# THE INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE DIPLOMA PROGRAM AND THE SCHOOL LIBRARY

## Inquiry-Based Education

ANTHONY TILKE

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# CONTENTS

# 1

# INTRODUCTION

Important new ways of working in the 21st century—such as thinking creatively and across traditional disciplines, as using skills in relating to and cooperating with people, employing a different definition of being literate, and being smarter or thinking critically about information—were some of the things that Claudia Wallis and Sonja Steptoe, reporting in *Time* magazine in 2006, thought were necessary for students to learn and use in this century. They considered that the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (often referred to as the IBDP; the spelling of *programme* is explained later) would be an excellent curriculum to follow, so that students could develop these vital aptitudes and skills. This curriculum, the IBDP, based as it is on inquiry and self-discovery and offering breadth and depth, poses challenges and offers rewards for schools and their communities—students, teachers, administrators, and, of course, librarians.

The International Baccalaureate (IB) as an organization, with its three curricular programs, is a developing presence in and among educational thinkers and school systems worldwide. This is also true of the IBDP, which is growing in the United States and also in other globally important countries such as India and China. The IBDP was introduced in the 1970s, initially in international schools, so that children of diplomats, businesspeople, those in the armed forces, and officials in nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and other expatriates living abroad, could experience a rigorous curriculum that would enable them to gain entry to universities in their home countries and indeed other countries. Now, the IBDP has spread throughout the world and is offered not only in international schools but also in public (state-funded) as well as private or independent sector schools. The IB website notes that, in 2010, "The IB Americas [region of the IB, known as IBA] includes IB World Schools in 31 countries and territories in Central, North and South America. IB World Schools in the Americas are state/public, private, magnet, charter, international, parochial and secular and serve a broad and diverse range of students in urban, suburban and rural communities. There are . . . 1,123 [schools] providing the Diploma Programme in 30 countries" in the IBA region alone (International Baccalaureate Organization [IBO], 2010a). Globally, there

are nearly 2,200 schools offering the diploma. In terms of the IBDP, the Americas region is the largest, followed by Europe, Africa and the Middle East, and the Asia–Pacific regions (IBO, 2010a).

When one college applied to the IB in order to teach the IBDP, some practitioners at the institution noted that it succeeded because the faculty had the "right educational experience, and the library met the IBDP's academic demands," though what the latter requirements actually were remained unidentified (Andain, Rutherford, & Allen, 2006, p. 62). Indeed, official documentation specifically about the role of the school library in the IBDP is limited, which is partly why librarians and others tend to ask questions like: "How do I support the program?" and "What is my role and that of the library in the IBDP?" As a response, this book narrates the impact of a school library on one school's IBDP community, students, and teachers and also provides a range of theoretical and practical strategies that a school librarian can use to develop the school library program to support the IBDP. The book provides information for those embarking on the IBDP, especially as there are regular pleas from new or novice IBDP librarians on various listservs for direction, support, and ideas. There should also be enough detail (such as research findings and report of good practice) for more experienced librarians. The book should also be capable of being read by interested nonlibrarians, such as administrators, because their role in comprehending, articulating, and supporting a role for the school library within the IBDP is, in a way, almost more important than that of librarians.

Addressing heads of IB schools in Geneva in 1995, one librarian described the IBDP as offering a "research approach to learning, rather than the mere accumulation of factual knowledge" and indicated that "when our students go on to university . . . they are likely to find a complex library . . . which can be very daunting. Preparing students for university should include preparing them to be confident library users" (Clark, 1995, p. 43). Research and inquiry are therefore seen to be integral to pursuing the IBDP successfully. As late as 2005, there was little if any published research work about the library and librarian and the IBDP—although there are some professional writing and self-help local or regional support groups as well as official and unofficial listservs or online groups—but it is not uncommon to see repeated requests for information from aspirant IBDP schools and their librarians for *any* information about what is required in terms of effective library support and how to obtain it.

This book therefore blends academic knowledge, practical strategies, and insight about the IBDP. It is based on the present writer's background, which comprises the following:

1. Over 10 years experience of the IBDP in four different international schools
2. Experience as an IB library workshop leader in the IB Asia–Pacific region and as chair of the International Baccalaureate Asia–Pacific Library and Information Specialists (IBAPLIS) group
3. Doctoral research with Charles Sturt University, Australia, concerning the impact of an international school library on the IBDP
4. Six years' experience as a Theory of Knowledge (TOK) teacher in the IBDP, simultaneously serving as an IB examiner for the TOK essay
5. Work as full-time school and youth library adviser with the U.K. Library Association (as it then was, but is now called the Chartered Institute of

> Library and Information Professionals, or CILIP) in London, which involved work in promoting a library role when the then government looked at adopting a baccalaureate model for the national education system

It is also important to recognize that the IB community of librarians, abstract and fragmented as it may be in practice (but only because it is worldwide), is a very helpful and cooperative one, and that good practice and new ideas are shared by various librarians, often online, but also through IB training events for librarians. The reader will find that effective practices from various practitioners are reflected in the book.

This introduction naturally deals with various broader issues about the IBDP and also some basic ideas, concepts, and questions related to school librarianship. These are presented in this introduction to set the scene and arrive at some common understandings.

*What is a school library?* This seems the most obvious concept of all and perhaps superfluous to question; however, if you ask members of your school community what *they* think their school library exists for, several (possibly conflicting) answers or viewpoints may be forthcoming. These may help to explain use and nonuse patterns and issues that may have occurred for the library in your school. For whatever reason, the position statements of the library and information science (LIS) sector on the role of school libraries nevertheless see the need to define what a school library is. In Australia, a school library includes space, facilities—not least information and communications technology (ICT)—and staff to facilitate services or a library program (Australian School Library Association & Australian Library and Information Association, 2001). Guidelines in the United Kingdom for CILIP promote the idea of providing "a learning space . . . as its principal purpose" (Barrett & Douglas, 2004, p. 24). Are these definitions different from American Association of School Librarians (AASL) documentation? To whom is the LIS community providing definitions? Are the definitions communicated effectively, and are they agreed upon?

*What is a school librarian?* The definition of this role may only further confuse matters, as what constitutes a librarian in a school varies from country to country and, in some cases, within a country. Even school library literature uses several terms and acknowledges variations. Terms are important, as a given term may affect how people see and perceive the school librarian. There is some research to suggest that, for all the variations around the world, there is no research-proven "best" type of school librarian in terms of terminology, education, and experience (Turner, 2007). Nevertheless, for clarity and comprehensiveness, this book uses the term *librarian*.

*What is a baccalaureate?* A baccalaureate-style education offers a holistic approach to knowledge and education for pretertiary education students. There are several models, but probably the best known is the IBDP (Phillips & Pound, 2003). One reason that the IBDP is the best known is probably that it is offered worldwide rather than in only one geographical area.

*What could be the impact of a school library on the IBDP and the various groups of people involved: students, parents, teachers, administrators, and the IB itself?* This question was at the heart of research undertaken by the present writer and is discussed in this book, but taken more generally, there is no shortage of research and even more professional or secondary literature in the school library sector that

promotes the idea of educational change, life-enhancing skills, and meaningful knowledge acquisition by students. However, an interesting question is how accurately more general educational research and professional literature may reflect such a premise in relation to the IBDP. Perhaps IB school libraries and the curriculum itself are so different that it is difficult to apply existing LIS research to such a setting, or perhaps there is more synergy. This question, too, is reflected in the book.

*How useful are impact studies and evidence-based research?* Proponents of research about school libraries maintain that using impact studies and evidence-based research or practice is better than using unsubstantiated advocacy (perhaps including guidelines and recommended role statements) to policymakers and school administrators (Todd, 2006). However, especially as regards earlier research, say before 1995, these studies started and ended with a library point of view, with the aim of justifying input measures. Indeed, a belief paradigm based on the social good of libraries was the premise of some studies (Streatfield & Markless, 1994). The present writer's review of literature relating to impact studies of school libraries showed a clear geographical division of quantitative and qualitative studies—quantitative ones tended to occur in North America, whereas qualitative ones featured in literature related mainly to the United Kingdom and Australia. Initially, impact studies were used for advocacy purposes. Although evidence-based practice (EBP) informed or improved practice, the two styles now seem more mixed. Larger-scale studies, more typically associated with the United States, based any impact on test score results. They tended to identify a roughly 8 percent factor for school library impact in high schools, whereas up to 50 percent difference may be due to socioeconomic factors overall. Such studies have typically been promoted to policymakers in terms that would suggest the causal nature of any impact. Smaller studies, typically qualitative in nature, tended not to relate the impact of a school library to test scores but rather to broader aspects of learning, such as literacy, reading, and confidence (e.g., Williams & Wavell, 2001, 2002). However, a large study in Ohio (Todd & Kuhlthau, 2005a,b) looked both quantitatively and qualitatively at how students of a wide age range were helped by the school library.

*How useful are qualitative methods to research on school libraries? Are such methods better than or just different from quantitative methods?* There are different views about the equal validity of quantitative and qualitative methods of research; some of these may reflect realpolitik reasons. However, in terms of detail and identifying specific situations, it is generally considered that the qualitative method may allow expressions of views, feelings, and values to be effectively identified. For the study that forms the focus of this book, the qualitative method was chosen, as the study wanted to find out what the stakeholders in the IBDP—students, teachers, administrators, and librarians—thought about the role of the library in support of the IBDP. To further enable this to be achieved, the particular qualitative methodology adopted in the study was grounded theory, or, in other words, theory that arises from the data during the research process and is grounded in such data and in the research experiences of the researcher, rather than a hypothesis "being imposed on the research" at the beginning of the research process (Bartlett, Burton, & Peim, 2001, p. 46). There is a relationship with ethnography, so that studies are associated with detailed accounts of the actions, thoughts, and views of specific groups of people. In such studies, including the present study, appropriate and relevant techniques include extensive observation as well as interviewing (with

analysis of each line of verbatim transcripts), thus allowing for rich narratives of specific situations (Charmaz, 2006). The values, feelings, and views of particular students, teachers, and administrators therefore inform this book to a considerable degree. Because articulated and perceived views and values could have been different had other people been studied, grounded theory methodology cannot claim to be generalizable. Nevertheless, any application of the study's findings rests with the reader, and it is the reflection process on similarities or otherwise with the reader's own situation that will be valuable. Indeed, such a process probably needs to happen whatever the methodology chosen. (Interestingly, grounded theory is chosen more and more often for qualitative LIS studies and has also been used for some of the IBDP studies from North America that are cited in this book.)

A great deal of research is available from various countries, not least in the English-speaking world, concerning school libraries, both in general and relating to older students, though not about IBDP libraries specifically. This book identifies relevant, valid research, irrespective of country, making links and contrasting with the IBDP as appropriate. Given that the IBDP is an international curriculum, it is apposite to cite literature internationally. Some studies about relevant aspects of the IBDP are each cited several times in the text; for convenience, these studies and short descriptions of their main features are listed in Appendix 4.

*How relevant is internationalism?* Because it is included in the title of the curriculum, *internationalism* is very much a key term and concept, although the preferred term is *international mindedness*. One of the questions librarians tend to ask (and should ask) in relation to the IBDP is "How do we try to ensure that our libraries are international minded in outlook?" However, there are various definitions of *internationalism*, a term that can be ambiguous (Cambridge & Thompson, 2004). Nevertheless, internationalism has connections with international schools, which exist in many countries of the world, and also with the IBDP as an example of an international academic curriculum. However, international mindedness is not limited to international schools but can be applied to any school context. It is therefore a key idea, and is discussed more in the next chapter.

*How extensive will inquiry be in the IBDP?* Inquiry, as a curriculum stance, pervades all IB programs. It will look different in the IBDP partly because of the prescribed content in subject syllabuses and, more importantly, the ways of learning and teaching preferred by subject faculty members and how the core requirements work in individual schools. All these will play a part in how inquiry looks in the IBDP and how much of it is seen in the library and by the librarian. Although the inquiry or research models that librarians are familiar with could well be relevant, remember that "one model doesn't fit all." Thus advocating these models may not work in every subject area, although some educational writers on concepts, understanding, essential questions, and inquiry are highly regarded in the IB world. This very much includes the Understanding by Design concept developed by Wiggins and McTighe (2005, 2007).

*How much should technology drive the direction of an IBDP library?* It shouldn't. Relevant and useful technology will naturally be used and, as an information specialist, an IB librarian will continually be looking for ways in which information, perceived knowledge, and ideas can be obtained in whatever format or media. In a similar way, the IB itself is looking at ways in which technology can be harnessed in the interest of its programs. Nevertheless, IB programs are used throughout the world and it would be impossible to require specific levels of ICT and particular

products, because what might be available and possible in one part of the world wouldn't necessarily be found in another. Realistically though, in some parts of the world, a technology-rich school library is a given, yet it is not automatically so, even in any one country. Although the use of technology is of course discussed, when and where relevant, in various areas of this book, the main emphasis is on the curriculum and the needs of an IB school community.

*Terminology and acronyms.* Education and library worlds abound with acronyms and terminology or jargon, which may be specific to their own paradigm. An example from the LIS world is *information literacy*, which is a common enough term to librarians, though does not enjoy synergy amongst members of subject faculties. The text of a book that seeks to blend the two worlds of education and librarianship is likely to be rich in specific terms and acronyms, but which nevertheless may be commonly understood. Acronyms are also used in relation to the IBDP, and, to aid clarity, a glossary of IB terms is appended to this book. Readers may also wish to look for a more comprehensive glossary of IB terms, which is available on the IB website. A URL is not given for this page, as of course it may change, but more importantly because it is a very good strategy for the school librarian to be familiar with the public IB website and what is commonly referred to as the OCC (Online Curriculum Center), which is maintained by the organization for educators.

One word, though, about the use of the acronym IB. In 2007, the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) decided to brand itself more simply and calls itself International Baccalaureate, which is a registered name, although the website remains www.ibo.org. A number of writers and practitioners have always referred to the IB, and they might mean the organization itself or its first curriculum—that is, the IBDP. As this program existed on its own for over 20 years (before being joined by primary and middle-years programs), it also tended to be called simply IB, and the terms were regarded as being synonymous. Finally, should the word be spelled *program* or *programme*? Because the IB uses the latter spelling, this has been preserved where the full formal title is given, titles of IB documents given, and quotations are made.

*How is the book organized?* More general and perhaps basic information and discussion about important aspects of the IBDP will be found towards the beginning of the book. Chapters blend information and strategies, but each chapter ends with a summary of practical strategies for the librarian. As the book progresses, there is more presentation of the narratives of those involved in the study, upon which this book is partly based, and which includes discussion of the academic research and findings of the present study.

## PRACTICAL STRATEGIES FOR THE LIBRARIAN

- Librarians should become familiar with the IB's public website and OCC, which is available as a tab through www.ibo.org. (To access the OCC, password and codes are required and should be obtainable from the school's IBDP coordinator.)
- As an information specialist, becoming familiar with the contents of the IB website could be an enabling role for the librarian, especially in schools that are beginning to look at adopting the IBDP, so that the librarian could inform or advise faculty colleagues who are looking for information about various aspects of the IBDP.

- Seek clarity in your school regarding understanding of the role of the school library, which may involve revisiting or developing written policy statements.
- Think about impact and evidence-based research in relation to the school library. Especially, be aware of what the purpose of research is and who it is aimed at.
- Find or develop a definition of internationalism and try to relate it to your library.
- Think about the jargon, terminology, and acronyms that are commonly used in school librarianship. Do we use it in our school situations, and is it understandable by our school community?