

Library Observation Template

Burkina Faso: January 2008 site visit

created December 2007
by Brittany Williams
Messiah College Collaboratory

Name of School:

Handicapes En Avant

City/Village:

Mahadaga

School Principle:

Etienne

Name of Observer(s):

Brittany Williams and Kristen Wilt

Date: 1/14/2008

A) Structure of Library**1) General library structure arrangement and condition**

(1-poor; 5-Good/Resourceful; 10- state of the art)

Building: 1 2 3 **4** 5 6 7 8 9 10

The library building was a pretty good size for the school. Over the past two years, Francoise and Louise have organized the library books using a simple system in order to attain a usable library. Most of the books are on shelves, though there were some piles of textbooks throughout the library. There is one big room full of books that students can check out, and there is one small room that is full of textbooks which students rarely see (teachers sometimes use them for class, but students are never allowed to take them home). Even though it was the coolest season in Burkina, the library was still extremely hot; ceiling fans would be a great addition to the library if students start using it more often. Throughout the library, there were tons of spider webs and dust. Most of the time, the door to the library is locked, so students aren't able to go into the library unless they have a scheduled class appointment. The general structure looks pretty old but is less than five years old. It does have some electricity, but when we tried the light switch we realized that only one of the three lights functioned.

Shelving: 1 2 **3** 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

The shelves are organized now, but all of them are dusty and filled with cobwebs. Many shelves should be replaced, and the books are very high on the shelves. Most of the lower shelves are NOT used because they are afraid that the younger students will tamper with the books if they are at their eye level. This seems very contrary to the mindset of US libraries for young children – normally we're trying to attract students to books as much as we can.

Tables/Chairs: **1** 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

When we met with Louise, she struggled to find three chairs for all of us. There was only one table in the whole library (which is the developing “children’s section” of the library). The library is not

conducive at all for students staying in there for more than ten minutes at a time. It's not made as a friendly environment in which students can relax and read for long periods of time.

Book Accessibility

- Difficult access to all books
- Somewhat difficult access to some books
- Easy access to all books

Books are somewhat difficult to access; it really depends on how tall you are and which books you want. Younger children are forced to ask for a book because the books are not at their reaching level; the librarian wants it like this so that students don't unorganize the system or steal books. The books are organized and on shelves so students can at least see the spines of the books (which *sometimes* showed the titles depending on the size of the spines the books). However, I personally struggled in finding "sections within sections" of books. For example, there was a giant section of all of 1000+ pictures books, but there was no further organization, making it very difficult to find what you may be looking for. The books are so skinny and all smashed together, so to look for a specific book would be a nightmare. It would be much less frustrating to go into the library without expectations to find a certain book; it definitely fosters the "pick out a random book" style.

3) Is there access to resources other than books?

There are no other resources other than the books in the library. There is no technology or any sort of system to look up books. I did not notice any books on tape or CD. I'm not sure how beneficial resources like this could be to the children at this stage in the learning process.

B) Content of Library**1) Grade level of Books**

- Kindergarten (Age 3-6) __20__% Primary School (Age 6-11) __30__%
- Middle School (Age 11-15) __40__% High School (15-18) __10__%

This was somewhat difficult to judge, given the set up of the library, and that there was no way to know the total number of any specific category of books. They simply don't have a system like that. One interesting observation was the amount of reference books regarding the Bible and study of the books in the Bible. All of the books looked wonderful and perfect for a pastor, but there was a whole section devoted to this in the *school* library. Also, there were many textbooks (in the textbook room) for various grade levels.

2) Language

- French __99__% English __<1__% Gourma __<1__%

Almost all of the books are in French. This is the students' second language, and so reading in French probably comes about as natural to them as reading in Spanish does to me. I wouldn't say that reading in Spanish is something I do "for fun." I have to work to understand the vocabulary, and after awhile, my mind gets very tired. However, in the classroom, the students seemed to respond and speak very well in French. The teachers must do a good job of bridging the auditory language gap for the students.

This was one of the observations the teachers pointed out to us regarding our counting book. The French words we used in our book were more advanced than the math concepts in the book. The switching of languages is something that students here do not have to worry about at all, and I think this attributes much more worth and value to our libraries which are full of books written in a child's first language.

3) Copyright dates

- Before 1920 __1__% 1920 - 1950 __30__% 1950 - 1970 __50__%
- 1970 - 1990 __10__% 1990's __10__% 2000 + __≈0__%

4) Shape and style of books

- Same Some variety Much variety

They were the same, but I wonder if the students really care about appearance as much as we do.

5) Books/Resources for children with disabilities

- None (but under construction) Few Several Many

.6) Genres of the Books

NonFiction	Sciences	Social Studies	Art	Biography	Reference
Picture (Approx. #)					
Intermediate					
Young Adult					
Totals					

Fiction						
	Historical	Realistic	Science	Fantasy	Poetry	Traditional
Picture (Approx. #)						
Intermediate						
Young Adult						
Totals						

I think these charts were a good idea, but they were definitely too far-reaching for our assessment of this library. Had the sections of the library been more organized, it may have been easier. Some trends we noticed in scanning the library were many Walt Disney books and several shelves of chapter books that 10 or 11 year-olds would read in the states. There were many children’s books all grouped together, but unorganized. We saw several math books, but no books about art. As I said before, there was a large section of Biblical reference books and adult religious books. There were a few comic books and magazines near the developing children’s section which in the future will be the place where classes can gather and be read to and learn more about the library.

C) Librarian(s)**1) Training of the librarian(s)**

- Hardly any education Some education
- Very educated (but no librarian training) Trained Librarian

Louise was chosen because of her competence, but she was not trained in any way for being a librarian.

2) Characteristics of the librarian(s)

- There is a librarian On staff Volunteer
- Has a staff Works alone
- Resourceful Not resourceful
- Young Elderly
- Enthusiastic Unenthusiastic
- Helpful Unwilling to help

3) Librarian Activities to promote literacy

Resource to children? (Help them finding books, reaching books, reading, etc.) Louise and Francoise are two wonderful resources to the children. It would be unfair to compare their level of help to the level of help of American librarians, but they are taking the right steps toward building a library that fosters literacy.

Read alouds? Aline and Julie (two missionaries living in Mahadaga) come about once a week and read to the children. They also have activities where the children come and cut pictures out of books and use them for Sunday School or class.

Themed events? No themed events.

4) Librarian promotes literacy for children with disabilities

- Significant indication of this Some indication of this NO indication of this

They are currently working on planning more activities for the blind students.

D) Interviews

1) Librarians:

Tell me about your day.

How often are you here? Louise is in the library “as needed;” definitely not everyday. We had to set up an appointment so that we could make sure she would be there. We went to the center just about every day for 2 weeks and the door to the library was open one other time besides the time we met with Louise.

How many students come to the library? It depends on the day. It seemed like if more than 10 students were in there at one time, it would be chaotic.

Do students consider this a significant resource? I got the impression that the students did *not* consider the library a significant resource.

Are students allowed to take books out of the library? Sometimes students take out books for class. Students can take books out every 2 weeks and can sometimes check out novels for break, but this is a difficult system because the books don’t always come back because there is no good consequence. They can’t fine the students because they don’t have the money to pay.

How often do you get new books? She didn’t say how often they got new books, but most all of them come from France and are slightly used.

2) Students:

What do you do in the library?

Do you like coming to the library?

Does your class often come to the library?

What does the librarian do to help to? How has the librarian helped you?

What is your favorite type of book to read?

If you could ask for one thing that would help the library, what would you ask for?

Arranging an “interview” with the students about the library proved to be more difficult than I thought it would be. The students were never *in* the library during the 2 weeks we were there. Dr. Hare was able to meet with a few of the students for a short time during recess. The 2 students were in CP 1 which is the equivalent of first grade. The students said that they like to read, and they know about the library but don’t visit it often and hardly ever visit it with their class.

E) Other Notes and Conclusion:

I was thankful that we were able to observe the library at the Handicap Center because *there were no* libraries at the public schools in Ouagadougou (the capital city), which in and of itself is a note-worthy observation. There was one library at the International School of Ouagadougou (a private school with a very high tuition rate) which we quickly observed as we passed through on our tour of the school. This library was just like any small Christian school library you would see in the states. To see the stark contrast between this library and the Handicap Center library was astounding. The International School had several computers for looking at the library catalog, all sorts of sections, magazines, audio-visual resources, a reading room, and a computer lab for which every student and teacher has a user ID and password. While we were in this library, there was a class in the reading room, and afterwards, they all lined up in single file at the librarians desk to check out their books. *It* was so different; but I had to stop and remind myself, “The *students* (at the two schools) were so different.” As I reflect on what we observed in Burkina, I realize that the children with handicaps in Mahadaga may not have the conveniences and technology that a top-notch library has, but for what they’re doing and learning they do not need all the fancy stuff. However, I do believe that they could use more resources to aid the children with handicaps, specifically those who are deaf and seeing-impaired. Much is available in the Mahadaga library to those who can see and hear, but Francoise and Louise are just starting to work on resources for the blind and deaf students so that these children may also become literate and Lord willing become great men and women of God.

“He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you But to act justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?” Micah 6:8
