
Under-Resourced, Inadequately Staffed, and Little Used: Some Issues Facing Many School Libraries, Seen through the Lens of an Exploration of the Situation in Iraq

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses why many school libraries may not have been seen as an essential element of education, and supported and used accordingly. It reviews the international agencies' advice and encouragement for the development of literacy, education, and school libraries, particularly that focused on the Arab world, and considers the provision of school libraries within the context of a country's economic, political, and social circumstances, with Iraq as a particular focus. From this evidence, it discusses the reasons why school libraries remained underfunded, inadequately staffed, and little used, and what appears to be needed to transform the perception of their contribution to a country's development, briefly reexamining the interactions between the education system and the training required by all the personnel involved in the development of a reading culture, the role of book publishing and new information media, and the place of information literacy within the curriculum. Finally, it draws some conclusions about issues in mobilizing support for development, and points to the lack of a focused and coordinated effort by the relevant international agencies. The paper draws on a wider case study of the development of librarianship and information management in Iraq, which is expected to be published shortly.

INTRODUCTION

"I will not follow where the path may lead, but I will go where there is no path and I will leave a trail."

—Muriel Strode [Lieberman]¹

Despite the claims made by librarians for school libraries' contribution to development, they seem to attract only token support from teachers and educational administrators in many parts of the world, and often remain, at best, underfunded, inadequately staffed, and little used. This deplorable situation is evident in many wealthy, industrialized countries with otherwise well-developed library and information services, as much as in countries that are generally less well-developed. Among the latter, Iraq provides an example on which this paper has chosen to focus. Iraq was formed from three provinces of the Ottoman Empire when that was dissolved after World War I, and became an independent state in 1932. From the middle of the twentieth century, rapid growth in the state's oil-based income facilitated substantial investment in education. However, heavy investment in education appears to have made little significant difference to the state of the country's school libraries. This paper seeks to shed fresh light on some of the underlying issues to explain why this archetypal situation occurred and has persisted. To that end, it aims to examine the development of the school education system and school libraries in Iraq, taking account of the levels of literacy in the country, the state of its publishing industry, the provision of public libraries for children, the context provided by the national economy, politics and social change, and the role played by the relevant international governmental and nongovernmental agencies (NGOs). From the available evidence it seeks to explain why Iraq's school libraries have generally remained inert depositories, and discusses some implications for the development of school libraries internationally.

EARLY SCHOOL LIBRARIES IN IRAQ

There is a long history of libraries associated with educational institutions in Iraq, beginning in the *edubbas*, the schools for cuneiform scribes that began to be established in the second millennium BCE, and continued, from the advent of Islam, by the libraries that grew alongside mosques, together with the schools known as *kuttabs* where students were instructed in memorizing the Qur'an. Writing, arithmetic, and other subjects were also taught in some *kuttabs*. In the *madrasas*, which were centers of higher learning that began to be founded in the ninth century CE before printing made books more readily available, the teachers generally knew their own works by heart and sometimes had to dictate the text of a lecture. However, the teachers often sought to check that their students had followed and understood their arguments, while students were permitted to ask questions, discuss what they had learned, and, if they had evidence to support their opinion, to challenge the teachers (Bukhsh, 1927; Hitti, 1956; Sibai, 1987). Indeed, a teacher's knowledge and ability to answer questions were among the tests of competence (Hell, 1926).

After several hundred years of stagnation, the Ottoman administration finally recognized, in the middle of the nineteenth century, that improve-

ments were needed in the education system to supply the literate and numerate staff required for an effective imperial bureaucracy and thus began to establish schools throughout the empire. At least one of these schools, in Samarra in Iraq, was given a library (Al-Badry, 1964). At the same time, schools were being founded by monastic orders long resident in Iraq, especially the Dominicans, by other Christian and Jewish community groups, and by foreign missionaries. Libraries are known to have been established in some of them; for example, in the "School of High Hope" founded in Basra by missionaries from the American Dutch Reformed Church in 1912 (Van Ess, 1974), and in "Baghdad College," a secondary school founded by American Jesuits in 1932.

It was in schools such as these that the children of the Iraqi elite would probably have had their first experience of "modern" library service. For example, the library installed in Baghdad College within a few months of its founding, "(with all books arriving as donations) became the best of its kind in Baghdad. . . . The boys were surprised to learn that they could actually take home to read whatever book they wanted, free of charge" (MacDonnell, 1994, 27). Throughout the school's existence the library was managed by one or more Jesuit teacher-librarians, although only one of them ever held a degree in library science (R. J. Coté, personal communication, February 2, 2014). Educational administrators and teachers from other schools regularly visited the college, including its library, to find ideas they could use, but this seems to have made little impact on provision elsewhere. In the state schools, in 1944 the Ministry of Education's budget for all its school libraries was only 6,000 Iraqi dinars (ID), compared with ID100,000 for textbooks. Unsurprisingly, in the late 1940s, school libraries in Iraq were still small and little used; only the old, established schools might have as many as a thousand books (Matthews & Akrawi, 1949).

STATE EDUCATION IN IRAQ IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

The embryonic education system established by the Ottomans in Iraq was said to have been trashed during the Mesopotamia campaign in World War I, allegedly by Turkish troops as they retreated from the advancing British army (Bell, 1920), although the attribution of responsibility may be open to interpretation. Many of the troops in the Ottoman army were Arabs, and the schools had been unpopular with the civilian population because teaching was in Turkish rather than Arabic. When the state education system began to be rebuilt in the former Ottoman provinces in Mesopotamia that were gradually occupied and administered by the British beginning in 1914, Arabic was introduced as the principal language of instruction. Teachers and books were in short supply. Books had to be imported from Egypt until the local publishing industry was able to meet

demand, which included textbooks in Kurdish for schools in the north. In 1919 the British authorities issued a standard syllabus for the state schools, which repeatedly emphasized that students must demonstrate that they understood the meaning of what they had read (Diskin, 1971).

Under a Mandate granted by the League of Nations in 1921, the British authorities were required to supervise the development of the government system in the newly designated state of Iraq. By 1923, in keeping with the aims of the Mandate and to reduce the costs of its administration, the British had transferred responsibility for the Ministry of Education's policy decisions and operational management entirely to Iraqis (Iraq, Educational Inquiry Commission, 1932). Sati Al-Husri, the first Iraqi director general of education, apparently favored independent learning methods (Bashkin, 2009), but seems to have given little encouragement to developing new approaches to pedagogy or providing the necessary learning resources. Teaching methods in primary and secondary schools were based heavily on memorization of the contents of textbooks and the teachers' presentations. School teachers were trained in the second of the two three-year stages of secondary education and could only function in the same way as their predecessors. The country was poor and its development had to be funded from its own resources because it was not until 1929 that the British Parliament first authorized any expenditure on development assistance for its colonies and protectorates. Nonetheless, during the mandate some three-hundred primary and fifteen secondary schools were opened. A Teacher Training College was established in the 1920s, but the growth of education created a shortage of books in the schools, and because of this the college felt obliged to provide teachers with enough knowledge to last them for the duration of their career. This reinforced the belief that teaching was a mechanical process (UK Colonial Office, 1931). Although the teacher-training system did produce some teachers whose approach to their students was said to be more engaging than that of the imams in the *kuttabs* (Conway, 1927), concerns about the quality of teaching and learning and the limited use of the state's school libraries continued to be expressed by British advisers to the ministry, who commented in 1929 that "every school has a library of reference books and, in the secondary and higher schools, these libraries are provided in addition with modern Arabic books and Arabic periodicals. But Arabic literature is an unexplored country to the students, and also, it is to be feared, to many of the teachers" (Jarman, 1992, n.p.).

In 1932 a small group of American professors was invited to review the country's education system. The group was led by Paul Monroe, director of the International Institute of Teachers College, Columbia University, where a number of the Iraqi Ministry of Education's senior officials had studied. This Educational Inquiry Commission was particularly forthright on the need for school libraries:

Several subsidiary aspects of secondary education need emphasis. There is a great need for increased library facilities. Such library matter should include supplementary reading matter on all subjects, a variety of textbooks in the various subjects both in English and Arabic, and general literary material. At several points in this report, we have commented on the futility of teaching people to read when there is nothing to read. We believe that the introduction of libraries into secondary schools would do much to remedy this in the communities where they are established. (Iraq, Educational Inquiry Commission, 1932, n.p.)

These concerns seem to have been ignored, perhaps because of political struggles within the ministry and government (Simon, 2004). During the period of Hashemite rule (1932–1958), the government of the kingdom generally proved ill-equipped to govern and lacked stability, with the membership of the cabinet of ministers changing frequently.

Compulsory education was introduced in 1940, offering six years of schooling, but only wherever the facilities were available. A semi-independent development board controlled the expenditure of most of the state's oil income, from which it supported *inter alia* the construction of 100–150 new schools each year. Enrollments expanded rapidly but still accounted for only a third of the relevant age group in a growing child population and stretched the country's ability to meet the demand for teachers. Accordingly, the government began to recruit Egyptian and Palestinian teachers, many of whom, according to British academics then working in the country, preferring an authoritarian pedagogy that discouraged students from asking questions (Penrose & Penrose, 1978).

THE EVOLUTION OF INTERNATIONAL INTEREST IN SCHOOL LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT

The International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) was established in 1927—the same year that an intergovernmental body engaged with the field for the first time. A Comité d'Experts Bibliothécaires was asked to identify the problems in the library field by the Subcommittee for Science and Bibliography, which had been established by the League of Nations's Commission on Intellectual Cooperation (Rossi, 1935). Discussions in the early 1930s of the responses (mainly from Europe) to a survey of professional education that had been suggested by the comité and carried out for the commission by the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation (IIIC) pointed among other things to the need for school librarians to have a good understanding of teaching methods (IIIC, 1935).

The International Bureau of Education (IBE), founded in 1925 as a private body, became an intergovernmental agency in 1929. During its first few years the publications of the bureau discussed children's literature and the organization and use of school libraries (IBE, 1932, 1940). However, perhaps because of the state of the global economy and partly because

IIC and IBE could only try to influence matters that were controlled by their member states, and with little funding to support independent activities, no action had been taken on either organization's studies before war intervened.

UNESCO AND THE ARAB WORLD

The UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) involvement in the Arab world began, in the aftermath of the Arab-Israeli conflict in 1948, in the provision of educational facilities for Palestinian refugees. The work was taken over by the United Nations Relief and Welfare Agency (UNRWA) in 1950 (Sheniti, 1965). By the late 1980s almost 100 percent of the UNRWA schools for Palestinians had a library and a teacher-librarian (Fasheh, 1991).

UNESCO's first involvement with school libraries in the Arab world began following the establishment, in December 1952, of the Arab States Fundamental Education Training and Production Centre (ASFEC), based in Egypt. This provided a twenty-one-month program to train fieldworkers to support rural welfare and community-development projects in which library provision was seen as an essential corollary of literacy development. By the end of 1958 ASFEC had established projects, including small public libraries in fourteen or more villages in its vicinity. Neighboring schools were also encouraged to permit public access to their collections of books; such collections were given to selected secondary schools, and training was provided for nominated teacher-librarians (Williams, D. G., 1954b). To support a training program in librarianship for interested trainees from projects in other Arab states, a manual in Arabic on the organization of small public and school libraries was produced ("ASFEC Library Activities," 1954).

When UNESCO was created after World War II, the information available on libraries in the Arab world was so limited that it was difficult for the organization to make any plans for their development (Thompson, 1954). It also struggled to recognize the Arab world as an entity, initially inviting the Arabic-speaking member states to nominate participants in activities intended either for states in the African continent or for those east of the Suez Canal. However, UNESCO was pointedly reminded about the linguistic and cultural differences in the member states in the different regions of Africa by the participants in its "Seminar on Public Libraries in Africa" in 1953 (Williams, D. G., 1954a). Eventually this led to UNESCO organizing its first international seminar for librarians from all Arabic-speaking states, which took place in Beirut in 1959. There, the need for school libraries to be developed was explained as a firm foundation on which to build a wider library system and status for librarians. The participants in the Beirut meeting made detailed comments and recommendations about the role of school libraries and the training of teacher librarians, but

these were largely omitted from the published final summary report sent to member states, probably because it was common practice for UNESCO headquarters to edit reports to reduce the likelihood of requests for assistance that stood little chance of being approved because they were not part of UNESCO's agreed aims (UNESCO, 1959, 1960).

The initial agenda of UNESCO's Department of Libraries—heavily influenced by its legacy from the League of Nations' activities and the intervention of the American Library Association—paid no attention to school libraries, although the department was subsequently continually reminded of the need to support school library development by delegates to the international seminars it organized. It was UNESCO experts working in the education field in various countries who first acknowledged that acquiring the habit of reading and the ability to use books for enjoyment and information were likely to be of lasting benefit. These experts helped to plan and organize school libraries and train teacher-librarians, notably as part of UNESCO's "Major Project for the Extension of Primary Education in Latin America," implemented between 1957 and 1965, which called for the establishment of pilot primary school libraries and for assistance in the improvement of existing school library services. This seems to have finally prompted UNESCO's libraries department to include the promotion of school libraries among the priority objectives of its development program, and to commission its first publication specifically about school libraries (Douglas, 1961). However, in the 1960s, because the UN had encouraged its agencies to focus on economic development, UNESCO placed more emphasis on support for special libraries. Nonetheless, it has subsequently facilitated school library development in Jordan and a few other countries (Sheniti, 1965).

INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF LITERACY

Literacy development attracts support from bodies like the World Bank and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, as well as most bilateral government development agencies, and has been a focus of UNESCO activities since its inception. It remains a major activity for UNESCO's education sector, which supports the promotion of literate environments as a foundation for cohesive societies and sustainable development. UNESCO convened its first Arab regional conference on the planning and organizing of literacy programs in Cairo in 1964. Although no librarian was present, delegates supported the use of teaching methods that stimulated learners' interest in the subject, showed an appreciation of the need for new literates to be provided with suitable reading materials, and encouraged governments to provide reading rooms (UNESCO, 1965). However, seemingly no librarians were invited to participate in another UNESCO meeting in 1968 regarding literacy materials in the Arab

world. The report on the latter meeting shows no awareness of the potential role of libraries as an agency for making supportive reading material available (UNESCO, 1968).

The IFLA began to engage with literacy development in 1989, organizing a preconference on illiteracy and public libraries with support from UNESCO's Programme General d'Information (PGI). In 1994 a new IFLA core program for literacy and reading promotion was proposed, but rejected on financial and organizational grounds. Instead, a working group was created to study the feasibility of a major IFLA initiative to support literacy program in libraries. The IFLA Section on Literacy and Reading was established in 1995 as the Round Table on Reading Research, became the Section on Reading in 1996, and adopted its present name in 2007. It now provides a focal point for the promotion of reading and literacy in libraries, and the integration of reading research and reading-development activities into library services. It claims to work in cooperation with a number of other international bodies, including the International Literacy Association (ILA) and the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) (Cole, 2011).

The ILA, formerly known as the International Reading Association (IRA), was founded in 1955–1956 and changed its name in 2015 (which the IFLA section's webpage had not acknowledged six months later). It does not enjoy the same level of formal recognition by UNESCO as IFLA, having been granted only consultative status with the Education and Culture sectors. However, it has some seventy-thousand members in over a hundred countries, through whom it advocates for literacy development, both preschool and in the school curriculum, and promotes the contribution of independent reading to learning development. It has produced a position statement supporting the development of both classroom and school libraries (IRA, 1999), but its guidelines for the performance standards that might be expected of professionals working in the field do not acknowledge the role of the teacher-librarian nor the school librarian (IRA, 2010; ILA, 2015), which casts some doubt on the IFLA section's claim of cooperation between the two associations.

LITERACY AND EDUCATION IN IRAQ

Little improvement in the overall literacy rate in Iraq had been achieved by the middle of the twentieth century. In 1957 only 11 percent of the total population of Iraq was literate (*International Literary Market Place*, 1983). Recognition of the connection between education and national development began to lead to a belated appreciation in Iraq and other developing countries of the need for investment in the development of their human capital (Al-Rahim, 1978). Successive Iraqi governments recognized the need to improve literacy rates, and that one of the first tasks of schools is to develop basic literacy in their students. When Iraq hosted the

1966 meeting in ALECSO's "Alexandria" series of conferences on literacy, it claimed that its literacy rate among children of school age had reached around 76 percent by 1965.

While UNESCO's support for literacy development in education at all levels was steadfast, it consistently failed to identify a role that library services could play and to actively encourage support for them. For example, discussions at the Third Regional Conference of Ministers of Education and Ministers responsible for economic planning in the Arab states in 1970 reflected the continuing emphasis on the use of textbooks and made no mention of independent reading or libraries (El-Ghannam, 1971). Eventually, an appreciation of libraries' role in supporting literacy development did establish itself in official thinking, but was confined to public libraries, perhaps understandably in the changing circumstances (Krolak, 2005). As the government in Iraq and other Arab states moved closer toward achieving comprehensive availability of school education, the attention of literacy developers turned to the ongoing problem of adult illiteracy.

PUBLIC CHILDREN'S LIBRARIES IN IRAQ

Public children's libraries can provide an alternative or supplementary source of reading material for young people when school library provision is limited. In Iraq the first public libraries were established during the British Mandate, and then by the Iraqi government. As a result, public libraries were to be found in major cities in the country in the 1930s (Al-Werdi, 1983), earlier than in most other Arab countries. After 1948 the public library provision was extended across the entire country, with the establishment of a central library and branches in each of the *Liwas* (provinces) (Al-Amin, 1970). Initially, most were small; they were also little used partly because of the low level of literacy, but also perhaps because the collections were of limited interest, being dependent on the output of the Arabic-language publishing industry. This particularly hindered provision for children.

The first reported development aimed at children took place only in 1958 when an annex was added to the Mosul Public Library to provide space for a children's room, among other things (Chilmeran, 1962). Des Raj Kalia, an Indian librarian who worked in Iraq as a consultant for UNESCO on several occasions, claimed to have subsequently persuaded the authorities in many *Liwas* to open children's libraries (Kalia, 1960). Perhaps reflecting the need to reinforce the literacy of a growing population of young people, a specialized children's library was founded in Baghdad in the mid-1960s, built with the assistance of the Gulbenkian Foundation as part of a center for young people between ages 5–14 (Zado, 1990). The then prime minister, who had been a school teacher, was said to have been personally interested in the project, and several international agencies are reported to have donated quantities of books.

Otherwise, the international agencies seem to have made little effort in this direction, which appears at odds with their aim to promote the use of the English language and win the support of future influential citizens. In the late 1950s the British Council librarian in Baghdad attempted to encourage reading by children, but had to rely upon donated books to provide a collection suitable for their use. In the early 1970s, U.S. Information Service (USIS) libraries ceased to provide children's books (Hausrath, 1981).

PUBLISHING IN IRAQ

Development of both school libraries and public libraries for children was hindered by the limited output of the Arabic-language publishing industry. In a comment regrettably buried in a section of its report devoted to textbooks, the Monroe Commission recommended, "Much supplementary material needs to be prepared. No great purpose is served in teaching children to read, if they do not read. If there is no material of interest available, the skill in reading is soon lost. . . . The entire reading textbook material . . . is far too meager material with which to train a child to read" (Iraq, Educational Inquiry Commission, 1932, n.p.). These worthy aims failed to reflect the state of the Iraqi publishing industry, whose growth was inhibited by the small number of people who were both literate and sufficiently affluent to purchase books. Between 1920 and 1945 only 1,904 titles in toto were published in Iraq (Adwan, 1984).

In the 1930s the Ministry of Education became an important publisher through its employment of factual and creative writers for its textbooks and other publications (Bashkin, 2009). However, the presentation remained largely factual, with little to stimulate interest or thinking; the physical format was also poor and unappealing (Akrawi, 1942). During the 1940s the ministry's budget continued to include funds for buying books for school libraries, but these were dwarfed by its expenditure on printing the millions of copies of textbooks that were distributed to schools. In the period immediately after World War II, the local publishing industry was becoming more established, but its output remained limited, totaling only 3,204 titles between 1946 and 1957 (Adwan, 1984). Printing presses in Iraq produced mainly government-sponsored publications; other books were printed only at the author's expense (Longrigg, 1953). In the early 1950s there was no local publishing for children other than the still unattractive textbooks (Stone, 1953).

The first of many attempts to improve the regional book trade to offset the low national production of books in each of the Arab states was made at a conference organized by the League of Arab States in Damascus in 1957, but even today these efforts have had only a limited impact because of continuing poor bibliographic services and import restrictions imposed for political or fiscal reasons. Even so, the number of children's books

available throughout the Arab world is small. Tunisia, for example, today publishes only 150–200 children’s books annually, and prices remain high in relation to incomes (Galli, 2016).

Foreign aid agencies made token gestures toward improving the supply of books for young people. In 1955–1956 USIS provided two-hundred secondary school libraries with American books, translated into Arabic. The collections, each approximately 120 volumes, were presented in “a self-standing, modernistic book-case” (U.S. Department of State, 1960). In the 1960s, Soviet foreign-language publishing included a small number of books in Arabic for children: those for younger children usually told a simple moral tale, while those for older ones carried a propaganda message (U.S. Information Agency, 1965). The American books provided by USIS would probably not have escaped similar descriptions.

EDUCATION IN IRAQ IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

According to the Iraqi Ministry of Education, by 1964–1965, enrollments increased in primary schools by 300 percent, and in secondary schools by 400 percent (Iraqi educational statistics, cited in Srivastava [1969]). By the late 1960s, Iraq had come close to achieving the necessary complement of trained school teachers (Akrawi & El-Koussy, 1971). Nonetheless, a shortage of school buildings resulted in cohorts of children sharing school premises (Al-Dahwi, 1977), no doubt placing a premium on the availability of space for activities other than teaching. A later commentator remarked: “The emphasis on quantitative expansion of education was surely a major success for the republican regime . . . but has obstructed the emphasis on the quality of that education” (Saef, 1986, p. 222).

Compulsory primary education for all children from age 6 up to age 12 was reconfirmed in 1976 as a goal to be implemented during 1978–1979; however, progress was slow, and it was not expected to be achieved until 1980–1981 (Mossa, 1979). Secondary education for three or six years remained optional, and only about 25 percent of primary school students continued to the secondary level (UNESCO, 1984). However, sometime before 1970, in order to improve the quality of teacher training, the training of primary teachers as part of the second phase of secondary education had been discontinued (Taylor, Brain, Baritsch, & Chorlton, 1970).

The war with Iran that dragged on through most of the 1980s had serious consequences for Iraq’s economy, social infrastructure, and human resources. The country started the 1980s better equipped than most other Arab countries, but then government expenditure on education began to decline and school attendance was affected by shortages of staff, especially at the secondary level. A study of teacher training in Iraq, undertaken around the time of the end of the war, identified major limitations: first, in its organization, content, and structure; and second, in the use and under-

standing of the possibilities of educational media (Ridha, 1990). This was rendered irrelevant following the UN's embargo on exports to Iraq following its invasion of Kuwait in 1990. The sanctions caused further shortages of educational materials and equipment. Enrollment rates declined, children dropped out because of their families' economic circumstances, and literacy levels dropped.

SCHOOL LIBRARIES IN IRAQ IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

It was reported that at the end of the 1950s all schools in Iraq had small libraries ("Library Services in Arabic-Speaking States," 1960). However, there was not a properly run school library in all of Iraq, according to Kalia (1960). According to an assistant librarian at Baghdad College, there was no library room in state primary schools. Books were kept in cupboards in the head teachers' rooms. Schools were not allocated funds for acquisitions. The "teacher-librarians" had no special training, and they were granted no relief from teaching for their extra duties as librarians. Secondary schools were a little better; they usually had a room with a few places for reading and set times for the circulation of books (Chilmeran, 1962).

Consultants employed by UNESCO (and other agencies) continually attempted to foster interest in the role of school libraries. For example, a U.S. educational consultant proposed that the Ministry of Education establish a school libraries advisory committee (Tidwell, 1957). A British consultant, working for UNESCO on a general program of library development, conducted two seminars for teacher librarians, supporting it by preparing a textbook of library practice for schools that was later adopted and published by the ministry. He also advocated improvements in the staff in school libraries and in the Ministry (Bonny, 1958, 1959).

The Iraqi government had, however, clearly been persuaded of the need for action, but this seems to have not been grasped or reported to Paris by the UNESCO resident in Iraq, and UNESCO probably did little to help when in 1958 it rejected a request by the Iraqi authorities for a fellowship to study school librarianship (UNESCO, 1958). The ministry was reorganized in 1958, creating a new post of director of school and public libraries. Moreover, the ministry was sufficiently interested in the state of its school libraries that it issued regulations in the same year, outlining precisely how it expected them to operate and the role of each school's library committee. All this was to be monitored by a team of specialists. It also prescribed that, in those schools that had a library room, the timetable should be arranged to ensure that all students spent an hour each week in the library; students' families were expected to make a small "voluntary" payment for use of the library. The manual for teacher-librarians, based on the one written by Bonny in 1959, was distributed to all schools, but the teacher-librarians could not make effective use of it (Chilmeran, 1962).

Kalia (1960) claimed to have persuaded the Ministry of Education to fund two model school libraries in Baghdad, and to centralize both the acquisitions and processing of school library books for the entire country. Kent and Haidar (1962) reported that on average, each school library had received 950 books during an eighteen-month period. In a draft report on the first of several missions to Iraq, Srivastava (1968) reported that in 1965, official statistics claimed that there were 3,204 primary school libraries, with 733,000 volumes serving 253,000 students; and 395 secondary school libraries, with 591,000 volumes serving 111,000 students.² It seems likely, however, that the "library" collections were little more than multiple copies of textbooks.

The scale of library development that appeared to gather pace in Iraq during the 1960s was principally manifested in new premises—token gestures toward modernization that disguised the lack of appreciation of what was needed to develop effective services, stemming from a severe shortage of professionally qualified librarians to plan and manage operations. Throughout the decade, however, a number of Iraqis began to be identified as contemporary or future leaders in the professional development of librarianship. One who can be singled out for his efforts was Nihad Abdul Majid (Nassiri), the first director of school and public libraries, for whom both UNESCO and the British Council provided assistance and motivation. He clearly made some substantial efforts, not only in improving the quality of school libraries and raising their visibility by his 1963 book on school librarianship (Majid, cited in Vann and Seely [1965]), but also in gaining support for formal education and training for the school librarians for whom his directorate was responsible. A U.S. consultant, although visiting Iraq to review the potential involvement of the Ford Foundation in Baghdad University's libraries, noted: "The Minister of Education is especially interested in doing something about school libraries. I have suggested . . . the possibility of having enough courses offered in the Higher Teachers College to produce a supply of teacher librarians" (Dix, 1958, n.p.).

At the end of the decade, libraries in secondary schools, although better than those in primary schools, were still inadequate according to Iraqi educationalists (Akrawi & El-Koussy, 1971). However, substantial steps were taken during the 1970s to improve matters. In 1974 a revised School Library Act (Law no. 54) was promulgated requiring that a library be established in every primary and secondary school and vocational and teachers' training school and institute. The main school library was to support classroom libraries; in each school it was now expected that there should be a library committee of teachers and students to oversee its operation (El Kassim & Nabham, 1977).

The Ministry of Education's Department of Books and School Libraries aimed to provide about one book per student in the primary schools, and

two books per student in the secondary schools (Al-Kindilchie, 1977). As a matter of policy, no books were placed in schools until a separate room was made available for them. However, the definition of what constituted a *school library* was clearly open to debate. Al-Amin (1970) reported that all secondary schools had libraries of varying sizes, but they were ignored by teachers, and students did not have the time to use them. Only a few experimental primary schools had small libraries, and even these apparently did not provide good service.

A review of intermediate schools' libraries that appears to have been undertaken for the Ministry of Education during the mid-1970s reported that teachers and students were still focused on the use of textbooks; that the pedagogical system did not encourage independent study; and that most school libraries were poorly organized (Al-Timimi, 1976). At about the same time, a critical study of the state of school libraries in the Basra *Liwa*, presented at a conference in 1975, argued that the condition of school libraries could not be improved without significant changes in the educational system giving them an active and effective role (Al-Shawk, 1976). Zado (1979) confirmed that the system of education offered no incentives for students to seek out information; moreover, she commented that libraries gave no encouragement to students, and that there was no basic training for students in the use of libraries.

A later report noted that the Department of Books and School Libraries was part of the ministry's Directorate of Curriculum and Educational Media (Razik & Willis, 1978). This seems to have provided a medium for at least potentially facilitating the integration of school libraries into the development of curricula and pedagogy. However, the law made the department, and a Central Committee on School Libraries comprising mainly high-level ministry officials, responsible only for

- promoting school library service;
- supervising, coordinating, following up, and reporting on school library activities;
- maintaining records of book collections and their numbers of readers; and
- organizing training courses for school librarians.

In addition to the central committee, there was a school library committee in the Directorate of Education in each *Liwa* (Al-Abdulla & Kanaan, 1981). However, Al-Werdi's opinion (1983) was that these committees were generally ineffective and contributed very little to the development of the school library service. He attributed this to a limited understanding of the planning and development of school libraries among the majority of committee members.

The Ministry of Education issued and circulated a number of special regulations about the organization and maintenance of school libraries, emphasizing the importance of the school library and the need for

adequate reading material in the class libraries to support the school program. The ministry's regulations emphasized that the library should provide adequate materials to support and enrich the school program. However, books that were selected and purchased centrally by the ministry or by the directorate of the local *Liwa* and supplied to school libraries at infrequent intervals rarely had any relevance to schools' educational programs or students' intellectual abilities (Zado, 1990). On only very few occasions were school librarians involved in purchasing books to meet teachers' requests (Al-Werdi, 1983). The ministry's guidance stated that students must be introduced to their school library, must be taught how to use the library catalog, and must be able to borrow books for reading at home (Al-Abdulla and Kanaan [1981], cited in Al-Werdi [1983]). Few of these recommendations seem to have been put into practice.

During the 1980s, although the publishing industry in Iraq contracted as the state budget was increasingly consumed by the war with Iran, there was a weekly magazine for children, called *Majalati*, and another for teenagers, called *Al-Mezmar*, and a series of popular children's books was also published, but otherwise children's books and magazines generally had to be imported from other Arab countries (Zado, 1990). This situation should come as no surprise. It has been many years since it was explained by Lorenz in 1962 that the shortage of books in vernacular languages in developing countries was partly a consequence of the absence of the basic market for the distribution of publications for which libraries' purchases would have provided the foundation, and it is clear that school and children's libraries were not strongly established in Iraq.

The Ministry of Education claimed that its aim was for school buildings to reflect modern education, but Saef (1986) reported that the school "library" was still typically accommodated on closed shelves in a room designed as a classroom or else in a hall. The adoption of the Instructional Resource Centre (IRC) concept in a school was expected to change the role of the librarian from being a guardian of resources, to facilitating access to resources. Mossa (1979) reported that the first IRC was provided for a technical secondary school in Baghdad during 1955–1956 by USAid, probably through an assistance project undertaken by Bradley University (Kermani, 1958). Further IRCs had been founded in the 1950s and 1960s with the help of foreign experts, and by the end of the 1970s there were nineteen scattered throughout the country. However, they received little attention until the 1970s when the government began to experiment with new approaches to try to raise the quality of education. The facilities of the IRCs were generally limited, and most functioned only as media storage centers. In 1981 three meetings on the development of school and university libraries were held in Baghdad by the National Union of Iraqi Students (1981), the Iraqi Teachers Union (1981), and the Ministry of Education (1981a, 1981b). The origins, aims, and outcomes of these meetings are

not known; however, it seems that the ministry subsequently established a working group to consider how to develop school libraries.³ This may have led the ministry to start, in 1984–1985, a project to develop school libraries throughout the country, and some thirty-five had been converted to multimedia resource centers by the end of the decade (Al-Kindilchie, 1994).

DEVELOPING STAFF FOR SCHOOL LIBRARIES IN IRAQ

Following Bonny's short training courses (1958), one of the first activities of the new director of school and public libraries was to initiate and organize a study program for teacher librarians. Eighty-one students in the second stage of secondary school were taught some library science subjects, as well as others—probably the same ones taught to students intending to become teachers (Chilmeran, 1962; Srivastava, 1969). This "Educational Course for Librarians" was a three-month program, with eight or nine modules, including "History of Libraries," "Classification," and "Procedures," as well as more general subjects like education and psychology. Students' assignments were graded, and the ministry retained records of their progress (UNESCO, 1972a). Students were then assigned to secondary schools, teacher-training schools, and some primary schools. But the experiment was not a success, perhaps because of the trainees' youth and inexperience, and the ministry eventually transferred them to teaching posts in elementary schools (Chilmeran, 1962).

In addition, a conference of school librarians in the Baghdad *Liwa* was arranged for May 1960 and expected to be attended by seventy individuals. At some point in 1968, another Indian UNESCO consultant, Anand Srivastava, delivered lectures for a one-month teacher-librarian course conducted by the ministry. He later suggested that one of the roles of the Institute of Library Science that he had proposed for the University of Baghdad would be to offer, about every two years, a six-month program for secondary school graduates to work in school and other libraries, but the program does not seem to have been implemented (Srivastava, 1974).

There were no qualified librarians working in school libraries at the beginning of the 1970s. Kalia (1979), however, found that, in 1978 there were 150 secondary schools with full-time librarians. These were most probably teacher-librarians, although by that time some of them may have been graduates of the program in librarianship that had been established at Al-Mustansiriyah University in Baghdad in 1970. This Department of Library Science expanded rapidly, students from throughout the country being directed to it by the state's higher education system, although its graduates sought employment close to their home. Staff members with specialist expertise were not in much evidence in the seven IRCs surveyed by Mossa (1979), none of which employing a librarian. The continuing use of teachers as librarians in school libraries may be explained by the shortage of qualified librarians that persisted throughout the country, as

graduates sought better pay or status than library work, but the increase in student numbers had probably resulted in higher priority being given to the employment of teachers. In the budgets of Iraqi schools, as in developing countries generally, "the school library has had to compete with more urgent priorities such as securing a supply of teachers, textbooks and equipment. Usually the library ranks low in the list of these matters" (Al-Werdi, 1983, p. 6).

The World Congress on Books, organized by UNESCO in London in 1982, adopted a declaration titled "Towards a Reading Society" that asserted, "We seek a world in which there are indeed books for all, but one also in which all can read and all accept books and reading as a necessary and desirable part of daily life" (UNESCO, 1982, n.p.). One of its recommendations was a further restatement of the importance of school and other libraries for stimulating reading, and the necessity of training librarians for this role. In Iraq, specialist staff members were few in number. Efforts by the ministry's Department of Books and School Libraries, which continued to actively engage in training teachers in the use of libraries and encouraging the formation of local library committees, had met with little success. The department's activities were handicapped by its own lack of sufficient, adequately trained staff; at the time, the department was run by three individuals, only one of which possessed a basic library qualification. The school library departments in the eighteen *Liwas* were staffed by twenty-seven people, of whom only twelve had training in librarianship (Iraq, Ministry of Education [1981b], cited in Al-Werdi [1983]).

Article 7 of the School Library Act directed that "the recruitment of school librarians should be from among the teaching staff who have the interest, experience and previous library training, or from specialized librarians" (Iraq, Presidency, 1975, n.p.). It seems that little had significantly changed by the end of the decade: "School Libraries are not well developed. The large secondary, vocational and technical schools maintain sizeable libraries administered mainly by non-professional personnel" (El Hadi, 1980, p. 270). There were only eighteen qualified librarians in all school libraries in Iraq in 1981 (Iraq, Ministry of Education, 1981b). Almost all school libraries were run by teachers who were relieved of some of their teaching hours and entrusted with the duties of caring for and developing the libraries and training students to use them, but most had no library training, experience, or even interest. There were 277 full-time teacher-librarians who had mostly been given the responsibility of running the libraries because they could no longer teach for health reasons. In the other schools, 7,590 teachers, relieved from some of their teaching duties, acted as part-time librarians (Al-Werdi, 1983). Such teachers had little motivation and many disincentives; for example, librarians in all types of libraries had to pay for any books that were missing when the annual inventory occurred.

In the early 1990s about 75 percent of approximately 2,500 secondary schools had a library, but many school libraries were without adequate premises, and only 131 primary and secondary schools employed a professional librarian (Al-Kindilchie, 1994). Because of the sanctions during the Saddam era that prevented Iraqi Kurds from studying librarianship in Iraq for almost twenty years, only twelve of 128 school librarians in Iraqi Kurdistan had any qualification in librarianship (Faraj, 2012). Many school libraries did not offer any services because no staff members were deputed to manage them either full- or part-time (Al-Kindilchie, 1994).

The Department of Library Science at Al-Mustansiriyah University had organized training activities for elementary and middle school library staff. No matter how limited this program was, it still made a significant change in librarianship in the country, according to one of the department's occasional lecturers (Qazanchi [2001], cited in Rehman [2009]). However, the quality of school libraries' services may have been rendered largely irrelevant by the social conditions that prevailed. All libraries were experiencing difficulty in retaining, recruiting, and motivating staff because of low salaries.

There does not appear to have been a specialist professional association for school librarians in Iraq. It took several attempts before an Iraqi Library Association was founded. Despite its relatively small membership, it became sufficiently established during the 1970s to organize a program of professional activities and also to publish a journal, but its activities declined during the economic and political crises of the 1980s and 1990s.

RECENT INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS TO PROMOTE SCHOOL LIBRARIANSHIP

There was a flurry of international activity in Iraq during the 1970s, possibly partly prompted by interest in the perception of the potential for identifying school libraries with the trend toward multimedia resource centers. For example, IBE, which had been integrated into UNESCO's Education sector in 1969, was one agency that tried to foster the development of multimedia resource centers (IBE, 1974). The International Association of School Librarianship (IASL) was founded in 1971, and the School Libraries section of IFLA in 1977.

The participants in UNESCO's Cairo meeting on book development in 1972 noted that libraries, while potentially important in supporting reading, were generally underdeveloped. They pointed to the need for each school and community to possess at least one library with qualified staff and an adequate book budget, and envisaged the role of a proposed regional center for book development as including assistance in the national planning of school and public libraries and in training librarians (UNESCO, 1972b). In "School Libraries in the Arab States," Aman (1972) implied that teaching methods in Arab schools were beginning to change.

The issue of pedagogical styles in the Arab schools was certainly not being ignored. Participants in a UNESCO conference on education and planning in the Arab states, held in Abu Dhabi in 1977, endorsed a statement that the democratization of education means "imbuing its content, methods and structures with a new spirit of initiative, free criticism" ("Education and Planning in the Arab States," 1977, p. 271). However, the learning resource support required to achieve this still seemed to be little understood. Sharif (1977) commented that generally the book collections in Arab school libraries would not support independent learning.

During the 1970s, UNESCO developed two new programs: UNISIST (United Nations Information System in Science and Technology) and NATIS (National Information Systems). The former, sponsored by its Science sector, focused on the greater availability and use of scientific information; the latter was a response by the Department de la Documentation, des Bibliothèques et des Archives (DBA, since 1966 the successor to the Department of Libraries) to a recognition that recommendations by librarians had little effect on governments, and that development planners and policymakers were not sufficiently aware of the place of information in the development process. NATIS provided a framework for a strategic approach to integrating library development in national planning that seemed more likely to be effective in promoting libraries' development. However, participants, mostly librarians, at an Arab regional meeting on NATIS pointed out that the importance of school libraries was not fully recognized in the region, and that the development of their potential could only be achieved through the introduction of modern educational methods (UNESCO, 1974).

UNISIST in particular had placed much emphasis on the training of information users. Arising out of a meeting on information use in higher education sponsored by UNESCO's PGI (the successor to DBA since 1977, incorporating the UNISIST program), a proposal was successfully made to IFLA in 1990 to establish a "Round Table on User Education." This became the Information Literacy section in 2002, and its activities subsequently attracted substantial support from UNESCO'S Information for All Program (IFAP, which had replaced PGI in 2001). The development of information literacy was seen by many librarians as an important opportunity to assert their role in supporting learning, but that opinion may not have enjoyed wider support. Research in UK secondary schools, for example, has revealed that "information literacy" is understood by teachers in isolation from the subject curriculum; they described it in terms of a variety of skills and processes that overlapped with existing models and frameworks, none of which included central elements in librarians' perceptions, such as defining the information need and knowledge-building (Williams, D. A., & Wavell, 2007).

Information-handling skills were no longer peripheral to developing

learning skills, but in Iraq and many other countries, teachers' awareness of the volume of information that was increasingly available and familiarity with how to help students build their own knowledge from it remained a gap in teacher education. A working group in the IFLA's School Libraries section prepared initial guidelines on how teacher education could respond to the changing information environment (Hall, 1986). The study was funded by PGI within the context of the training of information users, not by the Education sector, and was completed at a time when UNESCO was retrenching after losing more than a quarter of its income when three states withdrew from membership—two factors that may help explain why there appears to be little evidence of its recommendations being adopted.

In August 1993 IFLA and IASL jointly organized an international seminar on school libraries at Caldes de Montbui in Spain, financially supported by PGI and other organizations. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, the IFLA's School Libraries section had issued guidelines on several aspects of school librarianship. Following the seminar at Caldes de Montbui, work began on drafting a school library "manifesto," which was eventually approved by IFLA in 1999. Later that year, with support from PGI, it was submitted for adoption by the UNESCO general conference and became the *IFLA/UNESCO School Library Manifesto* (UNESCO/IFLA, 1999). As a follow-up to the manifesto, the *IFLA School Library Guidelines* were prepared "to assist school library professionals and educational decision-makers in their efforts to ensure that all students and teachers have access to effective school library programmes and services, delivered by qualified school library personnel" (Saetre & Willars, 2002, n.p.), which were endorsed by UNESCO in 2002. As Oberg (2015) observes, research on the impact of the *IFLA/UNESCO School Library Manifesto* and the *IFLA School Library Guidelines* has not yet been undertaken, although a number of experiential accounts of the implementation of national and regional guidelines have now been published (Schultz-Jones & Oberg, 2015).

The participants in the seminar at Caldes de Montbui recommended that IFLA should seek to encourage greater collaboration between the relevant international and national agencies (IFLA, 1997). As long ago as 1983, IASL had begun to openly acknowledge the need to develop closer relationships with other international NGOs involved in related fields and with other professions connected with children and youth (Knuth, 1996). Following the seminar, efforts were made by IFLA to try to work more closely with IASL, including even raising the suggestion of trying to coordinate the venues for their annual conferences. In 2006 the governing bodies of both organizations eventually did formally recognize the advantages of working together, and IASL's and IFLA's School Libraries sections set up a joint working party, which managed to organize a joint event in the Caribbean before their separate conferences in 2011, when—coincidentally—they were both held in the same region. They have also pro-

duced two joint publications on recent activities in the field (Marquardt & Oberg, 2011; Schultz-Jones & Oberg, 2015).

DISCUSSION

A feature of many conferences and publications has been descriptions of school libraries in particular countries; these have served little purpose, lacking any critical analyses or explanations of how these situations arose. On the face of it, their problems are easily described. Zado (1990), for example, claimed that the factor that was hindering the development of libraries and information services generally in Iraq was the lack of a reading culture, and called for changes in the education system, increases in publishing, and the promotion of user-education programs to raise information awareness and use. While not specifically addressing the limited ability of the Iraqi library profession to motivate the government to make these changes, she nonetheless implied that the assistance of international agencies would still be required. Discussing the challenges facing school libraries internationally, Knuth (1994) pointed to the dearth of books in vernacular languages, the barriers to the flow of books, the lack of infrastructure supporting school libraries and children's literature, and the lack of adequately trained personnel in school libraries. Having examined these issues in terms of the evidence from Iraq, the remainder of this paper aims to discuss their international relevance and how they might be overcome.

The Reading Culture and the Education System

It is widely recognized that teaching and assessment methods based on memorization do not inculcate the lifelong learning skills necessary to cope with the modern, continually changing world. They fail to foster a culture of independent reading, inhibit the development of analytical skills and the ability to make critical, objective judgments, destroy the inclination to search for possible alternative solutions to a given problem, and limit the creativity and innovation that could contribute to a nation's development. One "expert" described the state of education in Iraq as one in which "instruction had suffered from the Middle East disease: 'understand' means 'to be able to recite the textbook'" (UNESCO, 1954, n.p.). Such criticism is inevitable, but ill-informed: teaching through memorization is only a manifestation of the problem, a symptom rather than the cause. It is important to understand the origins of the pedagogy to explain its continued existence in contemporary primary and secondary education.

The evidence of history clearly shows that this pedagogic practice in Iraq is not a legacy from the tradition of memorization of the Qur'an in the *kuttab*s. In the twentieth century, Iraq's education system was confronted by intractable problems arising from the inability of successive

governments to match growing resources to even more rapidly growing student numbers. Recruiting and training sufficient teachers was a major challenge. The state was the principal employer in the country, and there were few alternatives. British observers noted that teaching was an honored profession, but “too many enter it for the sake of the honour and not for the love of the work” (UK Colonial Office, 1931). Trainee teachers who themselves had had a limited education were given equally limited preparation for the career ahead of them. It is clear that the demand for teaching staff as a result of the rapid expansion of the education system had constrained the introduction of new pedagogies that might have encouraged heuristic learning. The country’s economic problems of the 1980s and 1990s then reduced the purchasing power of teachers’ salaries. Many necessarily devoted time and energy to second jobs that could otherwise have been spent in preparing for new approaches to teaching.

The numerous demands on the Iraqi state budget also meant that the school-building program could not be allocated unlimited funds, which resulted in school libraries remaining, at best, mostly small. The country’s circumstances during the 1980s and 1990s highlight in particular the underlying issue for the government: that public-policy choices had to be made in allocating finite resources. Similar decisions confront all countries either because limited resources are available and/or because the decision-makers in government are not convinced that investing in school libraries is a priority that would command the support of the population—the taxpayers and voters.

Managers of private schools similarly have to consider the level of fees they believe that parents would be willing to pay. A study of private schools in Iraq suggested that many were no better than the state schools, both requiring better facilities and improvements in teaching practices (Obaide [1968], cited in Jiven and Kanderian [1975]), which underscores another issue that needs to be addressed; namely, public understanding of the costs and benefits of investing in learning.

Book Publishing and New Information Media

Another issue that cannot be ignored, and one that is as relevant in other less developed countries, is the state of the publishing industry. UNESCO’s Education sector continues to encourage the provision of books for schools with its Books for All program, with which IFLA collaborates in determining the venue of World Book Day. The program encourages book production and equitable access to books in the member states based on the belief that reading is a fundamental human right. Nonetheless, there seems to be little wider appreciation of the detrimental impacts of an underdeveloped local publishing industry and book trade, which affect the potential for collection development by school libraries in Iraq and thus the development of a culture of independent reading and learning, as well as

inhibiting library use generally. It seems equally certain that the role of the publishing industry as an element in economic development through its potential for scaling up from modest beginnings was negated by the Iraqi government's actions to control its output (Johnson, 2013). Indigenous publishing is often further undermined by donations of books from foreign foundations, and also through bilateral aid programs that grant contracts for preparing and printing publications with companies in the donor country.

Currently, there is a new and additional challenge. Participants in the seminar at Caldes de Montbui noted that "in the years to come, focus will be on developing skills and processes through the curriculum, not on mastering technology as an end in itself, which will in turn require more initial and continuing education of both school librarians, teacher librarians, information specialists, AND teachers" (IFLA, 1997, n.p.; emphasis in original). The provision of new information and communication technologies (ICTs) has become a major feature in education, and especially in the international assistance provided for education in less developed countries. The forerunner of ICTs—audiovisual media—was not the success expected in Iraq largely because of problems with the availability of technical and professional support and suitable content. Although the new computer-based systems, when adequately networked, can improve the flow of information and data, their efficacy in enhancing learning are as yet largely unproven. Moreover, in the less wealthy and developed countries in particular, the availability of digital content suitable for use in primary and secondary education remains limited, and their technical and financial sustainability of ICTs is threatened. These issues need to be assessed openly and realistically.

Information Literacy in the Curriculum

During the 1960s, when the British Council was particularly involved in supporting the development of education globally, it felt that its efforts were "somewhat diminished by the apparent reluctance of teachers to abandon general reading for books serving solely their anticipated specialist interest" (Flood, 1972, n.p.). There seems to have been little impact of the work initiated thirty years ago to encourage classroom teachers to integrate the development and effective use of school libraries into efforts to empower students "to take control of their own learning so that they will know how to learn in societies of rapid change and decreasing certainties" (Hall, 1986, p. 14). Recent research identifies this failure as a continuing barrier to effective interaction between school libraries as providers of books and information, and teachers as potential stimulators of students' reading and research. The proposed IFLA/IASL revision of the *IFLA School Library Guidelines* place greater emphasis than the earlier version on the librarian's role in developing information literacy in students,

but still fall short of offering pedagogical guidance for teachers on how to incorporate the development of these skills in subject curricula.

Appropriately Trained Personnel

Opinion among librarians in Iraq is strongly in favor of schools needing librarians, but little empirical data have been produced that might contribute to the debate about whether school libraries would be better served by librarians or teacher-librarians, and it is not one in which this paper will seek to engage. What is undoubted is that school library development would benefit from specialist personnel who have a wider understanding of not only both the pedagogical and professional/technical issues, but also the range of information products and services that could be brought to bear to encourage independent reading and enhance children's learning skills. The history of development in Iraq highlights the challenges in preparing and producing such a specialist workforce of adequate size and possessing appropriate knowledge, skills, and motivation. The literature also draws attention to the need for some of this knowledge and understanding to be embedded in all teachers' training. The efforts of both IFLA and IASL do not seem to address the wider range of issues involved, but instead focus narrowly on the professional/technical aspects.

Mobilizing Support

It is important to recognize that such progress as has been made in Iraq came about because influential officials within the Ministry of Education were eventually convinced that circumstances were ripe to provide a new focus on school libraries. The advice received by the ministry from visiting U.S. educationalists on the need to improve the library services in schools generally appears to have been ignored (for example, Iraq, Educational Inquiry Commission, 1932; Tidwell, 1957). An Iraqi official pointed out to Tesdell (1958) that an international expert's advice was of little value unless the expert stayed long enough to learn the reasons for present practices, to understand the complex obstacles facing any attempts at reform, and to help in implementing recommendations. It may be significant that the ministry acted after Bonny (1958) not only provided training for some teacher-librarians, but also presented an instruction manual that could be used by others.

The effectiveness of international assistance was threatened because, according to the counselor for economic affairs in the U.S. embassy, "the general failure of Iraqi officials to grasp the need for government-wide planning and coordination causes duplication and waste" (King, 1957). Clearly, any arguments that are put forward to promote the development of school libraries must be placed within the context of a government's overall aims and plans; such arguments require their advocates to have an

understanding not only of the politicians' agenda but also of the political system through which ideas can be presented to the decision-makers. The perceived failure of the committees that have existed at various levels in the Iraqi administration should raise questions about the extent to which the advocates of school libraries are involved, and the degree of understanding of the broader political and fiscal issues that they bring to the table.

How to influence policy formulation is a challenge that the library profession has not yet fully addressed (Johnson, Williams, Wavell, & Baxter, 2004). The diversity in the field should not be underestimated (Carroll, 1990). Individual countries face different challenges, follow different rates and patterns of development, and have differing resources, priorities, and capabilities. The skills required vary because of the numerous different audiences at which advocacy efforts need to be targeted, and the varying and sometimes overlapping interests of the different audience groups involved in the education field—politicians, administrators, teacher-trainers, school managers, teachers, and librarians—as well as differences in local organizational structures and managerial cultures. For this reason, Carroll (1990) argued that school librarians must be actively engaged in creating bridges among school libraries in their country, its education system, and its government's social policy if both national and international concerns are to be adequately addressed.

While arguments need to be presented to decision-makers in governments and institutions in ways that enable them to recognize political advantages, the cases need to be underpinned by hard evidence. In the United Kingdom the groundwork for future research has already been done. A number of critical studies have critically reviewed the research evidence available in the English language on school libraries' impact on attainment and learning and the socioeconomic benefits derived; have identified the items that support the case for enhancing school library provision and use; have highlighted gaps in the evidence; and have examined the methodologies used (Wavell, Baxter, Johnson, & Williams, 2002; Williams, D. A., Coles, & Wavell, 2002; Williams, D. A., Wavell, & Coles, 2001; Williams D. A., Wavell, & Morrison, 2013). These reviews need replicating in other countries to identify any gaps in the coverage of studies in other languages. Oberg (2011), observing that the complementary strengths of IASL and IFLA should be harnessed to enhance the provision and use of school libraries, defined IASL's role as encouraging its 500–1,000 individual members to provide the research evidence to underpin the debate. IASL could play a useful role in encouraging further reviews along these lines and providing a framework that would ensure some compatibility among the resulting reports that emerge from different countries.

Engaging the International Associations and Agencies

Knuth (1994) highlighted that although there was an element of cross-representation in the memberships of IFLA and IASL, and occasionally common leadership, the lack of coordination among all the international agencies in the field was an obstruction to progress, as they mostly work separately toward their particular goals. As Carroll (1990, p. 265) notes, "The issue seems to be whether the leadership of organizations related to school librarianship will respond and improve communications to move their memberships toward a tremendous professional opportunity."

International organizations should be able to reflect the diversity of national circumstances, but have a responsibility "to prepare materials that indicate its acceptance of plans by a majority of nations" (Carroll, 1990, n.p.). At the time of writing, IFLA and IASL have been collaborating in drafting a revised version of the *IFLA School Library Guidelines*, and these await adoption by UNESCO. Oberg (2015) acknowledged that using IFLA's formal relationship, as one of only forty-two bodies granted associate status by UNESCO, was necessary to advance the cause. The apparent retention of IFLA's name in this document may be intended to smooth its path through the UNESCO approval process, but otherwise could perhaps appear inappropriate to some IASL members and may detract from its acceptance within the wider educational arena.

It does, however, seem that some sense of the political realities is at last entering the arena. In discussing the revised guidelines, Oberg (2015, n.p.) also acknowledged that "both the educational and cultural sectors of UNESCO would have to be involved in the approval and implementation of the document." IFLA's relationship with UNESCO has hitherto focused almost exclusively on part of what is now the Communication and Information sector, a part of the organization that has been openly criticized in recent years for its internal weaknesses, notably in the relevance of its current skills base (Carpenter et al., 2010). A longer-term review might also have pointed to shortcomings in the leadership provided by the managers in UNESCO's library and information field in many periods during the last seventy years. The organization's support from its regular budget for its changing organizational manifestations in the library and information field (Department of Libraries, DBA, PGI, IFAP) has never been more than barely enough to enable them to experiment with, demonstrate, promote, and advise on advances in the field. Its limited budget is now increasingly disappointing the many member states who had come to expect it to provide the higher level of substantial technical assistance that UNESCO was able to access through the UN Development Fund (UNDP) to support major projects between 1965 and 1990. (The UN revised the brief given to UNDP in 1990.)

It is clear that IFLA now needs to use its position to establish a stronger link with UNESCO's larger and more influential Education sector if

it wishes to promote school libraries more effectively. It is also clear that, while IFLA and IASL have recognized the need to work together, they cannot do it alone. Bridges have to be built by both IFLA and IASL with other international bodies in the field such as ILA to motivate them to work together in advocating school library development to the decision-makers in the relevant agencies of national governments and intergovernmental agencies. The range of organizations linking children and books is more substantial than might appear at first. Through the organization of the annual World Book Day events, IFLA and IASL already have some contacts with IBBY, founded in 1953, which includes publishers of children's books among its members, has consultative status with UNESCO, and like IASL has a strong basis in related national organizations. In addition, Knuth (1994) suggested the International Youth Library (IYL), founded in 1949, as another key organization with a reach that extends to other specialist organizations interested in children's literature.

CONCLUSION

This paper has reviewed the salient features of school library provision in Iraq within the context of the circumstances that influenced its development as part of the country's education system, particularly during the twentieth century. It has explained that the token gestures made toward the provision of school libraries and encouragement of their use in the country were not a consequence of the absence of a strategic vision of how to develop the culture of independent reading and critical thinking that underpins continual learning; rather, they were a result of the government's tactical decisions about priorities in the allocation of finite resources when faced with a range of increasing demands on the state budget. It has also pointed to shortcomings in the recommendations proffered to Iraq and other Arab states by international professional and intergovernmental organizations in terms of their immediate relevance, practicality, and lack of demonstrated benefits, as well as the absence of consistency and unanimity in those recommendations.

At IASL's conference in 1972, participants were asked to consider how they could help "to bring about better support for the basic concept of libraries—the center for information (print and non-print)—on the part of administrators, Ministers of Education, community leaders and parents" (Knuth, 1996, n.p.). While current efforts by the supporters of school library development appear to be slowly heading in the right direction, it is regrettable that they seem to be doing so without a more widely shared agenda that addresses all the issues. Support for school libraries will be mobilized only if politicians hear a consistent message from all the interested parties that it will be seen to benefit the country; decision-makers in governments are convinced that the costs will be offset by sufficient economic benefits; and teachers fully appreciate that improvements in

learning can be derived from implementing relevant pedagogical methods while fulfilling the requirement to expound the content of their curricula. One obstacle to progress seems to lie in the predominance of *library* associations in promoting this dialogue, and their limited engagement with the *teaching* profession through bodies like ILA and with the bodies concerned to promote the development of the book trade.

A starting point for any future efforts to promote school library development by the wider alliance suggested in this paper seems to be an understanding that policy choices have to be made when resources are finite, and that the challenge is to get school libraries visible on the policy agenda and raise their status. There are mechanisms for achieving these that the advocates of school libraries could adopt or adapt from other social sciences (Johnson et al., 2004). It seems important to recognize that the aim of (most) governments is the well-being of the community they serve, and that this depends first and foremost on their economic well-being. Clearly identifying the provision and effective use of school libraries as a cost-effective item in the agenda for national development is an essential element in securing political support. Another is fomenting a groundswell of supportive public opinion, based on instilling an understanding of how the effective use of school libraries underpins development of the lifelong learning skills that contribute to individual prosperity. However, these efforts will not succeed without successfully encouraging all teachers to work together with librarians to foster the independent use of information, and without evidencing the links among information use, learning, and development. It is also clearly important that the case being made is directed at influential elements within national governments and international agencies instead of being wasted on weak or failing bodies, as seems to have been the case in recent years.

NOTES

1. Muriel Strode [Lieberman] (1875–1964), “Wind-Wafted Wild Flowers” (1903).
2. This information, and much more, was edited out of the final version of his report by UNESCO headquarters staff before it was sent to the Iraqi government and published the following year because the terms of reference for his mission focused exclusively on the potential for developing a postgraduate degree program in librarianship at the University of Baghdad.
3. Notes made by the author from a conversation in Amman with the director of the Baghdad Documentation Centre, A. K. A. Jabbar, during June 13–17, 2004, and from Professor Jabbar’s curriculum vitae.

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