

# Education plan for a library for children and adolescents: initiatives and mediations

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## Abstract

This article introduces the paths and results from a study conducted at Biblioteca Infantojuvenil Maria Mazzetti (BIMM) a Library for children and adolescents, located at *Fundação Casa de Rui Barbosa* [Rui Barbosa's House Foundation], in Rio de Janeiro. The main objective of the investigation was to help guide the activities conducted at BIMM through the preparation of an education plan, thus providing information for the systematization of the work to be conducted at the library. The investigation built upon the premise that aspects such as school, cultural, and artistic education and the democratization of culture and education are fundamental in a field that today extends beyond school institutions. Generally speaking, the research aimed at: knowing and analyzing the activities of BIMM; increasing knowledge on current and potential users as well as their information needs; identifying the educational and cultural activities that matched the profile of the target public; planning future projects for BIMM. To conduct the investigation, a bibliographic review, a document analysis, interviews, user surveys were used as research instruments. Due to field peculiarities at that time, the research became an action research. The preparation of an education plan allows building the profile of education at the institution, but that will only be reached after the space and the target public are known, a qualified team is trained, and professionals from different areas get involved.

## Keywords

Library for children and adolescents – Education plan – Child – Action research.

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# **Plano educacional para uma biblioteca infantojuvenil: projetando ações e mediações**

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## **Resumo**

*Este artigo apresenta os caminhos e resultados de uma pesquisa realizada na Biblioteca Infantojuvenil Maria Mazzetti (BIMM), localizada na Fundação Casa de Rui Barbosa, na cidade do Rio de Janeiro. O principal objetivo da investigação foi contribuir para a orientação das atividades realizadas na BIMM através da elaboração de um plano educacional, fornecendo, assim, subsídios para a sistematização do trabalho a ser desenvolvido na biblioteca. O pressuposto que orientou a investigação foi o de que aspectos como a formação humana, cultural e artística e a democratização da cultura e da educação são fundamentais em um campo que hoje se estende para além das instituições escolares. De modo geral, a pesquisa buscou: conhecer e analisar as atividades desenvolvidas na BIMM; ampliar o conhecimento dos usuários atuais e potenciais e de suas necessidades informacionais; identificar as atividades educativas e culturais adequadas ao perfil do público; fundamentar futuros projetos para a BIMM. Para a realização da investigação, foram utilizados como instrumentos de pesquisa a revisão bibliográfica, a análise documental, entrevistas, estudo de usuários, e – por peculiaridades do campo naquele momento – a pesquisa passou a se configurar como pesquisa-ação. Constatou-se que a elaboração de um plano educacional permite a construção do perfil da educação na instituição, mas que só será alcançado com o devido conhecimento do espaço e do público-alvo, a formação de uma equipe qualificada e o envolvimento de profissionais de diferentes áreas.*

## **Palavras-chave**

*Biblioteca infantojuvenil – Plano educacional – Criança – Pesquisa-ação.*

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Generally speaking, the importance of reading in the education of critical subjects is highlighted in several studies, and there are countless others that stress the relevance of spaces to encourage reading. However, what activities are performed in a library? Are there guidelines orienting the activities performed in such spaces? Do libraries for children and adolescents have specific projects to cater to their target public? What are the priorities when dealing with children?

*Fundação Casa de Rui Barbosa* (FCRB), a federal public institution located in Rio de Janeiro, comprises, among other spaces, a library for children and adolescents. Aware of the issues mentioned above, FCRB requested that a study be conducted.<sup>1</sup> Such study should result in an education plan for the space housing Maria Mazzetti Library for Children and Adolescents (BIMM).

Thus, the research aimed at knowing and analyzing the activities performed at BIMM; increasing knowledge on current and potential users as well as their information needs; identifying the educational and cultural activities that matched the profile of the target public; planning future projects for BIMM.

This article presents some paths and results of the research that was conducted for two years (from 2009 to 2011). Firstly, some reflections are presented on the potential of cultural institutions and on the service these spaces provide to the general public. The library and the children then becomes the focus, and concepts such as language, reading, and childhood - which were adopted in the development of the investigation - are explained. Next, through a document analysis, a bibliographic review, and interviews, the investigated space and aspects that are considered relevant are included in the process of preparing an education plan for non-formal

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spaces such as a library. The results obtained in the user survey conducted in the course of the investigation are equally presented, as well as the changes throughout its path. Then the discussions on the related topic are resumed. The methodological options and the results obtained with the conduction of the investigation are believed to contribute to the development of similar proposals in other libraries or related cultural spaces.

### **Services at cultural institutions and the children**

Over the last few years, cultural institutions of several kinds - museums, cultural centers, foundations, libraries, NGOs, etc. - have focused on the services offered to their target public. In that perspective, it is possible to verify the creation of spaces that were supposedly dedicated to planning the activities an institution can offer. However, how are activities performed? Are there guidelines orienting the activities? Do the spaces have education plans?

As a matter of fact, public services in non-formal education spaces have existed for a while. Hooper-Greenhill (2007), when rebuilding the services offered at museums, highlights that the first permanent education sector in this institution was created by the Louvre Museum, in 1880, and that, in that same year, Victoria and Albert Museum also founded an education sector. To Machado (2009), the duties of education sectors - which are stated and systematized in several international and national seminars - are fundamentally the same ones taken up by Victoria and Albert Museum's education sector, and they still are nowadays the main duties the education sectors of different museum categories are in charge of. However, the author highlights the importance of discussing theoretical references that guide the creation, performance, and evaluation of education practices at museums. Such lack of theoretical references at education initiatives

proposed is also highlighted in other studies and for the remaining non-formal education spaces, such as libraries (TRILLA, 2008).

Besides that, the role of cultural institutions such as libraries and/or libraries for children, as well as the urgent need for efforts regarding the proper maintenance and use of these spaces have been equally analyzed by researchers in the field. The different cultural facilities that compose the urban universe are presented as points for learning, exchange, and dissemination of knowledge. In a perspective of comprehensive education, these several spaces are congregated in a subject's background, which is not only restricted to the influences acquired during formal education. School certainly has a major share in the role of educating generations; However, when alone, it finds constraints; thus, a proposal for comprehensive education seeks contribution from several agents and institutions that can together organize this education process (ASENSIO; POL, 2002; HOOPER-GREENHILL, 2007; CASTRO, 1998).

Thus, public libraries - as one of these institutions - have educational and social roles, fulfilling their duty of offering free access to books and other reading materials. However, such institution only makes sense when it is transformed in a learning space, when people go to libraries and get in contact with their catalogues, interacting with them. Libraries are places for learning and experiencing knowledge, reading, culture, and art. Thus, the role of agents who work in libraries is a potentially rich one, as these people may perform work that explores and takes advantage of the countless educational possibilities library catalogues offer (SANTOS, 2007). The mediator's figure, therefore, is an important component in the process of creating a reading habit. Firstly, the mediator is the one who creates possibilities for children to get in contact with books and stories, and to make such contact easier at home, at school, or in a library.

On the other hand, the countless possibilities for reading and creations are

only plausible through the use of language, substantiated in words. To Bakhtin (1995, p. 113), "A word is a kind of bridge between the others and I. It stands on me at one of the ends, and on the other end it stands on my hearer. A word is a common territory between a speaker and a hearer".

Language and thought, as experiences that differentiate us from other beings, are marks of our singular human existence. Through the poetic language itself - which is able to open up (more subjective) channels to understand reality - we may create meanings for our existence. Martins et al. (1998) point out how much man has created with the language tool (or languages) to be in a better place in the world and interact with it. They also point out who the language of art is located in such universe:

Languages have become inseparable from man, so he could penetrate the dark forest of the things in the world, and unveil reality fragments for himself, waking up to the conscience of living and existing. Languages that invent worlds for the playing sign-creating man. Among those, a language was made special, the language of art. Made for man to dive into himself, pulling his emotions out and bringing them inside other men. That man knows emotions are the salt of life. That is why when a man wants to speak to other men's hearts, he does it through the language of art. When that happens, an artist feels and acts inside that man (MARTINS et al, 1998, p. 5).

The perspective adopted in conducting this investigation therefore includes the understanding that libraries are configured as spaces for language, communication, and expression, the understanding that children have peculiarities, and that a mediator is in charge of an important role in this process to build the habit of reading, which consequently requires qualified training, so they can read the signs children give through gestures, looks,

their voices, senses, to open up a space for playful activities, thus conducting activities in a fun way.

However, in Brazil, research on the habit of reading and on the proper use of libraries highlight our low reading levels, lack of habit of going to these places, and lack of social appreciation for reading. The third edition of investigation *Retratos da Leitura no Brasil* (Portraits of Reading in Brazil)<sup>2</sup>, for example, showed alarming data: 75% of the population does not use libraries; only 10% of those frequently go to libraries and, although the number of libraries has increased in Brazil, a great deal of the population does not know those places exist. The study also reveals that the reading index decreases in the lowest social classes and in the population with the lowest education levels. The data obtained in the investigations reinforce the important role libraries play in the cultural background of all citizens, by making plenty of catalogue options available and educating people to enjoy reading.

However, making sure there are libraries is not enough. Those places need to have qualified staff who can plan activities that foster reading and, above all else, that contribute to readers' and future readers' autonomy. In regards to libraries for children and adolescents, their staff needs to be properly trained in different knowledge fields - such as pedagogy and psychology - and to be knowledgeable in the field of child development, providing subsidies for the work to be performed with children, as it is essential to understand all issues related to dealing with each age range to conduct proper initiatives. That is, the conceptions of childhood, child, and child development will guide the conduction of initiatives.

Investigating and reflecting on a project for a library for children and adolescents therefore requires taking into account the specific aspects of this segment, with its distinct characteristics and needs. We have certainly

advanced in the fight for empowering children. French historian Phillipe Ariès (1978) is seen as a reference in studies that aim to understand the historical changes in the concept of childhood according to social, economic, and cultural determinants. It is possible to notice how unaware we were of particularities of children and how much they were perceived as mini-adults.

The advancement in certain knowledge fields and the extensive production in social sciences<sup>3</sup> over the last decades caused changes in the way to think and act regarding small children. Therefore, there are countless ways to perceive children and several child development theories. In the context of this investigation, the adopted approach assumes a social interactionist perspective, which defends that the ability to know and learn is build from the exchange that is established between individuals and their environments. As highlighted by Felipe (2001, p. 27), "social interactionist theories see child development as a dynamic process, as children are not mere passive receivers of information around them".

With no intent to further discuss the concepts developed by each of the theoreticians of this school, we highlight some of Vygotsky's ideas to clarify the concept of child that guided the study and that serves as theoretical base for the activities focusing children in the context of BIMM's education plan. To Vygotsky (2009), psychological functioning is structured on social relationships that are established between an individual and their external environment. However, the author states that is not a direct relationship, but rather one that is mediated by symbolic systems, by cultural meanings that are only learned with the participation of mediators; that is, one can think of the mediation role in, for example, reading processes.

The author's reflections on the way child rearing is processed are dense, and they equally provide clues for working with children

**2-** <http://www.prolivro.org.br/ipl/publier4.0/dados/anexos/48.pdf>

**3-** It is important to highlight the contributions from medicine, biology, and psychology, as well as sociology, anthropology, pedagogy, etc.

in the literary field. To Vygotsky (2009, p. 14), imagination - as a base for all creative activity - is manifested in all cultural fields: “everything around us that were made by man’s hands, the whole field of culture, unlike the natural world, all of that is a product of human imagination and creation that is based on it”.

Wallon (2007) also makes valuable contributions and underpins reflections presented herein on childhood. The author proposed the integrated study of child development, including aspects regarding intelligence, affectivity, and motor skills, and harshly criticized linear studies of such development. He highlights the importance of observing the behavior and activities of a child in way that is contextualized with their cultural and social environments, because, for the author, the development of intelligence depends on the experiences provided by the environment and on the degree to which an individual appropriates them. Thus, countless factors effectively contribute to compose the child development context, such as close people, language, knowledge in culture, physical aspects of space, etc. To Wallon, (2007), social mediation lies in the base of development and is the characteristic of a being that is called by the author *genetically social*, who is radically dependent on other beings to survive and build itself as a being in the same species. His theory also shows it is necessary to respect children’s points of views, such as we do with adults. “A child can only live their childhood. It is up to adults to know it. However, what will predominate in that knowledge, the adult’s or the child’s point of view?” (WALLON, 2007, p. 7).

The theories developed by Vygotsky, Wallon and other theoreticians whose ideas we use lead us to think of the role of spaces destined to children, of the importance of collective experiences, and of the possibilities offered by the relationships between children and adults or other children in regards to contributing to child development.

We consider these author’s contributions in the fields of imagination and child rearing,

in the literary field, in the field of mechanisms in creative processes are valuable for people who deal with children, for professionals who perform activities focusing on childhood, and for the construction of an education plan of a library for children and adolescents. In such perspective, we reinforce that the work conducted at libraries must fully respect children, create conditions to hear them, promote opportunities for interaction, and have availability as one of its premises. Repression, judgment, and oppression render children silent; listening and responding lead to dialogue.

The potential from children as well as the complexity and specificity of the children’s universe reinforce the idea that projects conducted for this segment must be thoroughly planned, discussed, and based on sound theories, to ensure the quality of activities and the consequent development of children. As pointed out by Carvalho and Siqueira (2014), being a child, having rights, and playing a social role are recent achievements in the path of Brazilian children of all ages, ethnicities, and social classes. The activities that are conducted with children, whether in a library or in any other space, are closely related to the conception of childhood we have.

Children require clear and understandable representations from adults, but not “childish” ones. Much less the one adults are used to considering as such. They have a keen sense for even a distant and solemn seriousness, as long as it comes sincerely and straight from the heart. (BENJAMIN, 2002, p. 55).

Besides, the concept of reading also interferes in decision-making and in the planning of activities. In this study, we believe reading represents a unique dimension of the human experience, and it enables us to record thoughts and facts and mix them with others from different times and from different cultural and social spaces. Reading is deciphering and



also producing meanings, and that is performed in the realm of human communication in a semiotic perspective; that is, one that considers the interaction with different signs and symbols. In the various reading experiences is where human being is constituted as a historical individual, thus potentializing their way to see the world and be in it (YUNES, 2009; VARGAS, 2009).

### **The investigation and the education plan: planning everyday actions and mediations**

Simultaneously to the bibliographic review and to the definition of concepts, we made an effort to understand the institution itself: its structure, operation, activities, statutes, rules, etc. A document analysis was then conducted on the institution since it was founded, as well as the production performed by FCRB, through its annual reports and various records. Certainly, the intention was not to rebuild or retell the institution's history, but rather to know and understand the research space.

In this review, we found that countless events that took place in FCRB itself already surfaced a discussion on culture and education, thus highlighting the consequent importance of an educational policy pursuant to a cultural policy. However, some of these events showed how much these policies have led more to reproduction than to production of knowledge. These debates therefore were found to be starting points for the creation of the plan. The path of the institution was also considered, to resurface the restlessness and the actions that permeated its history and its production in the education field.

As previously informed, BIMM is located at FCRB, which was originated in a museum-library that was founded in 1928, at *Casa de Rui Barbosa* (Rui Barbosa's House). To better meet its goal of culture, research, and teaching development, as well as its role of getting visitors aware of Rui Barbosa's life and work, the legal personality of the institution was

altered in 1966, and its name was then changed to *Fundação Casa de Rui Barbosa*.

BIMM is tied to one of FCRB's sectors - the library service - and it was open in 1979 through a partnership between FCRB and *Fundação Nacional do Livro Infantil e Juvenil* (FNLIJ - National Foundation of Books for Children and Adolescents). The name was a tribute to educator Maria Mazzetti (1926-1974), who, besides being an author of children's books, also directed Teatro Gibi (a puppet theater), when she discovered the importance of theater in the education of children. In the creation project of BIMM, the lack of children's libraries in Rio de Janeiro was already pointed out as unquestionable, and this presented itself as one of the reasons for founding it. Only two specialized libraries were highlighted at that time: *Biblioteca Infantil Carlos Alberto* (BICA - *Carlos Alberto Children's Library*) - a state government library that still works but does not focus exclusively on children and adolescents -, and *Biblioteca do Museu da República* (Republic Museum Library), already closed.

With the creation of BIMM, the goal was to cater to the children and adolescents from Botafogo - the neighborhood where the library is located at, which gathers many schools - and the children from the poor families who live around the neighborhood. In the institution bylaws, one can already detect the main goal of the institution: "an essential goal is fostering the interest in leisure reading and disseminating fictional literature"<sup>44</sup> (FILE..., 1978).

Also as a methodological resource, we conducted five interviews: four with former, already retired employees from BIMM, and one interview with a worker that would retire in that first year of investigation. All people interviewed, who worked at different times, also mentioned the difficulty in building a team, by conducting activities "intuitively", "for the sake of children", and due to their being certain that "BIMM could contribute to the making of future

<sup>44</sup>- FCRB's file, Process no. 59/78, fl. 48.

readers". The tone of the interviews revealed the workers' dedication and commitment, revealing actions that were indeed conducted based on intuition rather than planning: "The only thing we need to do is look right in the eyes of each child that gets in here"; "I have always fought to keep this as an open space. I have given my life for BIMM. It cannot close"; "Each morning I arrived here happy. It was my second home". The desire to do work to foster reading among children was mentioned in the interviews, and, actually, the people interviewed undertook the task of maintaining that space, which was many times considered as their home away from home. However, their actions were not guided by guidelines or specific projects to cater to their target public.

Based on the document analysis and the result from the interviews, it was possible to find that, throughout over thirty years of existence, BIMM always offered services to the public, but the activities offered varied in quality and intensity in each period. The accuracy or insufficiency of actions was due to distinct economic, political, temporary, administrative, and even individual factors, as highlighted in the testimonials. It is also important to point out the countless efforts and initiatives from different management bodies to revitalize that space. The conduction of this investigation is an example of one of those actions, and it represents an effort to draft a political-pedagogical project that may underpin the activities to be performed at BIMM.

Regarding the results obtained in the document analysis, we have analyzed the foundation's 2007 education plan and found that the plan for BIMM was included in one of the three axes that were pointed out in document (CARVALHO, 2007) *A FCRB e os caminhos do livro e da cultura* (FCRB and the paths for books and culture) (CARVALHO, 2007). It is important to point out that the plan already mentioned the need to create a systematized project of activities to be conducted at the library, and it also called attention to the urgent requirement

of restructuring the physical space. This document, therefore, was equally important for the conduction of the research. But we decided it was necessary to better define what an education plan for non-formal spaces such as a library is. Additionally, it was necessary to know institutions that already had that document.

We then decided to map the libraries for children and adolescents in Brazil rather than only the ones in the city of Rio de Janeiro, in search of the ones that had already prepared education plans. However, it was not even possible to conduct such mapping, as none of the agencies contacted had information, or the data they showed were not accurate. There is no point in describing the difficulties we faced at that stage of the research; we only point out we seek information through visits, surveys, phone calls, e-mails - at that moment, we could not map the libraries for children and adolescents nor could we have access to any of their education plans.

Considering this situation, we extended the investigation to the international literature. Next we show some aspects that are considered to be relevant in this survey, which aid in the process of preparing an education plan (HOOPER-GREENHILL, 2007, 1999).

An education plan is a document that describes the education rules of an institution, what is priority and which activities will be conducted at a certain period. The preparation of an education plan does not mean the institution's educational work is defined; on the contrary, the document must be constantly revised as the priorities and needs from the institution and the visiting public are constantly changing. The international has point out that education plans should be reviewed every three years, which does not exclude annual reviews.

A policy - which is made explicit through the preparation of a plan - means that educational work will then be more organized and focused, that the whole institution will be aware of its potential and guidelines adopted, and that each involved sector is connected with



all others and held liable if necessary. It is also presented as a possibility for recording actions and as an instrument to guide the training of new teams. Therefore, it transcends the body of professionals involved in its planning at a certain time.

The process for developing the plan is valuable as a final document as, because it involves a great deal of people, consciousness of and support to the educational role of the institution can be raised. The key for a successful education plan is to know and understand its target public, once these subjects involved may help establish new or improved relationships with local communities. A plan should firstly identify the audience rates and its needs, so then it can define the quality and the types of services that will be rendered, as well as how these activities will be conducted.

Organizing and education plan is to put forward actions that are important to education and that can be executed in the institution. Such conduct does not only allow building the profile of education in the organization, but it also optimizes, enables, and provides the base for the resources to be fulfilled, thus contributing to internal applications that are safer (CARVALHO, 2007).

As a management tool, education plans must be as close as possible to the institution's strategic guidelines and documents; that is, the actions in the education plan must be part of the institutional plan. As highlighted in the education plan for the foundation, to execute the goals of a plan, it is important that one is not only aware of the institution's mission but also of the mission of the plan and of the institution's education mission. Thus, we elaborate on the definitions and steps that were already presented in a previous study (CARVALHO, 2007), making sure the guidelines that were pointed out for the library were pursuant to the foundation's mission.

In regards to the museological management, specifically on what is concerned to the importance of preparing an institutional

plan that can be equally applied to an education plan for a library, Mason (2004, p. 48) points out that "having a written document allows focusing on strategic thinking and decision making, and it also helps achieve credibility from agencies that might be considering whether to fund it or not".

### **User survey: getting to know the public**

The literature on the preparation of an education plan therefore determines that one of its steps comprises identifying audience rates and their needs. As a matter of fact it is a study on users, a field that has been becoming increasingly accurate in regards to providers of several kinds of services (BAPTISTA; CUNHA, 2007). The importance of taking user satisfaction into account, not only concerning the activities that are already offered but also future ones, is a consensus among researchers. Thus, the option for conducting a user survey was found to be a good way to support the education plan, underpinning actions proposed for BIMM.

Firstly, through the analysis of activity reports for BIMM, we have identified the different segments that composed our target public: 0 to 4-year old children who visited the garden for sunbathing around the library; young library members (5 to 18-year olds); school groups that visited BIMM and the museum (3 to 18-year olds); and the children's guardians.

After that, we drafted a questionnaire, assuming that a survey - one of the tools that is available to social researchers - would be the methodology adopted for that step. Babbie (2005) points out that this kind of investigation does not limit itself to asking questions and counting answers; on the contrary, it comprises the use of specific techniques that meet the general investigation rules. To the author, a survey can be used in a very advantageous and efficient ways, mainly when it is coupled with other methods, such as interviews. At the time the study was conducted there were not scheduled

visits from school groups, so two questionnaires were drafted - one to be applied to children and adolescents (5 to 18-year olds) and the other to guardians accompanying the children at BIMM's facilities (parents, grandparents, sitters, etc.). The issues, option, formats, strategies and all other possibilities for the construction and application of the instrument were thoroughly discussed and revised. The questionnaires were applied between June and August of 2010 and figure in the final research report, as well as the analysis of results. Besides that, to also include smaller children, we decided to prepare yet another research instrument: the conduction of playful activities with this segment, based on the same principles we decided to include in the questionnaires.

To validate the survey, we pre-tested it. That is an essential step when conducting surveys. According to Babbie (2005), pre-testing refers to the initial test, the low-scale exam of aspects in the design of the investigation. Its fundamental goal is to improve research instruments - that is, it is a mini-survey.

It was not a self-administered questionnaire; we supervised the subjects as they gave answers, and clarified doubts, taking not of suggestions to review and enhance the survey. Such supervision was intended to also work as an informal interview and observation of the space, thus combining other research methods. After being pre-tested it was given a few changes. Our intention was to extend the application of the questionnaire. However, due to BIMM facilities being closed<sup>5</sup> for a year for repairs, the former members and schools had stopped attending, and we had a small number of these segments. Generally speaking, only very small children still attended FCRB's gardens. Thus, after three months supervising the public, we found it would not be possible to broaden the investigation universe - 47 adults and 38 children - as we had the same visitors every day. The obtained data were properly organized

**5-** The library remained closed from August 2009 to June 2010 for renovation of its facilities and scanning of its catalog inventory.

and analyzed. Along with the observation work and the interviews conducted, they had relevant information, provided fundamental subsidies, and supported both the activities that were proposed throughout the conduction of the investigation and the suggests presented in the final research report.

It is important to highlight that the playful activities with younger children were not executed to a sufficient degree, and they yielded many more impressions than research results. However, we still find it to be a good investigation resource. Below, having in mind the small research universe - 47 adults and 38 children - we present some of the results obtained in the organization of data from questionnaires. They are shown as absolute numbers, but sometimes percentages are displayed to only give an idea of the investigated set.

### **Children and their guardians: who are they and what do they say about BIMM?**

When the answers were analyzed, it was possible to confirm that the former members had quit visiting during the period in which BIMM was being renovated. We had newly-achieved guests: 30 children (around 80% of the total) and 38 guardians were attending BIMM for less than six months, and only two children were members. Among the 47 adults, 25 of them made visits with their children, nineteen with children under their responsibility, and three refrained from answering the survey. In the investigated universe, almost all (95%) visitors came to BIMM from three to five times a week.

Regarding their reasons for visiting, all children marked the option *because I like reading*, and we had another 31 *because I like taking part in the activities* answers, as the question could be answered with more than one alternative.

The number of boys and girls who answered the questionnaire was practically the same. Among the adults, only three were males. More than half of the guardians (29

were between 26 and 32 years old or from 40 to 47 years old; 27 children were 6 to 8 years old; four of them were 9 to 11 years old; and seven children were 5 years old. In respect to their addresses, most respondents (43 adults and 35 children) marked the option that represented Humaitá, Urca and Botafogo neighborhoods (the latter is where FCRB is located).

32 children (almost 85%) attended public school. No students had been retained. Those children were found to have parents with high education levels: all mothers had finished college and only one of the fathers had finished high school. The education levels of guardians were also found to be high: 38 had finished college; seven of them, high school; and two guardians had finished elementary school. None of the people in any of the two groups attended graduate school.

We considered that the question that attempted at mapping the professions of guardians had to be redone, as 22 adults (around 46%) marked alternative *other*, without filling the field where their job information was supposed to go. Among the options provided in the questionnaire, twelve were teachers and thirteen were maids/babysitters. The gross family income in this group included seventeen adults in the range between R\$ 501.00 and R\$ 1,000.00; 27 of them were distributed equally in the three following ranges, and three adults had earnings above R\$ 8,000.00.

With the exception of the garden and the library, the remaining spaces of FCRB (museum, course room, auditorium, etc.) were not used by this public. The services and the catalogue were considered *great* or *fair* by people interviewed, highlighting their wishing that the services were offered on weekends. By the way, not only did the request for BIMM to also open on weekends appear on the questionnaires, but also in all informal interviews.

In regards to the consumption of books and leisure habits from the guardians, *listening to music and going to malls* were habits confirmed in the universe of people interviewed

(33 adults were frequent mall goers), and *cinema* appeared as a place frequently visited by 26 adults in this group. Going to parties/friends' houses, practicing physical activities/sports, going to bars/restaurants, and *reading a book* were configured as activities seldom practiced. The beaches in Rio de Janeiro city, which are famous worldwide for their natural beauty and for being overcrowded in sunny days, were not shown as a preference in the universe of people surveyed: 42 adults (almost 90%) marked they *never* or *seldom* went to the beaches in the city.

Most guardians (38) were not aware of BIMM's website, whereas half of the children stated knowing it, but not accessing it. Only three children considered the website as *good* or *great*, and the rest of them classified it as *fair*.

The habit of reading and the wish to intensify it were revealed by the people interviewed, and only one child marked that they *sort of* liked reading. The adults fairly pointed out the reasons that kept them from reading more: *excess work*, *lack of time*, and *excess chores*. In the children's opinions, what prevented them from reading the most was the *need to play and/or go out with friends* (24 children), followed by *lack of a library* (ten) and *lack of time* (four).

The preference for printed books was predominant among the people interviewed: only two adults and one child answered they did not have a preference regarding reading digital or printed books. The children were found to read much more frequently than the adults: 25 marked they read *one book a week*; twelve, a *book every fifteen days*, and one child reported reading *one book a month*. Among their guardians, all of the marked *once a month*.

The most appreciated literary genre was *romance novel*, followed by *adventure novel*. The opposite was found for children: *adventure* was followed by *romance*. Despite their taste for reading, fifteen adults reported not buying books, and only the children answered that their parents and grandparents usually gave them books as gifts.

All people interviewed started that someone influenced them to start reading as a habit, which thus reinforces the importance of mediation in this process. It was interesting to find that the 38 children answered that both their *fathers* and *mothers* influenced them to like reading. Among the adults, the figures of their *mothers* (a little more frequent) and *fathers* also appeared as the most frequent in this mediator role, but they were followed by *teachers* (ten adults), an influence that was not mentioned among the children. Their *grandparents* were mentioned by four children. On the other hand, none of the guardians marked *libraries* as spaces where their habit of reading started, and chose *home* as the place where they got in this habit, whereas 25 children marked that place, and the rest of them mentioned *home*.

We prepared the questionnaires with closed questions mostly, and only some of them could be answered with suggestions or specific information. Generally speaking, the guardians gave thanks: *existence of the library, renovation conducted; socialization between children and mothers; politeness of receptionists; quality of activities offered*. Some of the items mentioned as positive aspects of BIMM by children were: *good service; quality of books; opportunity to draw; presence of friends; and storytelling*.

Some guardians' suggestions for BIMM to be able to provide better service were: *promoting book releases; open on weekends; increasing and renovating the catalogue for the kids; intensifying activities during school vacations; increasing the space in the library for conducting activities; installing computers for the children; increasing the number of toys for small children; having storytelling sessions every day; purchasing books for children under three years of age; allowing parties/celebrations to be organized inside the library*. The suggestions given by the children were the following: *allowing parties to be thrown; releasing of books; purchasing more tables; purchasing a higher number of toys*. The wish for the library to open on weekends and the

everyday storytelling sessions were also mentioned in the informal conversations with the children and their guardians.

We did not have many answers to the question regarding their three favorite books. Some of the books and authors mentioned by the guardians: Monteiro Lobato; *Mapa do Brasil* (Brazil's Map); *A galinha ruiva* (The Red Chicken); *Poesia fora da estante* (Poetry outside the shelf); *Coleção artes* (Art Collection); *The Kite Runner*; *One Hundred Years of Solitude*; *The House of the Spirits*; *João Bernardo*; *Children's books with drawings*; *Vamos contar* (Let's Count); *O circo* (The Circus); *Odyssey*; *Animais na fazenda* (Animals in the farm); *Divirta-se com os números* (Have fun with numbers); *Drawing on the go*. And the children's favorite books were: Betty Bib's *Fairy Field Guide*; *Livro dos números* (Book of Numbers); *Reinações de Narizinho* (Adventures of Little Nose); *A bolsa amarela* (The Yellow Bag); *A reforma da natureza* (Reforming Nature); *O rato roeu a roupa do rei de Roma* (The rat chewed the king of Rome's outfit); *Mundo encantado* (*Enchanted World*); *Operação de Lili* (Lili's surgery); *Dinossauros* (Dinosaurs); *Alice in Wonderland*.

Considering, therefore, that the study was configured as a pilot test, and that the instrument was applied when the library was being reopened, we recommend it is redrafted to be applied again to users. However, the results obtained in the user survey, as well as the observation work and the interviews conducted through the research had relevant information and also underpinned the investigation.

## **Redefining the research paths**

As mentioned, to conduct the investigation, we chose to use some research instruments such as a bibliographic review, a document analysis, interviews, and user surveys, without intending on directly intervening in the actions conducted by the library. However, some factors redefined the study format. Also while BIMM was closed, we were invited by the foundation management body to be part

of the project for restructuring that space, with the renovation of facilities and computerized management and stock-taking of the catalogue. We have no knowledge of specific areas, such as library science or architecture, and we have not defined several aspects. It is important to highlight, nonetheless, the fact that we have been included in this process, and, mainly, the importance of an interdisciplinary dialogue in a project of this nature.

On the other hand, as the library was drawing nearer reopening, the need to define the activities to be developed became clear, and FCRB did not have a team that could take over the actions to be offered to the community, as their number of employees was small and the outsourced workers were not trained to conduct activities in the library.

Thus, considering the state of affairs at that moment, the path the research had been plan to go through was changed. From then on we took an active part in the actions of BIMM, from planning to organizing, dealing with the contacts for events, to executing the activities offered to the users. Thus, without further analyzing the theoretical discussions contained in the specialized literature, this investigation started being configured as an action research.

Action research is widely agreed to be a qualitative method of investigation, but, according to intellectuals in the field, the term is applied to a wide range of situations. It has been used vaguely for any attempt of improvement or investigation of a practice, and several authors have been dedicating themselves to clarifying some aspects involving this method of investigation. Tripp (2005), for example, defends that action researches need to be seen as one of the many different ways for action investigation. He considers that aspects that are common to other methods also apply to this modality: participation, role of reflection, need for managing knowledge, and ethics of the process. To the author, action research is a continued, systematic, and empirically grounded attempt at enhancing a practice.

As a matter of fact, the controversies in that kind of investigation start on its name: action research? Participatory research? Intervention research? There is no consensus regarding the differences and approximations between these names. To Thiollent (2011), action research is a kind of participatory research, but not always participatory research is action research. In Brazil, the controversy lies in several trends involving the concepts of research and participation. In the foreign literature (ANDALOUSSI, 2004; BARBIER, 2006), in turn, researchers are not concerned about using a term or another, but rather about whether studies are conducted in a participatory way or not. However, most scholars agree that action research is a collective methodology that favors discussion and cooperative production of specific knowledge on an experienced reality.

Moving on from the term that defines this study, it is a fact we intervened in the practice already during the investigation process, rather than just as a possible consequence of the final result of the project - one of the characteristics pointed out by Thiollent (2011) for this kind of research. Thus, the proposed actions were based, throughout this investigation, on deep theoretical analysis, which guided the planning and execution of activities.

### **The daily routine in the library and the evaluation of activities**

In the perspective of action research as a guide for this investigation, we planned, implemented, described, and evaluated the changes for the improvement of the practice, we learned more as the process advanced, both in regards to the practice and to the investigation itself (TRIPP, 2005). And, exactly in this perspective, we faced the reality of a public institution, characterized by the red tape of bureaucratic sectors, and attempted at dialoging with the everyday life and the dynamics in a library for children and adolescents, which demanded practical actions that enabled it



to operate. Nonetheless, we tried not to lose the theoretical concepts that guided our investigation from sight, such as the need to perform work focusing on the children, with the construction of a project that took into account the specific aspects of this public, with its distinct characteristics and needs (VIGOTSKI, 2009).

Practical aspects were then implemented throughout the research and/or highlighted in the final drafting of the document. Besides the educational and cultural activities, we executed, for example, and with the help of communication professionals, actions regarding a project for advertising the space and building a visual identity - creation of brochures, posters, bookmarks, etc. - to consolidate a visual identity to the library.

We also planned an annual schedule, with the inclusion of specific events, and its consequent disclosure, thus allowing users to be aware of the activities BIMM offered. We considered that the regularity in the actions enables them to be included in people's schedules and allows activities to be consolidated.

The construction of a manual of services which clarifies the rules the library follows in regards to the technical services adopted concerning the catalogue, as well as the drafting of a regulation for the use of space were also shown to be important, and also executed. The perception that users need to be aware of the rules and principles that guide the institution was only possible through the inclusion of one of the grant holders in the everyday routine of BIMM, through, for example, narrations, such as the one from adults who demanded silence from the children, as they were reading a book.

On the other hand, we implemented instruments to evaluate the activities conducted, as a fundamental aspect in the conduction of activities, plans, projects, programs, etc., as well as in the re-preparation and consolidation of proposals. The main goal of the evaluation is to produce information that is relevant to decision-making, but that is not accidental; it must be planned, properly programmed,

and anchored in an organized methodology. The evaluation also seeks to assess the impact from activities and to express value judgment, thus guiding the actions to be conducted. The evaluation processes enable reflection on actions, thinking back on activities executed. However, the evaluation must be configured as part of an educational proposal that is previously defined through the concept of education each institution adopts; that is, the conception of education is the one giving support to the evaluation (MORTARA, 2010).

In turn, in the education plan of *Fundação Casa de Rui Barbosa*, Carvalho (2007, p. 25) signaled that, ideally, an evaluation "must include evaluations before, during and after a project, by its target public. That may include comments from visitors, surveys, questionnaires, discussion groups, and discussion panels".

We once again stress that the user survey and the definition of concepts were fundamental steps in the preparation of an education plan, and they certainly guided the investigation conducted. Based on, for example, the information collected in the user survey that BIMM website did not have a good evaluation, we had some meetings with the responsible company, in the attempt to make some changes (although it was not possible to advance). In the same perspective, the search for efficient integration among BIMM's playful and pedagogical activities, not only in the physical environment but also in the virtual environment of the foundation, was also highlighted. Regarding the field of digital media, Gaspar (2012, p. 180) found "perspectives and possibilities which were shown to deserve investments and research in the field of digital entrepreneurship for museums". However, because of countless obstacles, this project was not implemented either, and, in the final research report, we point out some possibilities of action, highlighting the importance of making this environment as interactive as possible and connected with the



activities conducted at BIMM. We could not respond to some of the user's wish to open the library on weekends, as the institution did not have enough staff to undertake that task, and the recommendation was the only thing left.

### **Some considerations:** resuming the discussions

The research presented here made an effort to highlight some of the paths chosen in the construction of an education plan for a cultural institution. In the specific case of BIMM, we focused on preserving the principles defended by the foundation patron - Rui Barbosa - in regards to forming readers, fostering reading, and empowering citizens. His ideas confirmed the relevance of a project such as BIMM's education plan - focused by this investigation - which values cultural background and reading as a political project for building a democratic space that is focused on forming readers who can benefit from and produce culture.

From the start, this investigation aimed at evaluating the activities performed at BIMM; increasing knowledge on current and potential users as well as their information needs; identifying the educational and cultural activities that matched the profile of the target public; planning future projects for BIMM. Even though the research path has been changed, or even maybe because of this detour, we considered that our final purposes were achieved.

Nodding at the relevant literature, which highlights that each institution must build its education plan, as each institution is unique, our intention, by writing this text, was not to present a model, but rather to show some of the paths we chose and some of the options we adopted throughout the conduction of this investigation, to cooperate with other institutions that intend on preparing an education plan.

Besides forming readers, one has to think there is now way to ignore the importance of spaces such as BIMM, Considering the

degrading human relationships and the new urban configurations, places such as this one effectively take over a privileged role in the construction of relationships (CASTRO, 1998; ASENSIO; POL, 2002).

While conducting this research, we verified a sad reality found in our country, in regards to a great deal of Brazil's population not having the habit of reading. Parents, teachers, and librarians often end up failing from getting children and youngsters in contact with books.

We understand that, although we live in different times, aspects such as school, cultural, and artistic education and the democratization of culture and education - highlighted and defended in Rui Barbosa's work - are still certainly fundamental in a field that today extends beyond school institutions. Assuming human background in a broad sense is also a role that needs to be played by cultural institutions.

After two years of research, of theoretical analyses, of actions performed as a results of the adopted methodology, we highlight the need for Maria Mazzetti Library for Children and Adolescents to be a project from Fundação Casa de Rui Barbosa, for it to be recognized and to acknowledge its social, cultural, and educational purpose. One of the biggest challenges, for the institution as a whole, is the composition of a qualified team to execute the activities, and the consolidation of an education sector with proposals that are effectively planned to provide good services to users (MACHADO, 2009).

Mario de Andrade, already in the early 20th century, highlighted that the creation of popular libraries is a fundamental activity for the development of Brazilian culture: "It is not these libraries will solve any of the painful problems of our culture [...] But the gradual dissemination of the habit of reading, if well guided, will eventually create a well informed urban population that is capable of exercising its free will and is less indifferent to the state of affairs at the national level (ANDRADE, 1957, p. 71).

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