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# Global Perspectives: Exploring School-Based Brazilian Librarianship Through Institutional Ethnography

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*Exploring the practices of school-based librarians in other countries fosters new knowledge, contributing to global communities of practice. In 2013, researchers conducted an institutional ethnography study of school-based Brazilian librarianship in South Brazil. Themes identified were: collaboration, literacy, instruction, technology integration, and the learning environment. Themes reflect common challenges faced by Brazilian school libraries such as institutional barriers to collaboration, division of instructional duties, access to materials, and staffing. Themes also speak to distinct ways in which Brazilian school libraries reflect the social and economic disparity between private schools and government-funded public schools, as well as Brazilian society at large.*

## Introduction

The need to equip today's youth with complex 21st century information literacy and knowledge construction skills is galvanizing educators all over the world to question professional foundations and change traditional practices. Brazil, a rising global economic leader and the largest country in South America, is no exception:

Thanks to an incredible amount of institutional advancement, and a rare combination of factors, the nation burst on the global stage bolstered by its diversified exports, the success of ethanol and a recent conquest in the growth of investment, distinctions usually associated with economies classified as solid and trustworthy (Guandalini, 2008, p. 2).

In spite of its explosive growth and economic stabilization, Brazil still struggles with high illiteracy rates, extreme poverty, and diseases such as yellow fever and dengue fever. *Veja*, a major news publication in Brazil, asked its readers, "With which pair of wings will Brazil fly?" (Guandalini, 2008, p. 6). The *Veja* article called for Brazil to invest in improving access to and quality of education so that its citizens are capable of critically analyzing information, participating in scientific inquiry and contributing to a modern economy.

School-based Brazilian librarianship, despite its efforts to answer this call through expansion of its instructional role, reflects the social and economic disparity visible between middle and upper class private schools and government-funded public schools, as well as Brazilian society at large. Although the field faces unique challenges related to culture, government structures and the history of Brazilian education, many of the issues confronted by school-based Brazilian librarians are quite similar to challenges faced by school-based librarians in other countries. In the summer of 2013, the authors of this paper, one a Brazilian immigrant and native Portuguese speaker, were invited to attend the Brazilian Congress of Librarianship,

Documentation and Information Science (CBBB) annual conference in Florianópolis, Santa Catarina. This invitation came as a result of the CBBB hosting the first Brazilian school library forum, which endeavored to develop an awareness and advocacy of school library issues in the area of national public policy (Campello, 2013). School-based Brazilian librarianship has not been extensively or critically analyzed in English-language research publications. However, the unprecedented access created by the presence of a native speaker (with North American ties) who facilitated in depth conversations at the CBBB, motivated us to ask: "What are the experiences, practices, and challenges of school-based Brazilian librarians in efforts to meet the needs of 21<sup>st</sup> century learners?"

In order to answer the research question, in the summer of 2013, the authors spent eight days in Florianópolis, Santa Catarina, Brazil, attending sessions at the school library forum, connecting with school library researchers, leaders and practitioners, reviewing Brazilian academic research on librarianship, accessing key government documents and conducting multiple school site visits.

In this article, we use the term *school-based librarians* to refer to Brazilian librarians who work in primary and secondary schools. We use this term in an attempt to accurately identify this library professional's role within Brazilian educational culture and context. The majority of Brazilian librarians who work in primary and secondary schools are not certified teachers, have not completed pedagogical coursework, and do not self-identify primarily as pedagogues. The study participants consider themselves to be first and foremost, librarians.

### **Brazilian Government Initiatives and the School Library**

In the fall of 2003, President Lula instituted a national policy that set parameters for the commercialization, distribution, and access to reading materials, particularly print books, the *Política Nacional do Livro*, Law nº 10.753. This law describes the book as the main, irreplaceable vehicle for dissemination of culture, transmission of knowledge, fostering of social and scientific research, conservation of national identity, and social edification as well as improvement in quality of life. The goal of this policy was to promote and support a nation of readers. Several sections of the law directly affect Brazilian school libraries. Chapter 4, article 13, section 2, for example, claims the federal government is responsible, through appropriate agencies, for creating and expanding programs that stimulate the habit of reading in both public and private venues, introduce dedicated reading time in schools, and guarantee the existence of a basic collection of books for all school libraries (Presidência da República do Brasil, 2003).

In 2005, a national census identified 108,500 schools and over 13 million primary and secondary students with no access to a school library (Campello et al., 2011). A 2006 environmental study conducted by the Programa Nacional Biblioteca da Escola (National Library of the School Program) found that the majority of spaces identified as school libraries were nothing more than a reading room or a small corner with a stack of books. Schools that included the school library space in architectural planning were rare. The scan found the majority of school library collections were not catalogued to standard (electronically or otherwise), and that it was common to find books still in original packaging, or locked away. As a result, in 2008 the Federal Council of Librarianship (CFB) established the School Library Project: The Construction of an Information Network for Public Education (CFB, 2014). The project aimed to raise public awareness and government support for the establishment of school libraries in every Brazilian public and private school.

The most direct result of this effort was that in May of 2010, the Brazilian Congress passed Law 12.244, referred to as "Universalização das Bibliotecas" (Libraries in all Brazilian Educational Institutions). The law contains three articles. Article one states that all educational institutions, whether public or private, must have a library. Article two requires that this library contain a

minimum of one title per student enrolled at the institution, and article three gives all institutions ten years (until 2020) to meet the requirements of this law (Presidência da República do Brasil, 2010). In order to help schools with the implementation of Law 12.244, the Institute of Studies on School Librarianship at the Federal University of Minas Gerais (in Portuguese, referred to as "GEBE") adapted *Information Power* (the American publication), creating standards appropriate to the present realities and political and educational climate of Brazilian education titled, *The School Library as a Space for the Creation of Knowledge* (Campello et al., 2011).

A detailed analysis of the document is beyond the scope of this article, but a brief overview identifies two sections: 1) parameters and indicators that address the physical space, collection, computers and internet access, organization of materials, services and activities, and personnel; and 2) an instrument for evaluation and planning of the school library (GEBE, 2010). While Law 12.233 vaguely describes a school library as "a collection of print materials in a designated space," *The School Library* clearly defines a space as a school library if it meets the following criteria:

- A defined physical and exclusive space that sufficiently accommodates a collection, room for user services and activities and room for technical and administrative services;
- Contains a variety of materials that meets the interests and needs of its users;
- Contains a professionally catalogued collection where materials can be found and retrieved with ease;
- Provides internet access;
- Functions as a space for learning; and
- Is staffed by a qualified librarian and adequate (in number and in qualification) assistant personnel.

The GEBE Institute and the Federal Council of Librarianship continue to advocate for a strong and vibrant school library program, staffed by a professionally trained librarian, at every Brazilian public and private school. The resulting government mandates described in this section, although unfunded respond to a growing awareness of the importance of school libraries among the Brazilian public at large.

## **Review of Literature**

While legal and advocacy efforts of groups such as the Federal Council of Librarianship address school library facilities and materials, there is little description of the roles and duties of Brazilian school-based librarians present in the documents previously referenced. Therefore, this section explores the roles and duties of Brazilian school-based librarians as discussed in the academic literature of Brazilian librarianship.

### ***School-Based Brazilian Librarians as Pedagogues***

Brazilian education distinguishes between the pedagogue<sup>1</sup> and the librarian, differentiating the expertise in each field (Martucci, 2000). While the pedagogue's expertise comprises content area knowledge and pedagogical practices that help students master content, the librarian's expertise centers on the process of information transfer: production, distribution, curation, storage, cataloging, retrieval, and access (Campello, 2003). Even so, educational and library science researchers began advocating for the instructional role of the library professional, perceiving teaching to be firmly anchored in reference activities:

If one considers the social practice of reference an educational process, the librarian can be seen as a school-based librarian, working with his or her users-students...the reference librarian, coordinator of the user's development and growth as an information literate individual, helps to guide the user's information access and

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<sup>1</sup> "Pedagogues" is a term used in Brazilian librarianship research as well as professionally among Brazilian educators. This term is used in this paper to preserve authenticity and accuracy in translation.

selection according to the user's prior experience and the user's individual learning needs. (Martucci, 2000, p. 104)

Mueller (1998) clearly positioned Brazilian librarians as educators when explaining that, like most pedagogues, librarians concern themselves with "guiding people in the acquisition of knowledge, preparing them so that they might, on their own, find the information they need at the moment it is needed" (p. 66). In other words, both librarians and pedagogues hold the ability to engage in life-long learning as a goal for their users and students.

Around the same time, the term "alfabetização informacional" (information literacy), began cropping up in discussions of Brazilian librarianship. It was first mentioned by Caregnato (2000), who expanded on the concept of users as students, reiterating the need for university librarians to begin considering educational approaches that helped college students develop information-seeking behaviors necessary for interacting in a digital world. The appearance of "information literacy" in professional discussions and publications is viewed as a pivotal shift in traditional activities of the librarian. It marked "the necessity for an amplification of the pedagogical function of the library (or, in other words, the construction of a new educational paradigm for the library) and a rethinking of the role of the librarian" (Campello, 2003, p. 29). In regards to school-based librarianship, the educational role of the school-based Brazilian librarian was most easily integrated into teaching alphabetization, reading and writing instruction, fostering the ability to engage with information available in new formats (Campello, 2003).

Despite this call for an expansion of the instructional role of the librarian, and continued discussions among school-based librarians regarding this role, Campello et al. (2007) claimed the instructional role is still weakly applied. An in-depth analysis of the work occurring in school libraries across the country found the instructional role to be "conducted in an inconsistent and simple manner, consequently contributing little to the process of learning, resulting in libraries isolated in the school environment and a weakening of the dialogue between the librarian and classroom teachers" (p. 228).

More recently, Valadares da Silva and Moraes (2014) observed a continued separation of school libraries from other school spaces in a case study on the experiences of the school library coordinator for a public school network in Vitória, Espírito Santo. These researchers noted that the most commonly held view (by the general public and by educators within the network) was that the school library was a "space of silence, for the storage and lending of books, disconnected from daily school activities, and ignorant of curricular and pedagogical practices" (p. 18). Valadares da Silva and Moraes found that librarians throughout the network were generally met with resistance and suspicion by other employees. The researchers suggested this resistance might be due to the relative newness of librarians (added to the network in 2005). However, the school library coordinator interviewed for this study admitted that there is still much work to be done in establishing the pedagogical function of the school-based librarian, citing the complete absence of any reference to the school library or librarian in curricular directives and curriculum materials provided by the Brazilian Ministry of Education.

### ***The School Library's Role in Reading Promotion***

The 2011 *Portraits of Literacy in Brazil*, a study commissioned by the Instituto Pró-Livro (Pro-Book Institute), attempted to classify the reading behaviors of Brazilians. Accessing over 5,000 households in 315 counties, researchers conducted face-to-face interviews with an estimated 30,000 Brazilian residents, ages 5 and above. The top three reasons Brazilians interviewed for this study gave for reading were: 1) reading for life learning (64%), 2) reading for professional learning (41%), and 3) reading for school or college (35%); a finding that mirrors the Brazilian school library's traditional focus on reading for literacy development and research (referred to as *didactic*

*reading*) as opposed to reading for pleasure (Weiszflog et al., 2011). Two more key findings from the *Portraits* study provide insight into the ways Brazilian readers identify and think about libraries. First, when asked who influenced the reader in his or her reading habits the most, 45% of respondents named an educator. Twenty-six percent listed the school library as the main source for access to reading materials. Second, when asked "What is the library to you?" 71% identified it as a place to study, 61% as a place to conduct research, 28% a place for students, and 16% a place for school work (Weiszflog et al., 2011).

The perception of a library as a source of reading material for research and learning is established early, as evidenced by the *Parâmetros Curriculares Nacionais* (National Curricular Parameters) documents that provide the curriculum framework for all Brazilian schools. The documents identify school libraries, in conjunction with classroom libraries and reading activities, as primary in the development of good readers (Campello et al., 2007). Given this situation of the library in the school, it is not surprising that the library as a cultural or entertainment space does not figure in the mind of the Brazilian reader. Additionally, the concept of building a nation of readers against the backdrop of higher illiteracy rates has long been a key concern and tension within Brazilian education. Reading promotion holds a prominent place in the plans, policies and mandates of government agencies and public organizations developed over the last ten years (Moreira & Duarte, 2014).

Many school-based librarians identify reading promotion and support as the field's most crucial role (Campello et al., 2007). However, Moreira and Duarte (2014) explained that Brazilian librarians have yet to differentiate between reading for learning (didactic reading) and reading for pleasure, a confusion they attribute to the absence of a reading curriculum developed specifically for the school library and the school-based librarian. Regardless of the lack of precise nomenclature, the importance of reading for *learning*, and the educators chiefly responsible for its development, is well established in Brazilian education. Classroom teachers, leaders in this movement, embedded reading instruction in the study of other content areas. This instruction oftentimes pulled from classroom libraries (in large part donated by book publishers) that included textbooks, supporting tests and, in upper grades, classic literature. Many school libraries were originally (or still are) maintained by classroom teachers, so that pedagogical practices that support reading for *learning* are still viewed by many as the domain of classroom teachers, and not school-based librarians (Moreira & Duarte, 2014).

Even so, a shift in public perception may be on the horizon, as highlighted in a recent article by a nationally syndicated news columnist who analyzed the 2011 *Portraits of Literacy in Brazil* findings. The columnist noted, with concern, a pattern of significant drop in library use between the grades of 5 and 9 (Weiszflog et al., 2011). Some government officials interviewed for the column attribute this drop to teachers who do not have enough time to plan didactic reading activities to take place in the library. However, other stakeholders interviewed blame the singular use of school libraries for research. These stakeholders contend that if books are used for research purposes only, then the Internet will likely replace them. Instead, Gois (2014) expressed, school administrators should avail themselves of school library professionals who can help promote lifelong reading for pleasure through other means, including but not limited to cultural activities. This shift is also reflected in the results of Brazilian academic research on librarianship with many researchers (e.g., Almeida Júnior, 2007; Carvalho & Souza, 2012) concluding that librarians should be recognized as information experts who encourage reading for pleasure to help learners develop intellectually as information users and information creators.

## Methodology

Social science researchers choose their research methods based on the area of investigation and the research questions (Creswell, 2009). Institutional ethnography, while rarely utilized in library and

information science (LIS) research, is a methodology that enables the researcher to connect issues across multiple (and unfamiliar) sites, uncovering how institutional factors shape practice in sometimes unrecognized ways. Therefore, it served as a strong approach for investigating the practices of librarians in a different country and context.

### ***Institutional Ethnography as a Theoretical Foundation***

In developing IE, Smith (2005) started with the assumption that social life is produced through the routine interactions of all participants in a social setting, such as an institution. With IE, an institution is defined as the coordination of people through broad organized practices, working across time and geographic spaces. IE aims to capture how these activities are organized around a distinctive function such as law, education, or international development (Campbell & Gregor, 2004). IE researchers attempt to explain *problematic* situations by investigating how people's actions are coordinated and how people's experiences are organized within an institution. The IE researcher learns by focusing on actual people, their work, and the conditions of their work (Given, 2008), beginning with "the experience of the individuals in a local setting, but aiming to go beyond what can be known at that local setting" (Campbell & McGregor, 2004, p. 59).

IE research examines everyday experiences and activities in a local setting in order to explicate the translocal (outside) institutional processes and practices that shape and govern daily work (Campbell & Gregor, 2004; DeVault & McCoy, 2006; Smith, 2005). Smith (2005) calls these translocal forces *ruling relations*. These ruling relations exercise power and coordinate the activities and actions of people in and across various and multiple local settings (DeVault & McCoy, 2006). IE provides a lens through which to examine these ruling relations, which the participants themselves may not entirely be aware of, that impact daily work (DeVault & McCoy, 2006).

An IE study does not presuppose a research problem in the traditional sense, yet begins with the actualities of people's experiences. The ontology and epistemology of IE reflect the general values, beliefs, and ideas about social structure and organization that are common in the institution being studied. It is a "way of seeing, from where we actually live, into the powers, processes, and relations that organize and determine the everyday context of that seeing" (Smith, 2005, p. 9). Research questions addressed by institutional ethnography related to common problems and experiences (Given, 2008). IE aims to explore questions about problematic experiences that are characterized by underlying tensions and contradictions that seem to be generated beyond the individuals involved (Campbell & Gregor, 2004). The institutional ethnographer must take on the viewpoint of the people engaged in the problematic experience (Campbell & Gregor, 2004) because only then is the researcher able to investigate the ruling relations of an institution and its effect on local experiences (DeVault & McCoy, 2006). In IE the researcher "inquires, investigates, examines, and observes," but does not impose (Given, 2008, p. 434).

In an IE inquiry, data collection techniques are mainly qualitative approaches, including interview, focus groups, participant observation, and textual analysis. This qualitative data is utilized to develop a description of what the participants do in their everyday work life. Much time is often spent on the collection of data from participants in order to understand the participants' experiences (DeVault & McCoy, 2006; Given, 2008). Then researchers, through examining the descriptions and the participants' stories, "can begin to identify some of the translocal, [or ruling] relations, discourses, and institutional work processes that are shaping the [participants'] everyday work" (DeVault & McCoy, 2006, p. 21).

Because IE research is exploratory, universality and generalizability do not factor into sampling or research design. Rather, the analysis of problems in an institutional setting tends to describe and map nationally or internationally consistent social relations with local differences as

variations in generalized ruling practices of that institution (DeVault & McCoy, 2006; Smith, 2005). IE has been adopted in a variety of professional and human service disciplines, but it is not widely applied in LIS research. Since IE is quite useful in highlighting work that may not be recognized in official institutional discourse, it is especially beneficial to school-based librarianship where work entails both physical and intellectual activities within and beyond traditional learning contexts like classrooms. Applying IE to school-based librarianship helps to develop a map of, as well as pinpoint potential solutions to, the challenges endemic in field.

### **Research Design and Research Question**

IE work-setting research studies are often developed in response to a vague, persistent concern about a situation and the people it affects (Stooke, 2010). In the case of this study, this concern was voiced in the research question: "What are the experiences, practices, and challenges of school-based Brazilian librarians in efforts to meet the needs of 21<sup>st</sup> century learners?" Institutional ethnography lays out a sequence of steps to guide the researcher in this first stage of the research. First, researchers identify a point of entry for the inquiry which for this study, was the researchers' previous experiences with data collection visits to school libraries in other countries, as well as an invitation to present at the Brazilian Congress of Librarianship, Documentation and Information Science (CBBDD).

Next, institutional processes or elements that shape the situation were identified. In this study, these were identified through analysis of conference presentation topics and notes, informal interviews with school library researchers and practitioners, and review of pertinent Brazilian research and government documents. Finally, processes or elements were investigated in order to objectively describe how these shape the situation being studied (DeVault & McCoy, 2006). The third step of this sequence was completed during multiple public and private school library site visits (Campbell & Gregor, 2004).

### **Data Collection**

The purpose of this research was to explore the experiences, practices, and challenges of school-based librarians in Brazil in efforts to meet the needs of 21<sup>st</sup> century learners. The primary function of the data collection was to acquaint the researchers with the work and the concerns of school-based librarians in Brazil; in IE the focus is on looking for "how things happen *here*, in the same way they happen *over there*" (Campbell & Gregor, 2004, p. 69). In IE research one learns by encountering the actualities through observing or talking with those that are directly involved, therefore this study employed the traditional ethnographic methods of participant observations, structured and semi-structured interviews, and content analysis to answer the research question. Field data were collected during eight days in Florianópolis, Santa Catarina, Brazil with numerous subsequent data checks with the Brazilian participants. The first site was a private primary school, the second site, a public primary school, and the third site, a public secondary school. Both the second and third sites belong to the same *rede* (network), considered to be the largest public school system in South America.

### **Description of Sites and Participants**

The first site, a private Catholic Montessori primary school, was located in an affluent neighborhood and averages an enrollment of 500 students in grades Pre-kindergarten through year 8. The library was located near the entrance of the school. A large, airy and inviting space, it was separated into visually distinct areas: a storytelling or theater corner, a workroom, a kitchen, a circulation center, a reading corner, low shelving for younger grades and high shelving for older

grades. In addition, the library housed an updated computer lab with 25 student computers, a projector, and a television. The librarian, *Marinete* (pseudonym used to protect interviewee identity), supervised seven other library employees: three library assistants for the morning shift, three library assistants for the afternoon shift, and one library assistant responsible for the computer lab. The school also employed a full time book restoration specialist who maintained all school print materials. *Marinete* held a degree in library science but was not a certified teacher.

The second site, a public primary school, was located in downtown Florianópolis and housed 2,868 students in grades kindergarten through year 8. Classrooms were located on the first and second floors and opened to a large courtyard. The library was somewhat difficult to locate and took up space equivalent to two classrooms. This space was sunny and cramped, with book carts, magazines, toys, and textbooks vying for room on mismatched shelves. The librarian, *Giselle* (pseudonym), alternated between the morning and afternoon shift, supervising one other library employee. During *Giselle's* absence, the library remained open when there was a probationary teacher available to staff it (probationary teachers are explained further on in this paper). The reading specialist, *Laura*, worked a few doors to the right, and the technology lab, a room with 20 computers, was found a few doors to the left. Library employees had no access to the computer lab and there was no technology present inside the library. *Giselle* held a library science degree but was not a certified teacher.

The third site, a public secondary school, was also located in downtown Florianópolis, housing 3,082 students in years 9 through 11. The library took up two floors of a large room inside a Portuguese colonial style building – one of the remaining original buildings on the century-old campus. A metal spiral staircase connected the bottom floor to the top floor where the fiction collection was shelved. The first floor comprised a teacher lunchroom/ breakroom, a bank of 8-10 non-functioning computers, a small circulation desk, several large tables, and high shelving for textbooks and didactic books. The library remained open during all three shifts. However, the librarian, *Adriana* (pseudonym), who was part-time, was only present for the afternoon shift. Probationary teachers manned the morning and evening shifts. *Adriana* was a former classroom teacher who obtained a library science degree.

### ***Participant Observations***

Participant observation occurs when the researcher participates in the culture while still maintaining the status of an observer (Creswell, 2009). This approach allows the researcher access to the participant's culture while still maintaining objectivity. Utilizing an observation protocol adapted from Johnston (2013), researchers recorded observations and verbal exchanges concerning school library policies, procedures, and practices; the school library collection and facility; types of activities taking place in the library; technology usage; and the roles of teachers and the librarian.

### ***Interviews***

Interviewing is an important element of institutional ethnographic research, and has been described as "talking with people" (DeVault & McCoy, 2006, p. 18). There are no standard sets of questions used for IE interviews. Instead, questions are based partly on what is learned from previous informal conversations and partly on the researcher's accrued knowledge of the social relations constituting the problematic under investigation (DeVault & McCoy, 2006).

Approximately eight structured and semi-structured interviews were conducted with school-based Brazilian librarians and classroom teachers at three separate school site visits, locations purposively selected for offering the most learning opportunities for intense study due to their accessibility (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; DeVault & McCoy, 2008; Tedlock, 2008).



Additionally, informal semi-structured interviews were conducted with librarians and teachers at each site. Interviews were recorded, but were also immediately translated and notated by the researchers, which allowed interviewees to member-check any of the information collected, clarifying possible misinterpretations from translation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researchers used photographs, written sources in Portuguese, and detailed field notes to transcribe pertinent textual data. The use of multiple data sources and continued member checks through follow up emails were used to triangulate data while reviewing material for authenticity and reliability (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008).

### **Data Analysis**

All verbal and textual data collected was transcribed and entered into a spreadsheet for translation and coding. The researchers utilized inductive qualitative content analysis to analyze interview transcripts, notes from presentations, and the observation questionnaires, culling emerging themes from the data (Glaser, 1965; Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). During this process, the researchers applied open codes to the notes and topic headings written in the text during reading to describe manifest and latent aspects of the content. The codes were then grouped according to similarity under higher order themes, and assigned themes using content-characteristic words taken from the professional literature (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Themes are consistent phrases, expressions, or ideas common among the participants derived directly and inductively from the data (Creswell, 2009). Even so, ethnographic researchers who employ fieldwork and content analysis encounter advantages and challenges. An advantage of IE is that the methods used to gather data allow for direct access to the required information, but a challenge is that these methods can only reveal the content that interviewees choose to share during the fieldwork. IE research is used to explore problems at a particular location therefore comparisons to a larger populations are not possible in this type of research design; the conclusions are limited to the immediate problem under this investigation.

### **Findings and Discussion**

This section describes and discusses the themes identified by the researchers. "Themes in qualitative research (also called categories) are broad units of information that consist of several codes aggregated come together to form a common idea" (Creswell, 2013, p. 186). These were: a) collaboration, b) literacy, c) instruction, d) technology, and e) the learning environment. These five themes reflect common practices and challenges faced by Brazilian school library programs, such as institutional barriers to collaboration; the division of instructional duties between classroom teachers, reading specialists, technology teachers and librarians; access to reading materials or technology, and the use of probationary teachers for school library staffing. All themes speak to distinct ways in which Brazilian school libraries reflect the social and economic disparity visible between middle- and upper-class private schools and government-funded public schools.

#### **Theme 1: Collaboration**

The first theme, collaboration, represents a relationship that "facilitates the sharing of meaning and completion of activities with respect to a mutually shared superordinate goal" (Sonnenwald, 2007, p. 3). In school-based librarianship, the superordinate goal is student learning. The theme of collaboration includes practices related to partnering with teachers to teach information literacy skills, supporting content acquisition, and working with other professionals in the building, such as the technology specialist. This theme, as voiced by one of the conference attendees, emerged from descriptions of the struggle to develop collaborative partnerships with classroom teachers who do not consider the school-based librarian a pedagogue: "*I have one of the strongest [fiction]*

*collections in the area but the teachers have no interest in using them or working with me. They don't think I know how to teach."* This perception is exacerbated by both the fact that school-based Brazilian librarians are not typically credentialed teachers and a recent Brazilian legislative move that will enable librarians to obtain licensure after a two-year associate's, or technical, degree. Marinete described the results of collaborative efforts at the private school as mixed:

*Most of the time, the teachers send kids down in small groups to do research. If the kids are completing projects on a topic, they turn in the topic to me and I prepare a file of different resources on their reading level for them to use. I do try to partner with teachers occasionally, but not many of them are open to that. One of my biggest collaborators is the art teacher. We work together on all kinds of projects and these projects tend to bring in more kids even after school.*

Giselle and Adriana described the extent of their collaboration as the pulling of resources and materials for teachers or students. Adriana mentioned that previously, when the *rede* (network) could afford to support a reading specialist and librarian at the secondary school for all three shifts, true collaboration occurred between these two professionals and the music and art teachers:

*When we had people here, we could recruit more volunteers and the library was always packed. We put together this incredible program for 6<sup>th</sup> grade that integrated music, art, literature and the library. They even created materials on the computer, but now, we don't have the manpower.*

Giselle highlighted the impracticality of collaboration when librarians were inconsistently staffed for one or two of three school shifts: *"If I start something, there is no one here to finish it. So what's the point?"*

Despite the difference in scheduling between the private and public schools, it is interesting that of all the themes culled from the data, collaboration distinguished itself as the one area in which all librarians interviewed for this study experienced a significant struggle. This suggests that collaboration may not be as dependent on resources, space, or scheduling, as much as it is tied to how librarians are perceived by other educators in the building.

## **Theme 2: Literacy**

The second theme, literacy, relates to data collected on reading instruction, collection development, and access to reading materials. The Literacy in Learning Exchange defines literacy as an ability that moves beyond reading and writing: *"it has always been a collection of cultural and communication practices shared among members of particular groups [so that] as society and technology change, so does literacy"* (LILE, 2014). Campello (2003) seconded this definition and called on Brazilian librarians to help users become literate in current and future information sources. As previously discussed, the Brazilian federal government engaged in a strong legislative push for literacy and leisure reading, exemplified in national reading studies, and federal legislation mandating school libraries in every educational institution, both private and public. The three sites visited during this study presented starkly contrasting pictures. The ways definitions of literacy and government initiatives impacted reading and the materials available in library and classroom collections seemed to be different at each site.

Much of Marinete's work in reading instruction emphasized discovery and personal enjoyment (an approach in line with the Montessori philosophy of the school). Marinete pointed to a display in the storytelling corner. Several paper flowers with small quotes were hung from the ceiling on long strings. She explained this display was used formally and informally to encourage student reading:

Marinete: *I wanted this project to introduce them to the different poetry books we have here in the library. Each flower hanging from the ceiling has a quote from a poem and the call number so they can look for the book if they become curious.*

Researcher: Can the students look at these anytime they want to?

Marinete: *Oh yes! Anytime. I've even added a few based on student suggestions.*

Researcher: Is this part of a formal lesson you deliver in the library?

Marinete: *Yes. I read several poems and introduced them to different books that we had. These flowers are a mystery for them to solve because if they like the quote, they have to hunt for the book and find the poem that the quote is from.*

In the primary public school, Giselle clearly stated she did not deliver instruction, a detail further explored in the next theme. She led a scheduled storytelling time for younger grades (pre-kindergarten to year 4). However, the purpose of this activity was to introduce students to reading materials available in the collection. Adriana, the librarian at the secondary public school, did not identify nor describe any instructional activities led by the library other than supporting teacher-led student research.

Inequality and disparity was particularly evident when comparing and contrasting the collections at all three sites. To follow through its support of reading initiatives and legal mandates, the federal government infrequently ships boxes of textbooks and didactic materials to public and private school libraries. Book publishers also donated class sets of classic Brazilian literature as well as other translated young adult titles. In the case of the primary private school, these materials made up a small portion of the overall collection. In fact, Marinete frequently sold duplicate and worn books at the end of the year as a quick fundraiser. However, in both public schools the majority of books available for student use were these donated, didactic texts and class sets.

None of the librarians interviewed were given a budget for book purchases, but while Marinete had autonomy in selecting titles and turning in that list to administration for purchase, Giselle and Adriana made do with books that were donated or provided by the *rede*. Not once did Giselle or Adriana mention having control over the development of the collection itself. The age of the collections also varied greatly. While the private school boasted newer books, title variety and strong library binding, the public schools struggled with maintaining paperbacks, photocopied spiral-bound books and out-of-date reference materials.

### **Theme 3: Instruction**

The third theme, instruction, arose from the role of the school-based librarian in planning or delivering some type of instruction whether to an individual, a small group, or whole group. Data collected at the sites visited reflected a preference for flexible scheduling for research, fixed scheduling for checkout, and a unique Brazilian approach to division of labor. The typical duties associated with school-based librarianship in the United States, technology integration, reading enrichment, and collection development for example, are divided amongst the classroom teacher, the reading specialist, the technology/computer teacher and the school-based librarian. This division is fiercely protected in some of the schools visited, where one interviewee was warned by her principal (before speaking with us) to “not complain or share negative information because this is democratic rationing.”

As mentioned in the previous section, Giselle, the librarian at the public primary school, led storytelling times in the library. She gave out awards for the student who checked out the most books, the student who took the best care of his or her books, and the student who logged the most books read. However, any literacy or reading enrichment units or activities were the purview of the reading enrichment specialist. In fact, one of the reading activities the specialist recently completed was on *The Napping House* (Wood, 2000), a common elementary school library teaching

activity in the United States. Giselle and the reading specialist had a strong working relationship and seemed to genuinely enjoy each other's company. They agreed that oftentimes their work overlapped and that they were happy to partner on reading projects if the opportunity presented itself.

Marinete had a bit more flexibility in defining her pedagogical role. She frequently taught research skills, small units on different genres and, as previously mentioned, collaborated with other teachers at the school. When asked about the division of labor observed, Marinete described it as a strength:

*You know, a lot of libraries complain that they have no money or no way to host activities, but there are ways when you divide the work. You can recruit volunteers, establish partnerships...I've established partnerships with a retirement home, with an artist organization, with the city, with anyone who wants to work with me. I may not be able to do it all, but there is someone who is better at it than me and can help me.*

It is not difficult to understand why the division of labor is readily accepted. It is present in other facets of Brazilian society such as retail settings, where an individual sells the item, another logs the purchase, a third rings up the purchase, a fourth wraps up the purchase, and a fifth delivers the purchase to the customer. Marinete's ability to supersede this structure, and her willingness to partner with others may be due to her working at a school that is much smaller, and structured around the Montessori philosophy which fosters community.

#### **Theme 4: Technology**

The fourth theme, technology, categorized practices using technology for instruction, social media participation, testing, and for library administrative purposes. This theme was the second thread that most clearly reflected the disparity witnessed between public and private schools. The private school had access to a state-of-the-art computer lab housed within the school library, wireless Internet, and a computer lab instructor that operated under the supervision of the librarian. The school offered off-campus access to library databases and online resources curated by the librarian. Technology instruction was delegated to the computer lab instructor and did not consist of a formal technology curriculum. Rather, technology skills were taught on an as-needed basis, tied to research or homework assignments, or personal projects students were interested in pursuing. As far as technology for administrative purposes, the library catalogue was fully automated with a checkout desk that included a scanner and monitor.

In contrast, both public school librarians described their technology as outdated and unusable. The primary public school library had one computer available for the librarian. However, at the time of our visit, the computer was not working, and Giselle had been waiting on it to be fixed for quite some time. Other than this computer, there was no other technology visible or available. The technology lab, housed in a separate classroom, was inaccessible to Giselle, who did not have a key. At the secondary school, a bank of older computers, located at the back, was deemed unusable. There was no wireless Internet available in either the primary or secondary campus. Administratively speaking, none of the public school libraries had online or offline catalogues. Adriana explained that the books were not catalogued and that she was one of the few individuals who knew how to locate books in the collection. Neither library had a web presence nor did these provide online materials for students to access outside of school hours.

#### **Theme 5: The Learning Environment**

The fifth theme, the learning environment, included practices related to creating a physical space conducive to meeting the needs of 21<sup>st</sup> century learners. Data was collected on displays of

instructional projects and school library programs developed and maintained by the librarians interviewed for this study. The Brazilian adaptation of *Information Power, The School Library as a Space for the Creation of Knowledge* (Campello et al., 2011), set two levels for the evaluation of school library spaces. Table 1 classifies the three spaces visited according to the levels determined by *The School Library*:

**Table 1. Participants' school library sites rated with criteria from the Brazilian adaptation of *Information Power***

	Basic	Exemplary
Library Room Size	530 square ft to 1050 square ft	3200 square ft and above
Room Size Rating	Public Primary Public Secondary	Private Primary
Library Seating	Sufficient to accommodate one class	Sufficient to accommodate one class and a group of students checking out
Seating Rating		Private Primary
Technical/ Administrative Services	One checkout station, one table, one chair and one internet connected computer for the exclusive use of the librarian	One checkout station, one table, one chair, one internet connected computer for the exclusive use of the librarian, one space dedicated to additional technical services
Services Rating		Private Primary

The private primary school library rated exemplary in all three physical space categories. The public primary and public secondary school libraries rated as basic in library size but did not rate as basic in seating nor technical/ administrative services. Neither of the public school libraries visited had space to accommodate one class of students. At the secondary school this was an especially challenging issue, because class sizes averaged 48-50 students. Neither of the public school libraries visited had a checkout computer connected to the Internet. However, as mentioned in theme 4, the collections at these libraries were not catalogued electronically. Therefore, it would be unreasonable to assume the presence of a checkout computer.

Many of the instructional projects displayed, as well as school library programs established, reflected a strong, nationalistic focus, an intentional threading of Brazilian culture and local folklore, rich integration with fine arts such as drama and puppetry, and inclusion of materials provided by the federal government. Students explored different elements of state culture, including figures from folklore, traditional musical instruments, and indigenous art and storytelling. Much of the effort put into displays and programs served to promote the library to students and parents. Marinete explained:

*I always tie displays to the overall theme of the school [changes monthly]. Some of the projects I display here in the library, but some I display in the courtyard and at the entrance to the school. Every display is interactive. That way, the kids have to come into the library and research for more information.*

She meticulously documented every display, every guest author and speaker, and every project, taking pictures and describing the efforts in detail. The documented projects were stored in large three ring binders in her office: "It's a way to justify what I do. I have to document all of this on my own so that if anyone asks why the library is here, I can show them."

Unfortunately, the learning environment theme also addressed the placement of probationary teachers as library assistants. Probationary teachers are not pre-service teachers, nor are they teachers placed on administrative leave because of disciplinary action. Rather, these are individuals who have obtained a medical release from the classroom. According to most of the educators we spoke with, probationary teachers can easily obtain this release from a general physician for reasons such as fragile nerves or ringing in the ears. For this reason, probationary teachers are generally held in a negative view. The law requires that these teachers be allowed to finish their contract with pay, to be reassigned at the school administrator's discretion. Consequently, many end up as library assistants or as library clerks who staff the library during the librarian's absence with little if any training or desire to engage in library work.

At the public primary and secondary schools, probationary teachers were used to maintain the library when it was open during multiple shifts. The secondary school probationary teacher explained that she received no training and did not feel responsible for the collection in any way. She had a habit of writing down questions for Adriana to answer upon her return. On the other hand, Marinete implemented a formal training program with her probationary teachers: "I get a new crop almost every three months and I train them to help me. Some just want a chance to feel needed. Some don't want to work, but more often than not, they end up being a huge help to me." The concern expressed during the School Library Forum surrounding the presence of probationary teachers emphasized two points: 1) depending on the shift a student attended, he or she would not have access to the services of a library professional, so that there was no equity in library programming; and 2) staffing a library with probationary teachers sent the message that a library professional was not needed and not worth a school's financial investment.

### ***Ruling Relations***

The data collected and analysed in this first stage of this investigation came from the interactions and activities of subjects in the local setting, or the subjects whose experience is the problematic under investigation (Campbell & McGregor, 2004). In this first stage of the research we began to identify the institutional process or ruling relations. As themes were established, ruling relations such as legislation, governing boards, professional organizations, education, and administration were apparent in the work of the librarians. Phase 2 of this research will comprise the task of understanding how institutional factors shape practice in sometimes unrecognized ways, the connections across the institution, and the explicating of ruling relations.

### **Conclusion**

The goal of this research study was to examine the practices of school-based Brazilian librarians to learn about these practices, their experiences, and the challenges they face in efforts to meet the needs of 21<sup>st</sup> century learners. In institutional ethnography the focus is on looking for "how things happen *here*, in the same way they happen *over there*" (Campbell & Gregor, 2004, 69). The data collected and analyzed in this first stage of this investigation comes from the interactions and activities of subjects in the local setting, or the subjects whose experience is the problematic under investigation (Campbell & McGregor, 2004). In this first stage of the research we began to identify the institutional process and ruling relations. As themes were established, ruling relations such as legislation, governing boards, professional organizations, education, and administration were apparent in the work of the librarians.

While Mueller (1998) described Brazilian librarians as pedagogues responsible for fostering lifelong learning in their patrons, this study found the instructional role of the school-based librarian to be minimal at best. None of the librarians interviewed for this study described ongoing patterns of true collaboration as defined by Sonnenwald (2007). In the majority of sites visited, the

researchers observed school library spaces that more closely resembled the isolated spaces described by Valadares da Silva and Moraes (2014), as well as the inconsistency in library-classroom collaborations identified by Campello et al. (2007).

Although many researchers (Moreira & Duarte, 2014; Valadares da Silva & Moraes, 2014), have cited suspicion of the librarian's pedagogical expertise as a common reason for this instructional isolation and inconsistency, this study found two additional reasons for the librarian's separation from instruction. First, economic and budgetary concerns at two public schools cut down on the number of employees available to staff the library during different school shifts. In one instance, cutting back on staff resulted in the dissolution of a 6<sup>th</sup> grade interdisciplinary unit. Second, librarians observed for this study were isolated from instruction by a cultural emphasis on division of labor and the delineation of instructional duties (Moreira & Duarte, 2014), a division that kept school librarians from accessing computer labs and delivering reading or literacy activities.

Some of the library activities and programs observed in this study supported the emerging shift in Brazilian attitudes from *didactic reading* toward *reading for pleasure* (Almeida Júnior, 2007; Carvalho & Souza, 2012). One of the sites visited for this project featured Brazilian folklore in its activities, with local artists and storytellers frequently presenting at the library. The Montessori philosophy that anchored the school's curriculum also inspired the librarian to develop reading activities that promoted student discovery of topics of interest, student creative writing, and student artistic expression.

Even so, it is important to note that the data collected in this study revealed only the content that participants chose to share at the time of fieldwork. The results of this present study are not intended to represent the entire field of Brazilian school librarianship. Instead, the data collected represent only the locations visited. As a result, the primary function of this initial data collection was to first acquaint the researchers with the "work and the concerns" of school-based librarians in Brazil, so as to "glean an understanding of the informants' experiences in order to show how these institutional work processes are organized... and identify sites and processes for further investigation" (Campbell & McGregor, 2004, p. 123). More data is needed to uncover and further describe institutional factors that shape school-based librarian experiences and practices in Brazil, as well as on a broader international scale – work that the researchers are presently pursuing.

The identification of the ruling relations provides important information for practicing school-based librarians in any school library setting, by making power structures visible and thus enabling the utilization of this information to strengthen school library programs. While Institutional Ethnography research will not bring solutions, it offers a map of the challenges school-based librarians face, helping them to re-focus their efforts. This knowledge helps school-based librarians develop a clearer view of how to work within the institution to achieve the goals of school-based librarianship: "producing successful learners skilled in multiple literacies" (AASL, 2009, p. 5) and responsible members of society. Additionally, for those educators who prepare future school-based librarians, a glimpse into the reality of the work of school-based librarians assists in designing instruction that reflects best practices on dealing with and overcoming professional challenges. Future school-based librarians should be able to identify, explore and understand the impact of ruling regulations on their work so as to best negotiate power structures within their respective institutions.

In previous research of this type conducted in Germany, Johnston (2013) found similarities in the practices and challenges that emerged through interviews with German school-based librarians. Parallels to the practices of school-based librarians in the U. S. A. and other nations such as Australia (Godfree, 2012; O'Connell, 2012), England (Gildersleeves, 2012; McNicol, 2003), Italy (Marquardt, 2011), Croatia (Špiranec & Zorica, 2011), and Lithuania (Woolls, 2012), were also

apparent. The common practices identified as part of the institution of school librarianship indicate that as a profession, school-based librarians around the world struggle with similar challenges, although the ways these challenges are addressed differ significantly, emphasizing the need for an international exchange of practices and international communities of practice.

Asselin (2011) calls for school library researchers to connect with colleagues throughout the world, to address our issues and struggles on a global scale. Research such as this study should be conducted in other countries, that is, research within the native context that allows for “connections, learning, listening, observing, respecting, letting go of assumptions, discussing, and finding mutually meaningful inquiries (p. 21). Ingrid Parent, President of IFLA recently stated, “We must think globally, act nationally, and deliver locally.” As school-based librarians around the world struggle with strikingly similar challenges, it is important to examine the work of these individuals through a global lens. This worldwide perspective allows us to engage in partnerships that will enable school-based librarians and school library educators to investigate institutional factors that shape our profession, providing opportunities to learn from, share expertise with, and support one another, thus strengthening the practice of school librarianship throughout the world.

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