

Window on the World of School Librarianship

By Elizabeth Greef

This global project of the International Association of School Librarianship (IASL), first completed in 2016 after three years' work, offers profiles of 230 countries with information of relevance in building a global perspective on school libraries. These profiles are focused around the school library situation in each country, acquired through contacts with local informed people and/or through research.

It is designed as a means of advocacy for school libraries and for IASL, as an evolving repository for the information IASL gathers about the state of school libraries across the world, as a resource for information and connection, as a starting point for further research and as a framework to centralise this information and make it available.

This project arose from the same source as the PD Library Project (see article in the Interactions section of this issue of *Synergy*), an international SurveyMonkey questionnaire conducted in 2011. The IASL Board gave permission in 2013 to establish an Ad Hoc Committee to bring to realisation some of the recommendations from this survey coordinated by the IASL Vice President Advocacy and Promotion. In helping me decide on the fields to include, the advice of Dr Dianne Oberg was very helpful.

... a resource for information and connection ...

Each profile offers:

- Some statistical data about the country mostly drawn from the *CIA World Factbook*, relating to population, literacy levels, languages spoken and issues facing the country
- An overview of the education system, largely summarised from *Classbase*
- An overview of the school library situation in the country
- Links to important associations and contacts – a starting point for further connection
- Links to literature of the country and the names of some famous authors
- Links to school library programs and advocacy tools
- Links to news and reports
- A link to the information literacy resources related to their country from the *UNESCO Overview of Information Literacy Resources, 2nd edition*, if available.

More fields could be added at a later date such as historical data, more in-depth information on the training of teacher-librarians in each country, links to their school library journals and links to IASL conference papers on school libraries in each country, providing a rich historical resource.

While some of the profiles are of better quality and offer more detail than others, it is hoped that in time this will evolve into an even more substantial, valuable and accurate resource. Consideration has been given to the best format for presenting this information; so many options exist – a wiki, GoogleDocs, a database. Currently it is organised in PDF documents by country but it is hoped that sponsorship may enable open access and in an alternative form.

The process of getting such a large global project to the point of completion has not been without its issues; these include getting useful responses from people contacted, trying to enlist others in the vision for this resource and moving it along to the point of uploading to the website. It appeared that many people were willing to critique a draft but not create the profile, which resulted in a substantial amount of work for the coordinator.

There are many people to thank for their efforts in making Window on the World (WOW) come to fruition. Some of the IASL Regional Directors did a significant amount of work to assist. People from the following countries participated directly in creating or critiquing WOW profiles: Australia, Bangladesh, Brazil, Canada, Croatia, France, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Macau, Malta, Malaysia, Netherlands, Nigeria, Philippines, Portugal, Serbia, South Africa, Turkey, UK, USA,

Vietnam, Zimbabwe.

There are also others whose information was channeled through Regional Directors; further information is still expected from a few countries.

The IASL Board hopes that this WOW Project will be a useful contribution to the school library community and the field of school librarianship. The URL will be <http://www.iasl-online.org/Window-on-the-World-of-School-Libraries>.

***Elizabeth Greef** recently stepped down from the position of IASL Vice President Advocacy and Promotion after a long period in the position. She is the WOW Project Coordinator for IASL and continues to be an active member of the international school librarianship community.*