	This step enables you to **EVALUATE!** After gathering information, look at them one by one and decide which ones are relevant to your topic. Likewise, evaluate the resources for reliability and credibility.
STEP 5. A--ARRANGE information into a logical sequence.	• How will I arrange the information? Logically? Chronologically?	This step enables you to **prepare an OUTLINE!** Once you have the relevant information on hand, you can put the topics together into an outline.
STEP 6. R--REWRITE report until free of errors	• Did my report follow my outline? • Have I missed/forgotten anything? • Is there a typographical error? • Is my grammar correct? • Are my references properly cited?	This step enables you to **WRITE and REWRITE** your report!This step involves putting together your ideas and information that you have gathered into a form that could be communicated to others. Make sure that what you have written is accurate, reliable, understandable and presentable.
STEP 7. T--TALK and give your report	• Am I establishing rapport and eye contact with my audience? • Is my voice loud enough? • Are my pronunciations of words correct?	This step enables you to **COMMUNICATE your ideas!** Sometimes your teacher will ask you to read or present your report orally. Sometimes, you will be asked to post it on the bulletin board. Practice at home if this is your first time to report orally in class.
STEP 8. B--BEAUTIFY, BEGIN AGAIN to make it BETTER, or your BEST	• How could I improve my report?	This step enables you to **IMPROVE** your work! After the presentation, your teacher and classmates will evaluate your report and your presentation. The evaluation will enable you to do even better next time.

Observations

A training program was planned to train teachers, and librarians on the use of the guides. However, since the guides had to be completely revised, the training did not push through. Instead the writers and editors reworked the guides into its present format—a guide designed to be a self-learning tool. As a self-learning too, training on its use became easier. The second workshop where the teachers and the librarians were made to produce their own posters and reports to simulate what is expected of the students served as the training for the teachers on IL.

It also became very difficult to convene the teachers and librarians for the training because a number of the original teachers and principals were rotated. Rotation of principals in the Quezon City Schools is a practice of the Division. It seems that the principals are rotated every five years hence the project was severely affected by this rotation. The librarians and the superintendents had to re orient the new principals to the project. In addition several librarians who were involved in the project left for the Virgin Islands and Maryland in the United States to work as school librarians at the public schools there.

In lieu of the training of the teachers, the guide was presented to a group of librarians in Vietnam as one of the possible models that they could follow in teaching IL skills. The guides were also presented in two local information literacy seminar/workshops. It was observed that the participants also equated IL with information technology. The presentation made the participants aware of the difference. They seemed interested in using the guide in their own schools and asked for copies that they can use.

An awareness raising campaign on IL seems to be in order at this juncture. It is recommended that the teachers and librarians who participated in this project be used as campaign champions for IL in the public schools.

Year 2 Phase 5

Because of the rotation of the principals, it became very difficult to bring together the former participants in the project. The problem was compounded by the departure of several librarians for Maryland and the Virgin Islands. It was planned to use the guides only in two schools, one primary school and one secondary school. Eventually however, Dr Meleda Polita, the Assistant Superintendent for the Division of City Schools in Quezon City requested that copies of the guides be distributed to seven (7) schools. Each school was given 100 student's guide, 10 teacher's/librarian's guide and two posters for the library so that more students could benefit from using the guides.

Observations

Although no quantitative data about the usefulness of the guides could be obtained at this point, the continued use of the guides could be is a good sign that they are useful. Qualitative feed back seems to indicate that the guides are useful to the target community of the project.

Many lessons were learned from the project, as indicated below:
- It was found that it is very difficult to bring teachers, principals and librarians together unless there is authorization from the division superintendent. This required time and effort.

- It was also found that enough lead time was needed to pull together resources for the project. For example before the project could finally take off, several preliminary meetings with the superintendents, librarians, teachers and principals had to be held. The problem stems from the bureaucratic nature of the public school system in the country.
- It was noted that in general, educators and librarians see information literacy as information technology. The project became an awareness raising campaign for IL.

CONCLUSION

Of the several results expected from this project only the two guides, a teachers guide and a students guide covering the 'why, what, where and how' issues of information (Abid 2004) literacy development in school children and one poster were realized. The guides are currently being used in seven (7) of the eleven (11) SB-E schools of Quezon City. Preliminary qualitative feedbacks from the initial two participating schools indicate that the guides are useful.

The measuring instrument to determine the effectiveness of the guide as a tool in developing literacy in school children has not been developed because the superintendent felt that more time was needed before the measurable impact of the guides could be determined. It was however apparent that the involvement of the teachers and the librarians in the project has led to a closer partnership between them in assigning students library research activities and preparing reports.

Although there was no quantitative tool developed to measure the impact of the guide on the librarians, teachers, officials, students, and staff of the school, and parents of the students, qualitative impact through good feedback were obtained from the students, teachers, principals and librarians. The project has definitely created long term impact on the teachers, principals and the librarians of the participating schools. The continued use of the guides could be considered a manifestation of this impact. The project has also led to the holding of and call for seminars on information literacy skills by teacher associations, library associations and information providers.

The objective to identify individuals and groups in the community willing to commit resources to the schools library are yet to be identified. Support from the mayor is however ongoing and includes not only support in terms of books and equipment but also training for the librarians, teachers and principals. The project suffered a lot from the departure of many teachers and librarians for the Virgin Island, Maryland and other countries. The economic environment in the country is no longer attractive for many of our public school teachers and librarians.

The promotion of the love for reading and lifelong learning through the use of the guide and participation of key players in the community have yet to be measured. It is too soon to say that indeed the guides were useful in this aspect. It could be said however that the project and guides enabled the stakeholders to understand the meaning of information literacy is and its role in life long learning. In the beginning almost everyone equated information literacy to information technology.

By the end of the project all the participants were made aware that information literacy refers to:

- ..."an understanding and set of abilities enabling individuals to 'recognise when information is needed and have the capacity to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information," (ALA 1989)
- The ability to identify, locate, evaluate, organise, and effectively create, use and communicate information to address an issue or a problem," (Wijetunge and Alahakoon 2005).

RECOMMENDATIONS

- An information literacy awareness raising campaign should be a follow-up project to this project. The response of the participants was encouraging and should be sustained.
- No quantitative instrument was developed at this time because it was felt that the acquisition of information literacy skills is a process that could not be measured in terms of a short exposure to a guide. It will take some time before a person can become information literate. In addition, the Society of College, National and University Libraries (SCONUL 1999) in the United Kingdom, state that "many individuals only develop basic library and technology skills and fail to become information literate. Such individuals can only "recognise information need, distinguish ways of addressing the gap, construct strategies for locating information, and locate and access information. They have not learned to compare and evaluate information, organise, apply and communicate information and synthesise and create information." It is therefore recommended Instead of developing an instrument now, focus should be on using the guide. A longitudinal study on its impact could be done later on.
- The guides should be introduced to other schools and libraries in the country and its use encouraged. In this regard, it would be useful if a workshop on the use of the guide for teachers and librarians in other schools could be held. The guides should be translated into the vernacular as needed.
- Since the response of the participants in the awareness raising campaign on IL held in Vietnam was encouraging, IL workshops could also be held in their countries using the guides as resource materials that they could adapt to their own situation. The participants came from a number of Southeast Asian countries.
- It is further recommended that IL seminars and workshops be held in the Philippines so that the awareness of teachers and librarians about the importance of information literacy to lifelong learning could be enhanced and maintained. A follow-up workshop has been held on July 24-25, 2008 for more than 50 participants from 22 schools.

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