LIBRARY PRACTICE FOR YOUNG LEARNERS

Findings of the survey of the booklet: *Fifteen innovative ways with your learning resources.* LIWO Working Group: 1999.

Background

One of the objectives of The Library Practice for Young Learners project was to publish a national popular document which highlighted best practice ideas that emerged during the project. The aim of the document was to publicise and transfer these ideas to a wider audience beyond those schools directly involved in the project. To this end the booklet *Fifteen innovative ways with your learning resources* was published in July 1999. In the booklet the writers share what they considered to be the 15 best ideas that emerged during the project and suggested that the recipients of the booklet experiment with and try the ideas out in their schools.

The booklets were accompanied by a survey questionnaire designed to elicit information about the recipients of the booklet, their schools and, critically, how they rated the booklet and whether they intended to implement the ideas or not.

The findings of the survey are reported on below. Prior to listing the findings some brief points relating to the questionnaire, the sample and data analysis will be made. The report ends with some concluding points.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire (attached) was brief and consisted of nine questions. All questions with the exception of one were "closed". The one "open-ended" question asked respondents to give a reason why they did not intend trying out any of the ideas outlined in the booklet. The questionnaires were distributed with the booklets by post. On completion of the questions the questionnaire was folded and returned using the stamp and address provided.

Sample

The sample comprised 9000 randomly drawn schools. The *School register of needs survey* (1996) was used as the source data and the sample was representative of the following hierarchy:
- Province
- Type of school (grades offered)
- Urban/rural location

1079 responses were received - a response rate of just on 12%. The distribution of the sample by province is depicted in Table 2b below. Of the 9 000 schools surveyed, the majority viz.
7 006 (77.8%) were in rural areas with the remainder (1 994) coming from urban locations. The predominance of rural schools in the sample is reflected, but not to the same extent, in the number of rural schools which responded viz. 678 (62.8%) - see Table 3 below.

Data analysis

The "Statistical package for the social sciences" (SPSS) was used for analysis of the data. Given the structured nature of the questionnaire, data input was straightforward. In the case of the one open-ended question, responses were categorised, coded and subsequently input. Frequency counts were carried out and the results presented in the form of tables. Certain cross tabulations were made and the results also presented in tabular form.

Findings
1. Frequency counts

Table 1

Designation of person answering the questionnaire

Designation	Frequency	Percent
Principal	716	66.4
Teacher-librarian	180	16.7
Educator	100	9.3
School HOD	59	5.5
Chairperson of library committee	10	.9
Other	7	.6
Department official	3	.3
No response	2	.2
Chairperson of governing body	1	.1
Learner	1	.1
Total	**1079**	**100.0**

Just on two thirds of the respondents who completed the questionnaire were principals of the school. Teacher librarians as respondents were a distant second accounting for 16.7% of respondents.

Table 2a

Respondents according to province

Province	Frequency	Percent
Northern Province	206	19.1
KwaZulu-Natal	201	18.6
Eastern Cape	182	16.9
North West	105	9.7
Gauteng	100	9.3
Free State	93	8.6
Mpumalanga	82	7.6
Western Cape	75	7.0
Northern Cape	35	3.2
Total	**1079**	**100.0**

Northern Province and KwaZulu-Natal had the highest and most similar number of responses (19.1% and 18.6% respectively) with the least responses viz. 35 (3.2%) coming from the Northern Cape. However, Table 2b below indicates that the Northern Cape, while having the lowest number of responses, had the highest response rate viz. 20.7%. The Eastern Cape had the lowest response rate (9.3%).

Table 2b

Number of schools sampled and number of schools which responded.

Province	No. of schools sampled	No. of schools responded	Percent

Northern Cape	169	35	20.7
Northern Province	1 395	206	14.8
North West	776	105	13.5
Gauteng	746	100	13.4
Western Cape	580	75	12.9
Mpumalanga	650	82	12.6
KwaZulu-Natal	1 770	201	11.4
Free State	954	93	9.7
Eastern Cape	1 960	182	9.3
Total	**9 000**	**1 079**	**11.99**

Table 3

Location of school

Area	Frequency	Percent
Rural area	**678**	**62.8**
Township	154	14.3
Town	105	9.7
Metro city	70	6.5
Informal settlement	18	1.7
No response	11	1.0
Other	43	4.0
Total	**1079**	**100.0**

In accordance with the sample drawn the majority of schools were in rural areas. The "Other" category, where respondents indicated, comprised largely of farm schools thus also falling within the category rural.

Table 4

How booklet was received

How received	Frequency	Percent
Through the post	915	84.8
From the principal	109	10.1
From a department official	40	3.7
No response	10	.9
Other	5	.5
Total	**1079**	**100.0**

A large majority (84.8%) of respondents received their booklets through the post while those who received the booklet from the principal (10.1%) would no doubt have received it subsequent to coming via the post.

Table 5

Rating of content of booklet

Rating	Frequency	Percent
Very good	465	43.1
Excellent	312	28.9
Good	244	22.6
No response	29	2.7
Fair	24	2.2
Poor	5	.5

Total	**1079**	**100**

The booklet received an overwhelmingly positive rating with 1021 (94.6%) of respondents rating it either "very good", "excellent" or "good".

Table 6
Intention to try out ideas contained in booklet

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	1011	93.7
No	52	4.8
No response	16	1.5
Total	**1079**	**100.0**

The vast majority of respondents (93.7%) indicated their intention to try out the ideas mentioned in the booklet over the next 6 months.

Table 7
Reasons for not trying out ideas

Reason	Frequency (n = 52)	Percent
No library/accommodation/resources	25	48
Ideas already in operation	11	21
Other	13	25
No response	3	6
Total	**52**	**100**

Of the 52 respondents who said that they would not be trying out any of the ideas 25 (48%) pointed to the lack of resources as the reason for not doing so while 11 (21%) mentioned that these ideas had already been implemented in their schools. Given that there are 440 schools without any resources other than textbooks (see Table 9), it is clear that the vast majority of these schools do not see this as a stumbling block to implementing the ideas in the booklet.

Table 8
Existence of a library committee at school

	Frequency	Percent
No	651	60.3
Yes	352	32.6
No response	76	7
Total	**1079**	**100**

Just under a third of the respondents stated that they had a library committee at their school. A number of schools without library facilities answered this question in the affirmative indicating that the absence of such facilities did not prevent them from establishing such a committee.

The final part of the questionnaire ascertained from respondents what library-related resources they had at their schools or had access to.

Table 9
Only textbooks?

	Frequency	Percent
No	587	54.4

Yes	440	40.8
No response	52	4.8
Total	**1079**	**100.0**

Table 10

Classroom bookboxes?

	Frequency	Percent
No	733	67.9
Yes	294	27.2
No response	52	4.8
Total	**1079**	**100.0**

Table 11

A traditional library?

	Frequency	Percent
No	769	71.3
Yes	258	23.9
No response	52	4.8
Total	**1079**	**100.0**

Table 12

A mobile library service?

	Frequency	Percent
No	1013	93.9
No response	52	4.8
Yes	14	1.3
Total	**1079**	**100.0**

Table 13

Internet?

	Frequency	Percent
No	967	89.6
Yes	60	5.6
No response	52	4.8
Total	**1079**	**100.0**

Table 14

A public library service?

	Frequency	Percent
No	942	87.3
Yes	85	7.9
No response	52	4.8
Total	**1079**	**100.0**

Table 15

A shared library?

	Frequency	Percent
No	964	89.3
Yes	63	5.8
No response	52	4.8
Total	**1079**	**100.0**

Table 16
Other?

	Frequency	Percent
No	985	91.3
Yes	42	3.9
No response	52	4.8
Total	**1079**	**100.0**

Respondents who indicated "Other" were not asked to be specific.

Tables 9 to 15 above reflect the paucity of resources at the schools in the sample surveyed. Results of Tables 9, 11, 13 and 14 are particularly instructive - 40.8% of respondents stating that they have only textbooks in their schools, only 23.9% of schools having a traditional library and a low 5.6% and 7.9% of schools having access to the Internet and a public library service respectively.

2. Cross tabulations

The findings in Tables 17, 18 and 19 below indicate that the provincial affiliation of the school, its location and whether the school had a traditional library or not made little difference to the overall positive rating of the booklet - the shaded areas in the tables below ("Total positive response") all reflecting percentages of 90% or more.

Table 17
"Respondents by province" cross tabulated with "Rating of content of booklet"

		Excellent	Very good	Good	Total positive response	Fair	Poor	No response	
Western Cape	Count	18	30	24		2	1		75
	%	24.0%	40.0%	32.0%	96%	2.7%	1.3%		100.0%
North West	Count	34	36	30		1		4	105
	%	32.4%	34.3%	28.6%	95.3%	1.0%		3.8%	100.0%
Northern Province	Count	67	93	36		1	1	8	206
	%	32.5%	45.1%	17.5%	95.1%	.5%	.5%	3.9%	100.0%
Northern Cape	Count	7	19	8				1	35
	%	20.0%	54.3%	22.9%	97.2%			2.9%	100.0%
Mpumalanga	Count	28	34	16		2	1	1	82
	%	34.1%	41.5%	19.5%	95.1%	2.4%	1.2%	1.2%	100.0%
KwaZulu-Natal	Count	52	95	43		6		5	201
	%	25.9%	47.3%	21.4%	94.6%	3.0%		2.5%	100.0%
Gauteng	Count	18	47	26		3	1	5	100
	%	18.0%	47.0%	26.0%	91%	3.0%	1.0%	5.0%	100.0%
Free State	Count	29	42	15		6		1	93
	%	31.2%	45.2%	16.1%	92.5%	6.5%		1.1%	100.0%
Eastern Cape	Count	59	69	46		3	1	4	182

		Excellent	Very good	Good	Total positive response	Fair	Poor	No response	
	%	32.4%	37.9%	25.3%	95.6%	1.6%	.5%	2.2%	100.0%
	Count	312	465	244		24	5	29	1079
	% of Total	28.9%	43.1%	22.6%		2.2%	.5%	2.7%	100.0%

Table 18

"Location of school" cross tabulated with "Rating of content of booklet"

		Excellent	Very good	Good	Total positive response	Fair	Poor	No response	
Metro city	Count	10	38	15		4	1	2	70
		14.3%	54.3%	21.4%	90%	5.7%	1.4%	2.9%	100.0%
Town	Count	21	46	32		2	2	2	105
		20.0%	43.8%	30.5%	94.3%	1.9%	1.9%	1.9%	100.0%
Township	Count	47	72	29				6	154
		30.5%	46.8%	18.8%	96.1%			3.9%	100.0%
Informal settlement	Count	5	8	4				1	18
		27.8%	44.4%	22.2%	94.4%			5.6%	100.0%
Rural area	Count	218	279	146		16	1	18	678
		32.2%	41.2%	21.5%	94.9%	2.4%	.1%	2.7%	100.0%
Other	Count	9	18	13		2	1		43
		20.9%	41.9%	30.2%	93%	4.7%	2.3%		100.0%
No response	Count	2	4	5					11
		18.2%	36.4%	45.5%					100.0%
	Count	312	465	244		24	5	29	1079
	% of Total	28.9%	43.1%	22.6%		2.2%	.5%	2.7%	100.0%

Table 19

"Traditional library" cross tabulated with "Rating of content of booklet"

			Excellent	Very good	Good	Total positive response	Fair	Poor	No response	
A traditional library?	Yes	Count	66	106	69		6	3	8	258
		%	25.6%	41.1%	26.7%	93.4%	2.3%	1.2%	3.1%	100.0%
	No	Count	235	335	160		18	2	19	769
			30.6%	43.6%	20.8%	95%	2.3%	.3%	2.5%	100.0%
	No response	Count	11	24	15				2	52
		%	21.2%	46.2%	28.8%	96.2%			3.8%	100.0%
Total		Count	312	465	244		24	5	29	1079
		%	28.9%	43.1%	22.6%		2.2%	.5%	2.7%	100.0%

Concluding points

- The response rate for the survey was low (12%) (but arguably acceptable for a survey of this type). However, the total of 1 079 responses was sufficiently large to provide a useful basis for the analysis.
- The majority (66.4%) of the respondents were principals - in accordance with the objective that the booklet be read by a majority of the principals at these schools[1].
- In line with the sample drawn, the majority of schools which responded were located in the rural areas - in general areas and schools which have been most neglected (and subsequently most under-resourced) during the apartheid era and which, as a consequence, could benefit most from the ideas contained in the booklet.
- The rating of the booklet was overwhelmingly positive as was the intention to try out the ideas in the booklet. The ratings remained positive irrespective of the provincial affiliation of the schools, their location or the existence or not of a traditional library at the school.
- The resource base of the schools was in general low but this was not perceived as a barrier to the vast majority (93.7%) of the schools in terms of their intention to try out the ideas in the booklet.

Given the findings above it is patently evident that the 15 best practice ideas which emerged from the project and which were encapsulated in the booklet have been viewed in an extremely positive light by the respondents. Principals in particular have been exposed to the ideas contained in the booklet and this exposure can be seen as a positive contribution to the enhancement of school librarianship in South Africa. However, what is crucial and what needs to be ascertained is whether the implementation of the ideas (as noted good intentions to do so were expressed by a vast majority of the respondents) within a six month period follows on from this exposure.

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[1] Project information pack. 1998. Library practice for young learners National Information Meeting, 24-26 February. Mount Amanzi: 12.