Introduction: A Gentle Manifesto on the Relevance and Obscurity of School Libraries in LIS Research

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One area in many library and information science (LIS) education programs consistently occupies the far end of the prestige spectrum: school librarianship. As Evelyn Daniel wrote in the *Reader in Library and Information Services*, "School librarianship [is] frequently regarded as a low status and alien activity by both the education and library professions" (1974, p.57). To gain necessary recognition and continue to develop as a field, she concluded, awareness and understanding of the complexities of school libraries must come from library and information science educators, practitioners, and researchers (Daniel, 1974).

The intent of this issue of *Library Trends* is to begin to shift staid conceptions of school librarianship in the LIS academy to the idea of dynamic educational informatics in schools; this shift in perception can have tremendous impact upon preparation curriculum, professional practice, and research trajectories in all areas of library and information science. At present, few opportunities to encounter school library-related research exist in the information science community. School librarianship has only two peer-reviewed journals, *School Library Media Research* and *School Libraries Worldwide*. Research articles about school libraries appear infrequently in information and library science periodicals aimed at a broader audience.

Schools as Research Contexts

Schools are organized around the intersection of information and communications technology (ICT); teaching and learning; and information creation, provision, and use: topics applicable to many areas of current studies in library and information science. This intersection more aptly defines the study of information contexts in schools as a research-driven educational informatics rather than practice-driven school librarianship. The budding field of educational informatics encompasses the human

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effect of using digital information resources, services, systems, and media for learning and education and the development of practical and organizational knowledge relevant to using information and communication technology (ICT) and digital resources (Ford, 2004; Levy et al., 2003) and has yet to be applied to K-12 schools. The content of this issue of *Library Trends* sets the scene for just such an application.

Myriad current policy and social pressures affecting schools have created a prime opportunity for fresh academic exploration of the flow and effect of information for learning, teaching, and administration. Educators are faced with choices resulting from sweeping changes in their practice and culture; school libraries are at the nexus of these changes. Schools have been radically altered by governmental educational mandates like *No Child Left Behind* and its focus on standardized testing. Testing has narrowed the curriculum (Cawelti, 2006), constrained pedagogical approaches (Valli & Bueses, 2007), and left little classroom time for exploration and inquiry (Cornelius-White, 2007; Engel & Randall, 2009).

The consistently high enrollments in master's-level school librarian preparation programs (Shannon, 2004) suggest that interest in information practice in schools persists in the midst of an uncertain job market (Boltz, Daniel, & Powell, 2006). Indeed, calls are coming from within the educational establishment to reclaim the energy children are directing at learning activities outside of classroom (Cilesiz, 2009) by reformatting and regaining time in school with more unstructured time that allows children to explore their interests and build prior knowledge (Archibald, 2006; Bolliger, 2006; Hirsch, 2006). An ideal site for self-directed learning is the school library.

What Are School Libraries and School Librarians?

The LIS academy's ambivalence toward school librarianship (Esser, 2004) may stem from a lack of information about the function of current school libraries and the information professionals who lead them. Often, people overlay their personal experiences onto their perceptions of school libraries and librarianship (Hartzell, 2004) without considering the decade or more of progress that has occurred between those contacts and the current time and the bountiful research opportunities that school libraries provide.

Today, school libraries are as varied as the communities their schools serve. School librarians are prepared for and guided by principles that emphasize collaboration with teachers, contribution to the overall excellence of the school, development of children's leisure and academic interests, promotion of career possibilities, facilitation of creative expression, and support for student learning in the classroom (AASL, 2007, 2009). Monikers such as "learning leader" (Loertscher, 2007), "instructional partner" (American Association of School Librarians [AASL] and Association for

Educational Communications and Technology [AECT], 1998), and others that include responsibilities relating to teaching, learning, resource provision, technology, leadership, and outreach have done seemingly little to build understanding of school libraries as both independent and interdependent information organizations in the larger LIS community. These important roles demand examination, investigation, and understanding.

School Libraries as Research Contexts

In his influential book *Pasteur's Quadrant: Basic Science and Technological Innovation*, Donald Stokes (1997) argued that scientific research falls into quadrants, as depicted in figure 1.

Each of these quadrants can be represented by the research of a particular scientist, whether that work is advanced theory or use. The upper left quadrant contains pure basic research that is not meant to have immediate use in the real world. Research like that of theoretical physicist Niels

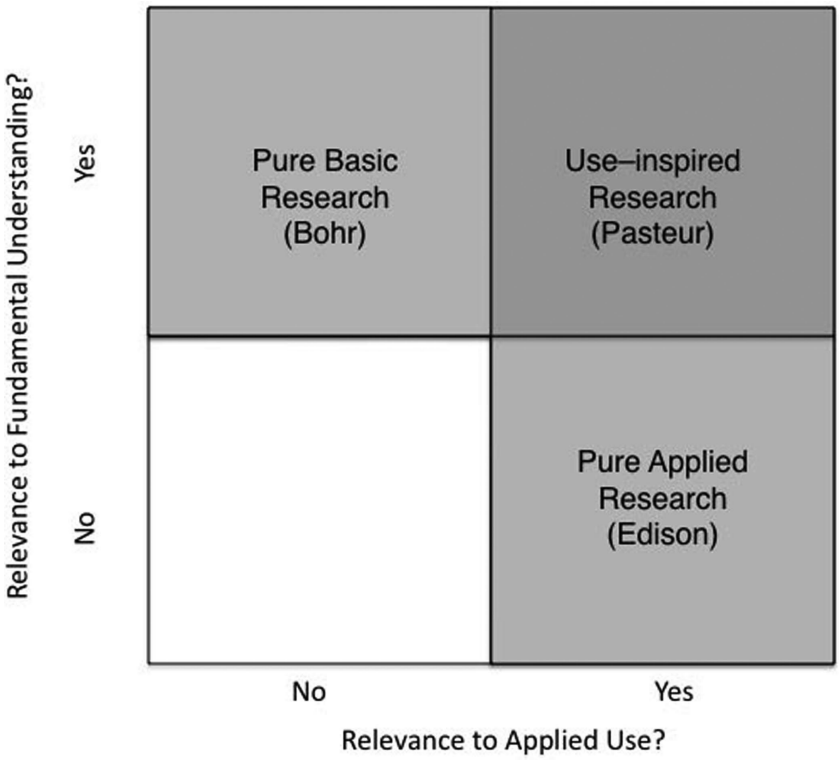

Figure 1. The relationship between basic and applied scientific research as proposed by Stokes (1997).

Bohr is placed in this quadrant. In contrast, the lower right quadrant is represented by the work of scientific entrepreneur and inventor Thomas Edison. Edison's work was pure applied research because he was primarily interested in its application to market. The lower left quadrant contains work that is neither theoretical nor applied, but is not driven by the desire either to advance knowledge or to practical solutions. Classification or taxonomy work fits into this quadrant. The upper right quadrant contains "use-inspired basic science," a dialogic and interdependent blend of research and application, like the disease prevention work of Louis Pasteur, hence Stokes' title of *Pasteur's Quadrant*. Stokes' illustration of Pasteur's quadrant was important to the scientific academy because it gave context to applied science and put value on research that led to application.

Stokes' model is a useful template for examining the place of school libraries in LIS research. Figure 2 illustrates a possible relationship between research and practice

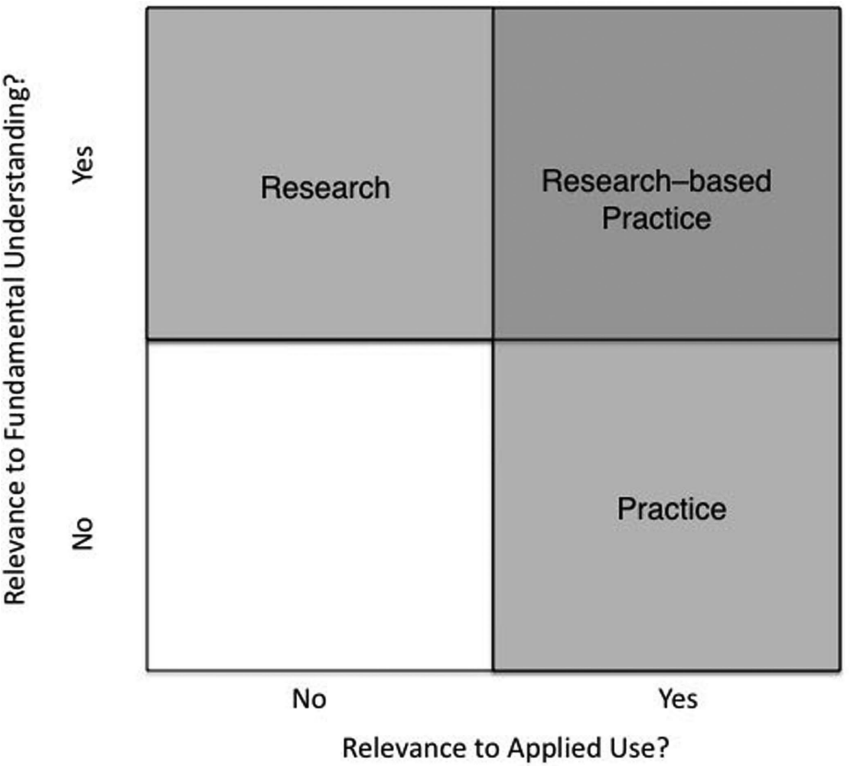

Figure 2. The possible relationship between research and practice in LIS.

The upper quadrant includes research that only furthers knowledge in LIS and has no bearing on the work of practitioners. Likewise, the lower right quadrant includes practice that is not meant to further knowledge in the library and information. The upper right quadrant includes research-based practice and, very importantly, its converse, practice-based research. This quadrant includes activities that pertain to data derived from practice as well as research performed separate from, yet brought to bear on, practice. All areas of practice in LIS have a research "face," and all areas of research have an application or practice face.

When this model is applied to common concentration areas of LIS programs in the latest top ten ranked library and information science programs according to *U.S. News and World Report* (2009) as illustrated in table 1, it appears that the specializations all fit within the upper right quadrant, with none of the programs fitting solely into the upper left or lower right quadrants. The research and practice faces of LIS subfields are difficult to decouple.

This information was gained through an informal survey of LIS program websites; interestingly, this survey revealed that though there is a wide range of options among the programs, school librarianship was present in every program. Because of this, the scholarly study of school libraries and school librarianship should be on equal footing with other specialization areas. That school librarianship is interdisciplinary and involves both research and practice places it in the same quadrant as other fields of study in LIS. I hope that this issue of *Library Trends* begins to shape the research face of the practice of school librarianship.

In this Issue

In the past, *Library Trends* has produced many excellent issues topics related to school librarianship: examinations of youth services (Summer 1998); children's literature (Spring 1979, Winter 1993); women and children (Spring 1996); and children's use of digital resources (Fall 2005). Not since April 1968, however, has an issue focused on the research pertaining to the practice of school librarianship or the function of the school library.

Table 1. Most common concentrations in top 10 LIS programs.

Archives and Records Management	Community Informatics
Digital Libraries	Human Computer Interaction
Incentive-Centered Design	Information Architecture
Information Organization	Information Policy
Information Retrieval	Knowledge Management
Library and Information Services	Preservation of Information
School Librarianship	Social Computing
Special Libraries	Youth Services

The articles in this issue, while seemingly about school libraries, will be of interest to other areas of LIS. Contributors to this issue are documenting phenomena in U.S. schools; however, this issue will also reflect relevant research conducted elsewhere. Papers in this issue also include substantiated recommendations for integrating the study of school librarianship more closely with other areas of library and information science. The research contained in the issue will suggest an agenda for reframing traditional ideas of school librarianship.

The overarching theme of the articles in this issue is that school libraries are dynamic, structured organizations that live within schools but also allow schools, educators, and children to connect with organizations beyond the school. The articles progress from a focus on inside the school building to the overall political scene.

In the first article, "Libraries in Schools: Essential Contexts for Studying Organizational Change and Culture," Dianne Oberg surveys international research on school libraries and makes a strong case for researchers to use school libraries to study organizational and professional change. Eliza Dresang and Kyungwon Koh use the second article, "Radical Change Theory, Youth Information Behavior, and School Libraries," to reframe and extend notions of youth information-seeking behavior to include resources and ways of thinking that reflect the technological and philosophical changes unfolding in a digital world. In the third article, Joanne de Groot and Jennifer Branch reinforce the importance of the traditional roles school and public libraries have played for children and call for the preservation of these roles and their continued integration into children's academic and literacy development.

Building on the idea of development, Virginia Walter explores the ways in which teens can be contributors to and active participants in library resources and services and teach others while they learn in the library in "Sowing the Seeds of Praxis: Incorporating Youth Development Principles in a Library Teen Employment Program." In their article "Building a Strong Web: Connecting Information Spaces in Schools and Communities," Chris Ritzo, Chaebong Nam, and Chip Bruce reinforce the importance of connecting children to the community through libraries by examining a powerful way of encouraging youth to act as community ambassadors and information gatherers.

The outward focus for information and school libraries is continued in "Rethinking Copyrights for the Library through Creative Commons Licensing," in which Cushla Kapitzke sites school libraries in a space of collision between access and intellectual property and investigates viable policy approaches that foster children's expression and creativity while honoring traditional ideas of authorship and ownership. Finally, in "A Decade of Promises: Discourses on Twenty-first-Century Schools in Library Policy and Research," Ellen Hoffman and I take a look back over the last ten years of

changes in information policy affecting school and school libraries and trace implications for the future of a K-12 learning infrastructure.

This issue is intended to be seen as a starting point for intellectual leadership, interdisciplinary research, and agenda-setting necessary to ensure that library and information science advances through research, practice, and research about and because of practice. Greater awareness of school libraries as both a strong subfield of and a viable microcosm for exploration can help to build a research face for the practice of school librarianship and dialogue within the LIS academy.

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