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JITA: DE. School libraries

COMPETENCIES, PROFILES AND SOCIAL ASPECTS
OF THE LIBRARIAN IN EDUCATION

AS COMPETÊNCIAS, OS PERFIS E OS ASPECTOS
SOCIAIS DO BIBLIOTECÁRIO NA EDUCAÇÃO

LAS COMPETENCIAS, LOS PERFILES Y LOS ASPECTOS SOCIALES
DEL BIBLIOTECARIO EN LA EDUCACIÓN

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ABSTRACT

The school library should be acknowledged as a cultural facility, a social institution, in order to integrate the information society, establishing new concepts and adapting itself to the social, cultural, educational and technological realities of society. With the information boom, contemporary society requires librarians working in the school library with competencies that meet the new demands of information products and services. So which are the roles and skills of these professionals? Are they prepared to fulfill the social demand of our readers? Thus, the goal of this study is to point out the profiles, competencies and social aspects of the librarian in the contemporary space, within the scope of the school library. For our investigation, we use exploratory research as the scientific method, which aims to develop and clarify concepts and ideas that usually involve the bibliography and documentary research. Regarding the school librarian, they should have the following as acting practices: the mediation among the library, the reader and the context, the technique and the promotion of reading; they should be alert to help alleviating the digital divide and the lack of access to information; they should make available a set of approaches, skills and competencies that certify them to work and contribute in a positive way; they must be flexible and must be able to manage the school information unit, generating information services and resources, to work with the tools made available by information and communication technologies and to bring the school community closer to the library space.

KEYWORDS: Social. School library. Librarian. Competence. Communication and information technologies.

RESUMO

A biblioteca escolar deve ser reconhecida como um equipamento cultural, como uma instituição social, com o intuito de integrar a sociedade da informação, estabelecendo novos conceitos e se adequando às realidades sociais, culturais, educativas e tecnológicas da sociedade. Com a explosão informacional, a sociedade contemporânea necessita de profissionais bibliotecários atuando em biblioteca escolar com competências que atendam às novas demandas de produtos e serviços de informação. Sendo assim: qual é o papel e as competências desses profissionais? Estão preparados para a demanda social de nossos leitores? Assim, o objetivo deste estudo é apontar os perfis, as competências e os aspectos sociais do bibliotecário no espaço contemporâneo, tendo como escopo a biblioteca escolar. Para nossa investigação, utilizamos como método científico a pesquisa exploratória, que tem como finalidade desenvolver e elucidar conceitos e ideias e que normalmente envolvem a pesquisa bibliográfica e documental. Com relação ao bibliotecário escolar, apontamos que este deve ter como práticas de atuação: a intermediação entre a biblioteca, o leitor e o contexto, a técnica e a promoção da leitura; deve estar atento para ajudar a amenizar, a exclusão digital e a falta de acesso à informação; não deve prescindir de conjunto de atitudes, habilidades e competências que o certifiquem a trabalhar e contribuir de forma positiva; deve ser flexível, saber administrar a unidade de informação escolar, gerando recursos e serviços de informação, trabalhar com as ferramentas

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disponibilizadas pelas tecnologias da informação e comunicação e aproximar a comunidade escolar com o espaço da biblioteca.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Biblioteca escolar. Bibliotecário. Competência. Social. Tecnologias da informação e comunicação.

RESUMEN

La biblioteca escolar debe ser reconocida como un centro cultural, una institución social, con el fin de integrar la sociedad de la información, estableciendo nuevos conceptos y adaptándose a las realidades sociales, culturales, educativas y tecnológicas. Con la explosión de la información, la sociedad contemporánea necesita bibliotecarios actuantes, con habilidades para responder a las nuevas demandas de productos y servicios de información. Así que: ¿cuál es el papel y cuáles son las habilidades de estos profesionales? ¿Los biblioecarios están preparados para la demanda social de nuestros lectores? El objetivo de este estudio es señalar los perfiles, competencias, habilidades y aspectos sociales del bibliotecario en el espacio contemporáneo, particularmente en la biblioteca escolar. Para nuestra investigación, utilizamos el método científico como la pesquisa exploratoria, que tiene como objetivo desarrollar y aclarar conceptos e ideas que por lo general involucran la investigación bibliográfica y documental. Sobre el bibliotecario de la escuela, señalamos que debe tener como prácticas de desempeño: la mediación entre la biblioteca, el lector y el contexto, la técnica y el fomento de la lectura; debe estar alerta para ayudar a minimizar la exclusión digital; no debe prescindir de un conjunto de actitudes, habilidades y competencias que lo capacitan a trabajar y contribuir de manera positiva; debe ser flexible, saber administrar la unidad de información escolar, creando recursos y servicios de información, trabajar con las herramientas proporcionadas por las tecnologías de la información y la comunicación y unir a la comunidad de la escuela con el espacio de la biblioteca.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Biblioteca escolar. Bibliotecario. Competencia. Social. Tecnologías de información y comunicación.

1 INTRODUCTION

Over the last few decades, with the rising of communication and information technologies, the spreading of information went through transformations that gave origin to other ways of distributing literary and scientific production. This change in paradigm became critical for the remodeling of contents in the training process for librarians, who must have a "[...] committed intellectual role, with the library as a democratization instrument against poverty, injustice, violence, anything that restricts freedom of thought" (CASTRILLÓN, 2004, p. 31, free translation).

Meanwhile, for Cendón, et al. (2005), librarians faced a new context in the workplace, which requires from them knowledge and skills in the use of technologies to organize, process, retrieve and spread information, regardless of the media in which it is recorded.

At the same time, the presence of communication and information technologies at school does not mean they are usually integrated to the library and the activities developed, within the scope of the miscellaneous disciplines taught to students. This leads us to agree with the statement that it is "[...] a big challenge to integrate electronic resources and the traditional library tasks" (CUEVAS CERVERÓ, 2007, p. 181, free translation), which requires even more efforts and skills from professionals working at schools, in order to bring

the library and its readers closer to these tools, using their tasks to weave in a more creative relationship with knowledge.

For Campello (2010, p. 198), "[...] integration and cooperation among librarians, teachers, educators, and the whole school team becomes fundamental for the librarian to be acknowledged as catalyzer/leader in such collaboration". This way, Moraes; Valadares and Amorim (2013, p. 59) state that the librarian has an *educational role* that "[...] extends itself to the teaching-learning of specific research-related skills, both in regards to knowledge and search for information sources, as well as to their use."

Authors such as Fragoso (2002) and Silva, Ferreira and Scorsi (2009), resume such meanings, pointing out different actions to be carried out by librarians, such as: attention to the needs of students, professors and other members of the school community; guidance in consultations, readings and use of the library; incentive to critical and reflective thought; making different resources and services available; and the promotion of the interaction among professors, librarians and students.

With the insertion of communication and information technologies, the library becomes part of the so-called information society, because "[...] the school library, for students, is the gateway to the information and knowledge society" (FUENTES ROMERO, 2006, p. 30, free translation). From that point of view, the school librarian has the task of adapting themselves to such society, including children and teenagers to it, and also promoting the so-called information literacy (IL), which "comprises from information research processes to build knowledge, through skills in information technology, to independent learning, through social interaction with the subjects" (FUENTES ROMERO, 2006, p. 30, free translation).

Information literacy has the purpose of "[...] building life-long learners" (QUEIROZ, 2006, p. 25), through an independent, critical, active and investigative educational process. We deem that such competencies, instead of being structured in a mechanical way, must aid the construction of knowledge in a broader and more creative manner, contributing to more pluralistic teaching-learning practices, through which students can access books and readings, information, and communication and information technology, thus seeking different perspectives (AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL LIBRARIANS, 2007). Some claim "[...] the urgent need to consider in the information literacy process, the inter-relation between knowledge and information present in text media accessed within the school library environment" (MORAES; VALADARES; AMORIM, 2013, p. 53).

In regards to the school library environment, a set of knowledge is expected from the librarian, as well as the technical and technological skills and competencies that allow aiding the education of readers and learners that are capable of "[...] sharing knowledge and lessons, both in person as through technology" (AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL LIBRARIANS, 2007, p. 2). We are interested, herein, in approaching such knowledge

expected from the librarian within the educational scope of the XXI century, also indicating some matters regarding libraries and their role within the social environment.

That way, the school library should be acknowledged as a cultural facility and, furthermore, as a social institution, with the purpose of integrating society and information, setting new concepts and adjusting itself to the social, cultural, educational and technological realities of society. With the information boom, contemporary society requires librarians working in the school library with competencies that meet the new demands of information products and services. So which are the roles and skills of these professionals? Are they prepared to fulfill the social demand of our readers? Such information is extremely relevant, because the librarian must transcend the bureaucratic aspects of the organization of information and perform creative actions that seek to train not just readers, but also researchers. Thus, the goal of this study is to point out the profiles, competencies and social aspects of the librarian in the social field, using the school library as the scope.

For our investigation, we use exploratory research, which has the purpose of developing and clarifying concepts and ideas, and which usually involves bibliography and documentary research. According to Gil (1999, p. 43), this method aims at "[...] providing an overview, as approach, to a certain fact". For Marconi and Lakatos (2006), documentation of miscellaneous nature and published in different media, is used in bibliography research.

2 THE SCHOOL LIBRARY AS EDUCATIONAL SPACE

The school library requires, in its management, a position as place of cultural dissemination, "[...] a gathering point for people, with notebook keyboards clicking and books spread all around" (ARENA, 2009, p. 162). A place for the circulation of different subjects, senses, services and resources (including electronic ones), not limited to but going beyond a simply teaching-educational support (PERROTTI, 2006), exploring its multiplicity, its different dimensions, as quoted by Ely (2003): social, informational, creative, educational and recreational; dimensions that imply the tasks to be performed by libraries, according to the International Association of School Librarianship (1993).

Among such different tasks, we point out the mediation of the collection, for the library to no longer be a place of imposed readings, closed to circulation, which prevents different experiences with the works, affecting the sparking of the love of reading. We consider that, using a series of works, information support and activities guided by a new concept of reading, writing and sensory involvement, the librarian, together with educators, can make of the library a favoured place for a more fruitful teaching-learning process (FERRAREZI, 2010).

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Currently reaching a desired profile of school library, we note the existence of the Hispanic-American model called Center of Learning and Resources (*Centro de Recursos e Aprendizagem* - CRA), deemed essential for education within the scope of the knowledge society that claims a new school library standard (CUEVAS CERVERÓ, 2007), different from the traditional idea of library as a place isolated from school dynamics, destined only to organize and preserve books (MARZAL; CUEVAS CERVERÓ, 2007). Such model does not annul, but enriches the conventional notion by integrating electronic resources, the educational dimension, the self-learning principle and long-life learning. Characterized by the existence of an array of resources and services according to the educational project, in which it shall have to be immersed and regarding which it shall not be seen as a supplement, the CRA:

> [...] is the educational space that permanently contributes to educational innovation. It gathers a myriad of information resources in different media (bibliography, electronic and multi-medial, among others), organizing them according to the requirements of the curriculum project, so as to make them available to the users, students and teachers of the center, through its different services (MARZAL; CUEVAS CERVERÓ, 2007, p. 9, free translation).

Taking over the function of school library as a "[...] new dynamic educational space" [...] (CUEVAS CERVERÓ, 2007, p. 178, free translation), the CRA considers education, information, entertainment, exchange and knowledge. From that new point of view, "[...] the library, so as to exercise its role, ceases to be the ancient passive collection and becomes an active information service" (MILANESI, 2002, p. 77).

We furthermore note that the new concept of library makes reference to the usual school library, however adjusted to the times: "[...] it can be called school library, resource center, multimedia resource center, curriculum documentation center, media library, etc., but we are always making reference to the same idea" (FUENTES ROMERO, 2006, p. 22, free translation).

We consider that a more dynamic school library, comprised of a variety of resources moved by educational, playful and reading activities, can open new ways to learn, more attractive and plural, bringing individuals closer to different languages, senses and other individuals, overcoming rigid and discouraging practices frequently found in schools. For there to be changes, the school library needs to have a prepared professional, interested in putting them into practice, because "[...] the physical existence of a library is not enough for its identity to become consolidated. It is the actors (together with the educational process) that will support it" (ANTUNES, 1998, p. 177).

3 PROFILE OF THE SOCIAL LIBRARIAN AND THEIR COMPETENCIES

Thinking about the profile of the social librarian and their competencies, we note that, from time to time, tasks change, according to technologies, social, political or cultural movements, making the information environments and the professionals themselves also have to adjust to the changes. In this sense, Souto (2003, p. 10) notes that "[...] technology brings new demands regarding the features of workers, and requires from them further preparation and permanent education for the performance of functions that are constantly changing." Beyond the conventional information units, such as university libraries, public libraries, school libraries, public institutions and NGOs, other spaces open up for the action of the librarian, such as cinema libraries, film libraries, video libraries, research and documentation centers, private companies, museums, bookstores and editorial houses, in addition to the Internet, in which we note the preparation of blogs, virtual libraries and the indexation of sites (CUNHA; CRIVELLARI, 2004). We note that, in some cases, information supports such as videos, CDs, blogs and digital libraries are also comprised in the information units we call conventional, demanding new practices from librarians both in regards to their handling as their movement.

In scientific literature, the librarian is seen as that who "[...] acquires the information, organizes, describes, indexes, stores, retrieves and distributes it to users" (TARGINO, 2000, p. 64). For that, such professional must have in their profile a set of approaches, skills and competencies that allow them to work and contribute, in a positive manner, to the different fields where they act. For instance, we mention the need for them to be flexible, know how to manage information units, be communicative, know how to manage information services and resources, and know how to deal with the tools made available by communication and information technologies (WALTER; BAPTISTA, 2008). Additionally, Faria *et al*. (2005) points out other characteristics ascribed to these professionals, who become those responsible for the collection of the institution where they act, for structuring and maintaining the memory of the institution. It is also feasible for such professional to work with human resources, providing support to knowledge-sharing practices within the organization.

Here, we reach an important point: in school libraries, the librarian action must focus on readers, not on the collection. In the text fairly called *Poetry*, Jorge Luis Borges, *de facto and in fiction* a librarian, offers a poetical narration that seems to comment on such librarian action:

> Emerson says that a library is a magical cabinet in which many enchanted spirits inhabit. They wake up when we call them; while we do not open a book, that book, literally, geometrically, is a volume, a thing among things. When we open it, when the book meets its reader, the aesthetic event takes place (BORGES, 1999, p, 284).

That way, the librarian must transcend the bureaucratic aspects of the organization of information, thus replacing a common practice in school libraries, which makes reference to

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focusing on the activities of organizing the shelves and the resulting non-performance of "[...] creative actions aiming to educate readers and researchers" (ALMEIDA JÚNIOR; BORTOLIN, 2009, p. 205).

Theoreticians Silva, Ferreira and Scorsi (2009, p. 62) note that, starting from a new point of view for librarian work, the school library does not need to be, nor can be, a place of excessive order, norms and safeguards, but a "[...] place for the choices of each reader, for the references by one reader to the other, for discussions abut books". From such point of view, the librarian opens up to new activities "[...] related to the promotion of reading, cultural extension activities for the community, recreation, fun, etc." (FURTADO, 2004, p. 8), overcoming the focus only on the lending of works and creating "[...] around the reading and research actions, an environment of freedom and fun" (ALMEIDA JÚNIOR; BORTOLIN, 2009, p. 206). And, furthermore, according to Castro Filho and Campos (2014, p. 23), for it to be

> [...] a research lab, that allows training readers; an educational action center; for it to be a place of communication and use of several information sources, whether in hard copy, printed or virtual media; for searching challenges and solutions to problems; that needs to be active; entertaining; and that has, as its mission, the development and training of citizens.

This professional is seen by Rigoleto and Di Giorgi (2009, p. 229) as an educator able to "[...] awaken the interest of the reader, multiplying reading practices and offering diversity of material [...]". Maroto (2012, p. 133) also stresses the need for this professional to be prepared to practice reading and its diffusion, which also implies that they need to be, in addition to dynamic, a reader who loves reading, as pointed out by Fragoso (2002).

Currently, the matter of the competencies desired in the school librarian are being discussed, with the following being frequently mentioned: creativity; interest; library organization knowledge; training to attend to the demands from readers; knowledge regarding the reality of the school. "[...] Other spaces and other action practices, as well as the intermediation between the library and the reader; between the reader and the context; between reading promotion and technique" are desired (MAROTO, 2012, p. 132). For Perrenoud (2013, p. 27), with the global evolution of society, the world "[...] demands progressively more competencies. Diversified competencies and competencies developed according to the technologies, lifestyles, work, etc." For that, Perrenoud (2013, p. 141) defined some competencies we can relate to the work of a librarian: "[...] to know, individually or in group, how to prepare and lead projects, to develop strategies, to know how to cooperate, to participate in a group and share leadership; to know how to manage and solve conflicts; to know how to analyze, in a systematic manner, situations and relations."

For Farias and Cunha (2009, p. 32), the school librarian has, as actions –what we consider competencies—four dimensions: a) technique, in regards to "[...] having proper command of the specific field of action", that is, to take the acquired knowledge and

restructure it according to the users; b) aesthetic, as the school librarian uses "[...] sensitivity and creativity [...]"; c) ethics, in regards to co-existence and the pursuit of a collective well-being; d) politics, as in the education of citizens.

For Castro Filho (2013, p. 21), there are: a) "[...] specific competencies [...]", which determine a high degree of knowledge, that is, of the use of tools applicable to library economy; b) "[...] intellectual competencies [...]", linked to information management and decision-making; c) "[...] social and political competencies [...]", which directly involve a certain community, with the knowledge of specific groups of users from an area of knowledge; d) "[...] methodology competencies [...]", which provide support in the use of information flows, as well as regarding the preparation of policies, standards and procedures.

Therefore, work in school libraries requires the professional working in them to know how to organize and classify materials from the collection – requires features such as: collaboration and partnership among libraries; a culture of knowledge collection and sharing; team work including professionals from other areas of knowledge; and the adoption of knowledge management practices and a new library management style.

4 DISCUSSION: THE SCHOOL LIBRARY AND THE SOCIAL PROFILE OF THE LIBRARIAN

Upon some theoretical explanations about the school library and the social aspect of the librarian working in it, this work warns about an important point: the need for library professionals that act in the school library with competencies that can meet the new demands for information services and products.

Considering these matters, it is up to librarians that manage school libraries: a) to schedule and design actions; b) to plan the costs of products and services; c) to organize cooperative activities among readers; d) to carry out cultural events and promotion, fomenting reading, at child-teenage level, to train readers for research and learning (CASTRO FILHO; PACAGNELLA, 2011), that is: "[...] the librarian must not be limited to technical matters of collection organization; they must take a reflective and active position in the scope in which they act" (BRANDÃO, 2014, p. 65).

As a librarian that takes the role of social educator, Dudziak (2007, p. 96) notes that

> [...] as transformation educational agent, the librarian takes for themselves, in addition to the role of educator, the renewal of their own competency, adopting and disseminating transformational practices in the community, such as: practicing learning to learn; promoting science and making it popular; explaining the effects of

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technology; discussing social and political reality; alerting to environmental and social responsibility. And, above all, their action as outstanding citizen and leader.

Within this scope, the librarian must be constantly updated and prepared for the challenges that contemporary society poses – which contribute to the exercise of citizenship.

Another aspect to note is the social role of the librarian upon the mediation of information and reading, an action that can be carried out as an educational approach: "[...] in this society, the educational role of the librarian becomes even more evident, considering their specific competencies to act as a mediator of reading" (RASTELI; CAVALCANTE, 2013, p.159). Regarding the competencies, Almeida, Costa and Pinheiro (2012, p. 472) point out that "[...] the mediation of reading becomes one of the processes to approach the reader with the text in a significant way, as mediating is facilitating the relationship of this individual with the text, filtering information before passing it onto the receiver".

We believe that the end of this sentence should be toned down, read carefully, given the pre-emptory danger of the verb "to filter": the mediation action of the librarian should organize the knowledge and the information so that the user finds what they need in a way that is as fast and efficient as possible, avoiding wasting time with obsolete or useless data, and not getting lost in a huge mass of sources and references that can lead the reader to drown in the current digital sea. Organizing knowledge and information does not imply making choices *on their behalf*, nor protecting or director the eyes of the reader, but preserving their critical curiosity, leaving their investigative spirit open and sharp (really *interested*).

Stumpf (1987) and Oliveira (1987) stress some competencies required from librarians, such as the exercise of educational, cultural, social, recreational-educational functions. Such competencies act according to curriculum plans, in the education of the person, in the promotion and extension of knowledge, making research and reading processes cease to be an imposition or obligation, to become a source and product of pleasure and satisfaction. Therefore, the librarian must have a love for reading and an ongoing concern with their updating and training, in order to perfect their work methodologies as social educator.

In regards to mediation, Brandão (2014, p. 71) notes that there is another important practice, which is the

> [...] mediation focused on citizenship building, where the librarian moves the materials from the collection, considering the education of the individual to access and use information, raising awareness about their rights and duties, and acquiring education to live in a society.

In the convergence of communication and information technologies, the librarian must be aware of the changes that took place during the XX and XXI centuries, in order to improve their competencies and promote products and services that meet the needs of contemporary users. In this sense, the librarian needs to be alert to mitigate digital exclusion and lack of access to information (with actions such as: installing a Wi-Fi island in the library; teaching

how to handle the device and the research tools of the Internet). By contributing to digital inclusion, the librarian takes a political and social position, their function in Brazilian society.

Finally, we underline the relevance of checking whether training courses in Library Economy and Information Sciences are preparing their students to act in school libraries. We believe that public policies and the essential competencies of these professionals are pertinent and necessary qualities for the pursuit of cultural and educational practices.

5 FINAL THOUGHTS

In regards to the competencies of the librarian, we can note that, firstly, they must be aware of the meaning and the value of information in present society and, therefore, of their social role as mediator of reading and information. The librarian also needs to be proactive, dynamic and creative, adjusting themselves to the ongoing changes that take place with communication and information technologies; they need to work in teams, using CITs (participating in tutorial rooms, lectures, interaction and communication with the user).

Some of the features of the school librarian are: a) being aware of their role as agent of social transformation; b) having information as an object of research and work; c) preparing and working on new information management methodologies; d) participating in the planning of information and public policies for the country; e) optimizing the use of telecommunications and of communication and information technologies; f) being an open and critical professional, with capacity to adjust to changes, as information media and channels to access, disseminate, and transfer information are constantly changing.

Therefore, when would be the time to train school librarians to achieve competencies, to carry out inclusion actions that organize the school library, the technologies and the reader? During their education, specialization, post-graduation? A possible configuration would be to generate a school library policy for Brazil as a whole, so that the cultural and environmental differences of each region co-exist in dialogue and understanding. Another composition would be the joint work of universities, institutions, Ministries of Culture, Education, school libraries and class entities, aiming at strengthening field research regarding competencies, profiles and social functions of librarians.

For the school library to fully realize itself as social and educational institution, the law (Law 12,244, of May 24, 2010) must be obeyed. And, for such realization, librarians need to be competent in the use of Communication and Information Technology for teaching-learning. Competencies, the profile and the social function of the librarian, if protected by an effective law, constitute an acting network, in which connections light up. Based on that, actions are implemented for entertainment, reading, information and knowledge.

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