

CDNL Annual Meeting, Gothenburg, 12 August 2010

Discussion Group C

Convenor: Penny Carnaby (National Library of New Zealand)

Topic: the role of national libraries in the promotion of literacy

Scope note

1: Do national libraries have a role in promoting literacy?

There is a wide range of contributions that National Libraries can make to the promotion of literacy – including (for example): the provision of supporting infrastructure and resourcing to other libraries, the coordination of policy and strategic initiatives connecting education and libraries, direct provision of programmes and services, the digitisation of content (especially stories reflecting cultural heritage), strengthening expertise and capability, and facilitating key partnerships and collaborations across the literacy landscape.

There is a large body of research which demonstrates the strong connection between literacy achievement and ready access to books and libraries.

Factors that have been shown to have the most significant impact on literacy are:

- Ready access to a wide range of relevant and appealing reading resources
- The presence of ‘enabling’ adults (teachers, family, librarians..) who are themselves positive role models as readers and provide support and encouragement
- Access to effective school libraries as an integral component of the literacy programme
- Creation of a positive reading culture in the wider community that values and celebrates literacy and makes real connections with home culture
- Instructional strategies that proactively aim to support and enable the pleasure of reading and a life-long enjoyment of reading

(Literacy itself is evolving and in the 21st century, the requirements for literacy are more complex and sophisticated. There is a need for higher levels of literacy and the development of new literacies, such as digital, visual, cultural and critical literacies. What was sufficient in terms of literacy 30 years ago will not be sufficient in the future. However, while new developments in the information and knowledge landscape are requiring new literacies, the importance of foundation or basic literacy and the enjoyment of reading remains as critical as ever. This provides the basis for all other literacy skills and research shows that those who have developed fluency and ongoing enjoyment and interest in reading do better on almost every educational indicator as well as other indicators for well-being and success.)

All national libraries have some contribution to make in the promotion of literacy, but the focus and scope of that role is highly variable and dependent upon many factors.

While there is considerable research on what makes a difference to achieving literacy, it is less clear where national libraries should focus their efforts in supporting literacy in their own countries. Are there roles that all national libraries should play in promoting literacy?

The following questions may serve as discussion points.

2. What are the most effective ways for national libraries to promote literacy, at national level?

- What is the role of national libraries in championing literacy through advocacy, public programmes and research?
- How might national libraries work with education agencies to ensure alignment of efforts and resources?
- How can 21st century technologies be used to support literacy development?
- What is the role of national libraries in building capability and expertise across the library sector in supporting literacy ? Is there a role for national libraries in supporting the knowledge and skills of teachers?
- What role could you envisage for national libraries in provision of support and resourcing to school and community libraries?
- How can national libraries work with others to develop and share best practice, research and evaluation?
- Is there a role for national libraries in developing programmes that support reading engagement and motivation?
- Do national libraries have a role in facilitating innovation and entrepreneurial partnerships to achieve literacy goals?
- How can national libraries provide effective online services and resources to support literacy/?
- Is there a role for national libraries in supporting publishing ?
- What role can national libraries play in the development of national policy and strategy to support literacy?
- Should national libraries play a leadership role in promoting and developing programmes to support 21st century literacies?
- How can national libraries facilitate national and local partnerships between education, libraries and community and cultural agencies?
- How could legislation and structures be developed to enable national libraries to support literacy effectively?
- How can national libraries facilitate stronger alignment between education policy, economic development, ICT and digital developments and library provision in support of literacy goals?
- What is the role of national libraries in developing and supporting effective library infrastructure in school and community libraries?
- What is the role for national libraries in strengthening literacy through access to cultural heritage and the preservation of local cultural identity and language?

3: What are the most effective ways for national libraries to promote literacy at regional and international level?

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