

# **IFLA-UNESCO School Library Manifesto 2025**

## **Vision**

The school library program<sup>1</sup> improves and enhances teaching and learning for the entire school community through its qualified school library professionals and staff, physical and digital collections, spaces and equipment, services and activities. In a rapidly evolving information landscape, with emerging technologies generating new opportunities and challenges, the school library's role in active collaborations for literacies, critical thinking, creativity, and global citizenship in inclusive and equitable education is more important than ever.

## **Mission and Goals**

The school library program and its qualified school library professionals focus on student development by providing equitable access for learning experiences and resources, through accessible, welcoming, inclusive learning spaces that enable all members of the school community to become engaged critical thinkers, effective readers, and responsible users, evaluators, and creators of information in multiple formats.

Equitable access to the learning commons in early childhood, primary, and secondary school library<sup>2</sup> environments, resources, and differentiated instructional opportunities for all learners' needs and abilities must be ensured, regardless of age, race, gender, religion, sexual orientation or identity, disability, nationality, language, or professional, economic, cultural, or social status. Specific access must be provided for those who are unable to use mainstream library services and materials.

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<sup>1</sup> School library program: A planned comprehensive offering of teaching and learning activities designed to develop students' media and information literacy skills, research and inquiry skills, engagement in reading, digital skills, and other literacy-related and curriculum-based competencies.

<sup>2</sup> School library: A physical and digital learning space within a public or private elementary or secondary school that serves the information needs of its students and the curriculum needs of its teachers and staff. A school library provides a collection of education materials appropriate to the grade levels of the school. A school library is managed by a school librarian who is dedicated to enhancing the cognitive, personal, social, and cultural growth of students and teachers through activities and services related to reading, inquiry, and research. The school library is known by various terms (e.g., school library media centre, centre for documentation and information, library resource centre, library learning commons).

Access to school library program services and collections should be based on the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, and should not be subject to commercial pressures or any form of ideological, political, or religious censorship.

School libraries link to public libraries, higher education libraries, and the wider information network, in accordance with the IFLA-UNESCO Public Library Manifesto.

The school library is a shared learning environment where the school librarian teaches and works collaboratively with the school community to:

- ensure expert instruction and guidance for all learners as their qualified school library professional;
- support and enhance educational goals as outlined in the school's mission and curriculum;
- ensure a safe learning environment for all learners where their quest for knowledge is respected and supported, and their personal information is protected;
- curate and utilize a broad range of relevant and responsive learning resources, educational games, and instructional strategies that meet all learners' needs and abilities while exposing learners to diverse ideas and opinions, stimuli, opportunities, experiences, resources, and tools;
- co-design active inquiry and discovery learning experiences in physical and virtual spaces;
- foster independent reading for knowledge, understanding, imagination and enjoyment;
- stimulate and enhance reading literacy and enjoyment through a wide range of resources and strategies, including reading aloud at all ages, shared reading, and free voluntary reading year-round;
- provide services and activities during the whole school day and beyond;
- instruct learners in becoming ethical users and creators of information and knowledge, including developing the skills and multiple literacies necessary for navigating current and emerging technologies.
- influence learners to adopt the use of libraries throughout their lives;
- organize learning activities that encourage cultural and social awareness and sensitivity;
- support and enhance cultural and social goals in cooperation with the local community;
- promote and involve the whole school community and beyond in the work of the school library;
- apply and defend the concepts of intellectual freedom and access to information as essential for effective and responsible citizenship and participation in a democracy;
- facilitate professional learning opportunities for teachers and staff, especially related to new resources and technologies, curriculum, and instructional strategies;
- engage in continuous review and renewal of all school library program goals and activities;
- overcome the digital divide and other forms of exclusion.

The school library program fulfills these goals by

- developing equitable policies and instructional programs,
- selecting, acquiring and processing high-quality resources and technologies,
- providing physical and intellectual access to diverse sources of information,
- providing participatory physical and virtual learning environments, and
- employing qualified school library professionals and trained clerical staff.

### **Funding, Legislation, and Networks**

The school library program is essential to every long-term education strategy, including multiple literacies, provision and creation of information, and economic, social, and cultural development. It is the responsibility of local, regional, and national authorities to support school library programs through specific legislation and policies which ensure adequate and sustained funding for qualified school library professionals, materials, technologies, facilities, and life-long professional learning. School library programs must be free of charge to students, school staff, and parents, as well as the local community when library facilities are shared or jointly operated.

The school library program is an essential partner in local, regional, national, and international library and information networks.

Where the school library shares facilities and/or resources with another type of library, such as a public library, the unique aims of the school library must be acknowledged and maintained through an active partnership with a qualified school library professional.

### **Operation and management, including Qualified Professional Library Staff**

To ensure effective and accountable operations in consideration of the school library's role as a whole-school learning space, the school management must:

- include the school librarian's whole-school focus and expertise as part of the school's management strategy;
- provide administrative support to the school library in order to realize the full benefit of a school library program for all learners;
- guarantee that the school library is accessible to all members of the school community and operate within the context of the local and global community;
- make the school library program visible in the school prospectus and website;
- include policies on school library services that are aligned to the goals, priorities, and services of the school's curriculum and the school community's interests;

and the school library must:

- have administration-endorsed policies regarding learning resources development and freedom of access to information;
- be organized and maintained according to professional standards;

- collaborate with teachers, senior school management, administrators, parents, other librarians and information professionals, and community groups;
- utilize an ongoing monitoring, evaluation, and accountability process, whose data are discussed and shared with the school and local community members and stakeholders.

The school librarian is a professionally qualified and motivated staff member responsible for planning and managing the school library program as its information specialist, dedicated to working together with all members of the school community, and liaising with the public library and others in the wider community. The school librarian should be a member of a relevant library association.

The school librarian should be supported in the school library routine by adequate clerical staff trained in school library procedures, and can be helped by well-trained volunteers in accordance with school policies.

The qualifications and role of the school librarian and clerical staff will vary according to the budget, curriculum, and teaching methodology of the school, within local, regional and national legal and financial frameworks.

In the modern information network, qualified school library professionals must be good leaders, competent in planning and teaching evolving literacies and digital competencies, operating and managing the school library facility and program, and responsible to students and teachers, the school community as a whole, and the local community for cooperative arrangements.

### **Promoting and Disseminating the Manifesto**

Every child deserves the benefits of a school library program as described in this Manifesto in support of United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) #4: “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.” (<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg4>)

Access to information (SDG target 16.10), Culture (target 11.4) and ICT (targets 5b, 9c, and 17.8), as stated by the UN and endorsed by the IFLA, should be guaranteed to the school community as a whole.

Governments, through their Ministries and Departments responsible for education, are urged to develop strategies, policies, plans, and ongoing reviews which implement the principles of this Manifesto.

Principals of schools and local school administrative boards are encouraged to adopt this Manifesto in their strategic documents in order to help their students to become responsible citizens.

*Approved in the 13<sup>th</sup> Session of the Intergovernmental Council of UNESCO IFAP, April 2025*