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Information Literacy and Social Protagonism: the role of public libraries in Belém, Pará

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: The Public Library has the mission and role of ensuring access to information for all people in need, providing a welcoming and comfortable environment for accessing knowledge, developing information literacy, and, through these initiatives and actions, fostering conditions for lifelong learning and improvement. Objective: To analyze the relationship between information literacy and the social protagonism of librarians in their role as agents of social transformation. Methodology: The research employs an exploratory and descriptive approach with a qualitative method, utilizing field research. Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews with librarians from two public libraries in the northern region of Brazil. Results: It identifies the presence of active, dynamic professionals who exhibit leadership and continually redefine their professional practices. Conclusion: Based on a critical analysis of the interviews in dialogue with scientific literature, the study considers the existence of professional protagonism among librarians in public libraries, as they feel increasingly prepared to meet the needs of users and consequently perform their activities with an awareness of their role in professional actions aimed at the development of individuals and communities. It concludes that only through the internalization and self-recognition as a social protagonist will the professional be able to initiate the formative and dialogic process of developing information literacy.

KEYWORDS

Information literacy. Social protagonism. Public libraries. Librarians. Public libraries – State of Pará.

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Competência em Informação e Protagonismo Social: o papel das bibliotecas públicas de Belém, Pará

RESUMO

Introdução: A Biblioteca Pública tem a missão e o papel de garantir o acesso à informação a todas as pessoas que dela necessitem, de proporcionar um ambiente aconchegante e acolhedor de acesso ao conhecimento, de desenvolver competência em informação e, com essas iniciativas e atitudes, favorecer as condições para o aprendizado e o aprimoramento ao longo da vida. Objetivo: analisar a relação entre a competência em informação e o protagonismo social dos bibliotecários em seu papel como agentes de transformação social. Metodologia: Realiza uma pesquisa exploratória e descritiva e com abordagem qualitativa, cujo método é a pesquisa de campo. A coleta de dados se deu por meio da técnica de entrevista, do tipo semiestruturada, com

bibliotecários de duas bibliotecas públicas da região Norte do Brasil. Resultados: Identifica a presença de profissionais atuantes, dinâmicos, que exercem protagonismo e que, continuamente, ressignificam o seu fazer profissional. Conclusão: Considera, a partir da análise crítica das entrevistas em diálogo com a literatura científica, a existência do protagonismo profissional do bibliotecário nas bibliotecas, uma vez que se sente cada vez mais preparado para atender as necessidades dos usuários e, consequentemente, exercer suas atividades conscientes do seu papel nas ações profissionais em favor do desenvolvimento das pessoas e das comunidades. Conclui que somente a partir da internalização e autorreconhecimento como protagonista social é que o profissional terá condições de iniciar o processo formativo e dialógico do desenvolvimento da competência em informação.
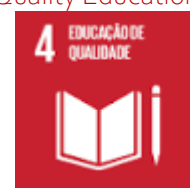
PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Competência em informação. Protagonismo social. Bibliotecas públicas. Bibliotecários. Bibliotecas públicas - Estado do Pará.

CRediT

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JITA: CE. Literacy
ODS: 4. Quality Education

1 INTRODUCTION

We live in a time characterized by changes in all areas of society. Public libraries have the mission and role to contribute to the educational and personal development of citizens, their quality of life, and guarantee of rights, and access to information and so on.

The motivation for writing this article on Information Literacy (CoInfo) and the leading role played by librarians arose from the need to understand the CoInfo actions developed by public libraries in the municipality of Belém, in the state of Pará. We envision that the conclusion of CoInfo in the face of social/informational vulnerability can stimulate reflection and be applied in different instances, whether through public policies, scientific research or social projects.

Since public libraries can contribute to the development of CoInfo for people in situations of social vulnerability, the issue should be addressed in greater depth, considering the diversity and specificity of social needs, both individual and collective. According to IFLA (2022), ongoing research should focus on evaluating the impact of the library and collecting data intending to demonstrate the social potential of libraries to attract the attention of policymakers.

In this paper, we have adopted the concept of CoInfo proposed by Dudziak (2003, p. 28):

> Based on the analysis of the evolution of the concept and following the conception of information literacy in terms of lifelong learning, it can be defined as the continuous process of internalization of conceptual, attitudinal and skills foundations necessary for understanding and permanent interaction with the information universe and its dynamics, to provide lifelong learning.

CoInfo is related to the development process and, according to the author, is a continuous learning process that integrates information, knowledge, and intelligence. It is transdisciplinary in nature, encompassing a set of skills, knowledge, and values, both personal and social, that permeate phenomena related to creation, problem-solving and decision-making.

In this way, this article contextualizes information literacy and the role of the librarian working in the public library. In this scenario, we bring the Avertano Rocha Public Library and the Arthur Vianna Public Library, both located in the city of Belém, PA, a context in which we seek to answer the guiding question, which is: how do information competence and protagonism manifest themselves in librarians who work in public libraries in the city of Belém, state of Pará?

In this sense, the general objective of the article is to analyze the relationship between information literacy and social protagonism of librarians in their role as agents of social transformation. The specific objectives are: a) to describe how public libraries promote activities to develop information literacy; b) to identify the social protagonism of librarians; c) to explore the challenges faced by librarians in applying information literacy.

The text is structured in five sections, as follows: the first one is made up of this introduction and the presentation of the objectives, the research question and the justification; in the second section we deal with a theoretical discussion on CoInfo and the social role of librarians; in the third section we present the methodology used in the research, highlighting the procedures for collecting, processing and presenting the information; in the fourth section we present and discuss the results; finally, the fifth section contains the final reflections of the research.

2 INFORMATION COMPETENCE AND THE SOCIAL ROLE OF LIBRARIANS

The American Paul Zurkowski, in a report entitled - The information service environment relationships and priorities, wrote about the term "information literacy", and this was the first record of the term published in literature in 1974.

We intend not to delve into the terminological debate, but to point out the adoption of the term "information competence", consolidated in 2011 in a seminar held at the XXIV Brazilian Congress of Library, Documentation and Information Science, in the city of Maceió, Alagoas, and recorded in the document resulting from the event (Furtado; Belluzzo; Vitorino, 2019, p.77).

Bezerra, Schneider and Saldanha (2019) point out that the history of the evolution of competence in the use of bibliographic services and systems, later focused on "information" in the American Library Association (ALA), is intrinsically linked to the concept of the public library, its technologies and its practice. They emphasize that the crucial year for understanding this construction is 1876, the year in which the Association was founded, showing a context that reveals the formation of an institution of great importance, marked by the integration of practices that had already been developing in the United States for decades, especially since the mid-19th century.

Some theoretical milestones of CoInfo in Brazil are highlighted by Vitorino and Piantola (2020), such as the articles by Bernadette Campello and Elisabeth Dudziak, both from 2003. For the authors, the expansion of studies on this topic highlights its importance, both internationally and nationally, as they are necessary to understand the nuances of CoInfo. For Dudziak (2001), user education studies developed by librarians are the precursors of information literacy in Brazil.

It is important to emphasize the social responsibility of the public library, the librarians who work there, and the importance of informational and cultural activities developed in collaboration with communities and their users. These actions aim to enable them to enjoy the benefits of an effective and critical use of information, which is becoming a necessary skill for the social inclusion of today's citizens.

Almeida, Farias and Farias (2020) point out that the activities that take place in the library are influenced by the librarian and his or her role as a protagonist around the community to which he or she belongs. This includes mediating actions, prioritizing agendas of collective interest, and representing social demands and interests.

In the context of the emergence of the Internet, Righetto, Vitorino and Muriel-Torrado (2018) consider the new social configuration in which information is disseminated in an immediate and fragmented way and warn of the need to adapt to the responsible use of information. Beyond the simple mastery of technology, the key is to know how to deal with, humanize, and understand differences.

For Fonseca (2021), it is important to understand that teaching-learning programs that focus on accessing and using information through digital resources enable users to build knowledge to face reality. The author states: "Citizens are expected to exercise their role in an effective, assertive and democratic way, actively participating as historical and social subjects in the current scenario, able to contribute to and inspire the development of future generations" (Fonseca, 2021, p. 60).

Thus, we understand, confirming the study of Gomes (2019), that protagonism implies taking a firm position because protagonists lead, face obstacles that may threaten the collective, and engage in conflicts to build a world focused on the common good.

The IFLA-Unesco Manifesto of 2022 proclaims the essential role of the public library in this context of educating citizens for a fair society for all, with sustainable development and social justice. The manifesto states that the public library is "an essential component of knowledge societies, constantly adapting to new media to fulfil its function of providing

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universal access to information and enabling all people to make meaningful use of information" (IFLA, 2022).

The public library, as a local portal to knowledge, provides the foundation for continuous learning, empowerment and cultural enrichment for individuals and communities. It is a fundamental pillar of healthy knowledge-based societies, facilitating access to and sharing of a wide range of knowledge, both scientific and local, without commercial, technological or legal barriers (IFLA, 2022).

Vitorino and Spudeit (2023), in their recent study "Guidelines for the development of information competence for public libraries with a focus on homeless people," point out that it is possible to prepare public library teams to design CoInfo programs aimed at this audience. Therefore, in this article, we discuss the relationship between information literacy actions and how the social role of librarians has made a difference in promoting these activities.

2.1 Information competence, librarians as social protagonists and public libraries

In this research, we agree with the concept of the public library as cultural equipment and also as information equipment, according to Almeida Junior (2021); as well as with the text by Romero-Sanchés, Gómes-Hernández and Hernández-Pedreño (2019), who discuss the social role of public libraries; and Dudziak (2003), who discusses CoInfo from a conceptual perspective; and Gomes (2017), who points out and discusses the role of the librarian as a social protagonist.

Libraries tend to become reference centers, a role that according to Almeida Júnior (1997) should already belong to the public library, they should be open to provide useful information to society, that is, a reception center that provides information on employment, health, culture, leisure, among countless needs that exist in people's daily lives. We believe that the scenario has changed considerably since the 1990s, but we still think it is necessary to emphasize the metaphorical nature of public libraries as spaces for the movement of knowledge, as advocated by Latour (2006).

The relationship between information literacy, the public library and the role of librarians involves a combination of knowledge, skills, and practices in a social context, given that this professional works in different segments where information, culture, and leisure are in demand.

In this sense, we have listed the three central elements of our study in Table 1 so that we can extract from them some characteristics of the three themes for an analysis of their importance in the context of the public library. In the table below, we list some relevant points in the work of librarians in public libraries in the implementation of CoInfo education, a field that has applications in different social environments.

Chart 1. Relationship between the information competent individual, the social protagonist librarian and the public library.

Information Competent Individual	Social Protagonist Librarian	Public Library
Features:	Role:	Functions:
Critical thinking	Information mediator	Learning space
Autonomy in learning	Reading promoter	Access to information
Use of technology	Project developer	Cultural center
Skills:	Competences:	Services:
Searching for and evaluating information	Effective communication	Borrowing materials

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Use of digital tools	Teamwork	User guidance
Creativity and innovation	Resource and people management	Scheduling events

The public library is essentially "social" and open to everyone in the community where it is located, and its main objective is to facilitate a basic universal right: access to information (Romero-Sanchés; Gómes-Hernández; Hernández-Pedreño, 2019).

These functions are essentially both for public libraries, which act as information access centers, and for librarian protagonists, who are the mediators of the users' information competence process. The information-competent individual has the capacity to improve people's critical and analytical thinking in relation to the information universe (Belluzzo; Santos; Almeida Júnior, 2014).

CoInfo is identified in the librarian's work as a fundamental agent for interlocution with the community, for contact with information and, consequently, for establishing personal, professional and emotional relationships in the library. The public library is a dynamic space that enhances protagonist action and requires constant learning due to the social transformations that permeate this information environment.

3 METHODOLOGY

The research is exploratory, descriptive, and bibliographical in nature. As a method, it adopts field research, which aims to obtain information to solve a problem to discover new phenomena or the relationship between them (Marconi; Lakatos, 2017). The data collection technique used was a semi-structured interview. The methodological process consisted of the following stages:

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     a) Documentary research and literature review;
     b) Interview script;
     c) Data collection;
     d) Transcribing the answers and analyzing and interpreting the data.

To conduct the interviews properly, the researchers first searched for information on the institutions' websites. This strategy made it possible to determine whether the information published was outdated, such as projects that were no longer in progress and other important actions that were not published on the official website and that we only learned about from the interviewees.

The universe of the research is public libraries in the northern region of Brazil, and the site of the research was two public libraries in Belém/PA:

- The Municipal Public Library of Avertano Rocha (BPMAR) was founded on July 21, 1972. It is a department of the Cultural Foundation of the Municipality of Belém (FUMBEL), attached to the City Hall of Belém. Located in the Icoaraci district, about 20 km from the center of the city, it serves a public from several nearby neighborhoods and those who live in the riverside areas, on the banks of Guajará Bay and the Pará and Paracuri Rivers (Biblioteca, 2023). Located in the neighborhood of Icoaraci (address: R. Siqueira Mendes, n. 607-705 - Bairro: Cruzeiro, Icoaraci - Chalé Tavares Cardoso).
- The Arthur Vianna State Public Library is associated with the Reading and Information Directorate of the Pará Cultural Foundation (FCP) and currently

coordinates three other libraries: Casa das Artes, Casa da Linguagem and Curro Velho, as well as the nine libraries located in the Usinas da Paz. The Centenary Library is located in the FCP building and has the following sections: Circulation and Reference, Works from Pará, Braille, Infocenter and Reprographics, Hemeroteca and Newspaper Clippings, Toy Library, Children's Library, Phonotheque, Audiovisual, Gibiteca, Rare Works and Cultural Core (Biblioteca, 2023). It is linked to the Directorate of Reading and Information, which coordinates the State System of Municipal Public Libraries, through a specific secretariat that covers all the municipalities of Pará, located in the Municipality of Belém (address: Av. Gentil Bittencourt, n.650, Bairro: Nazaré - 2nd and 3rd floors of the building).

An interview was also conducted with the librarians to find out about the functioning of the space where they work, its mission, its strengths and weaknesses, the public and the activities carried out, asking open-ended questions so that the professional librarians could answer freely and what they said was noted down.

The interviews took place at scheduled times, and due to the school holidays, it was not possible to interview all the librarians we had hoped to.

The criterion for selecting the interviewees was that they were librarians in the public libraries studied here, i.e., a homogeneous population of professionals. Creswell (2007) states that the researcher's deliberate targeting of groups and elements from which to gather opinions, as well as the personal interpretation of the results of the research, are all subsidies to qualitative procedures.

As for the semi-structured interview script, it consists of eleven questions about the library they work in, projects, partnerships, the profile, and needs of the users who frequent the space, and the dynamics of the librarian's daily work.

The interviews took place between July 26 and August 1, 2023, and were audio-recorded with the permission of the participants and later transcribed to highlight the most relevant parts for data analysis according to the research objectives. These excerpts were organized and presented along with the analyses in the following section. To protect the identity of the participants, they are referred to as interviewees in the text: E1, E2, E3, and E4.

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4 RESULTS: PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Of the people interviewed, all were female, over 40 years old, with the most experienced having been trained for over 40 years and working in libraries.

Initially, we sought to understand how the library works, its strengths and weaknesses, the characteristics of the public who attend, and the general activities carried out in the library.

Regarding the reading and cultural action projects carried out in the libraries, only the current projects are included in table 2 below.

Chart 2. Library projetos

Library	Projects
Avertano Rocha Library	**Literary Chalet:** meeting with writers, literary-musical performances, exhibitions; **Literary Tide**: cultural activities to promote reading; **The Paraense Bull:** active since 1993 with the aim of promoting BOI-bumbá culture.
Library Arthur Vianna	**Illustrates:** works with comics; **Multiple Visions:** develops activities in the Braille sector; **Literature for little people:** works with activities in the Children's and Toy Library sectors, promoting reading especially for children and teenagers; Film Club: promotes films, developed by the library's Audiovisual section; Literary Balconies: developed in the sector libraries, with conversation circles that bring authors and readers closer together; **Tonality**

	and A musical dose: developed in the Phonotheque sector with the aim of disseminating music (dedicated to the institution's music collection, with vinyl records and CDs).

Source: Research data (2023).

In this line of thought, we identified that the role of the public library is to promote and develop a cultural dynamic, working with people. We noticed that there are different projects in the libraries studied and that the librarians are interested in carrying out projects that develop CoInfo, highlighting the project "Literature for kids" of the Arthur Vianna Library, which not only aims to promote the love of reading among children playfully, but also to develop the cultural side of these children by introducing them to Brazilian authors and works.

We also found it difficult to implement some projects due to a lack of budget. In the case of Avertano Rocha, one of the projects that is not active is "I'm on the Net", due to the lack of Internet connection in the library, which has already been reported to the City Hall of Belém, but the problem has not yet been solved. In the case of the Arthur Vianna Library, a new project is being developed considering COP 30 (United Nations Climate Change Conference), which will be held in Belém in 2025, a project that will alert people to care for the environment and inform them about what the event is and how it can bring new perspectives to the Amazon.

The cultural actions are planned in partnership with the community, according to their demands, considering their daily reality, with the participation of schools, community centers, community libraries, artists, writers, cultural masters, artisans, communities in riverine areas, homeless people, people undergoing psychosocial treatment and the community surrounding the library, with the aim of contributing to social inclusion processes through practices of access to reading, culture, art, and information (Santos, 2017).

According to Almeida Júnior (2017, p. 51):

> Cultural Action works with the proposal of elevating the subject to the quality of the North, of the objective, of the protagonist. The aim of all the work carried out is to allow the subject to build itself, to build itself as a being through the activities proposed and carried out; for the subject to be a cultural producer and not a mere consumer, or a passive receiver and acceptor of what the cultural agents - in this case the librarians - want it to appropriate.

In this way, we seek to understand that the individual who participates in the cultural activities developed by libraries is at the center of the activities, developing as a human being who is the protagonist of his or her story, abstracting knowledge and empowering himself or herself as a creator and active participant in culture, not just a spectator.

Chart 3 shows that although the use of digital materials has increased, public libraries still have a regular in-person audience:

Chart 3. Audience profile

Library	Profile
Avertano Rocha Library	The library serves all generations, children, teens, young adults, adults, seniors, and the homeless.
Library Arthur Vianna	The public, children, teenagers, young people, adults, and the elderly. As well as the blind, the visually impaired, the deaf, and professionals specialized in inclusion (professors, educators). It serves the State University of Pará (UEPA) and the University of Amazonia (UNAMA), public and private state schools. It also serves homeless people, some of whom spend the day in the library.

Source: Research data (2023).

One of the librarians mentioned that she sees some young people who are interested in more specific topics, such as the Holocaust, who are interested in history, and she said that she talks and explains and points out books on the subject. She also often sees elderly people who are brought to the library by family members. In the case of this library, there are partnerships with the Pop Center, which also participates in the library's cultural activities. In Arthur Vianna, in the month of the collection, due to the school vacation period, there was a great participation of parents with their children in the children's, toy and audio library sections.

The public library is a space for everyone, as the IFLA Manifesto (2022) states: "Libraries are community builders, proactively seeking new audiences and using effective listening to support the development of services that meet local needs and contribute to improving quality of life" (IFLA, 2022). The speeches show that the Arthur Vianna and Avertano Rocha Libraries welcome everyone who comes to them and strive to be a place not only for study, but also for socializing.

Chart 4. Physical facilities

Library	Accessibility
Avertano Rocha Library	It has an elevator that is mainly used by wheelchair users, but it also welcomes other visitors with some kind of reduced mobility or disability, such as the blind and deaf.
Library Arthur Vianna	It only has tactile flooring in a few areas, such as the braille section, but there are plans for the whole library. It also has an elevator.

Source: Research data (2023).

Based on the answers given to us about the physical facilities, we can see that the libraries take care of their users. During our visit to the spaces, we observed clean, comfortable environments, with a collection accessible to users, except in some specific cases in some sectors at Arthur Vianna, such as the Phonotheque, for example, where the collection is closed access; we believe that it would be ideal to have more space for users to handle and select the records. The section has a limited but comfortable space for listening to records and CDs. The librarian commented on the closeness and respect with these users and that the shelves need to be adequate and that she envisions the collection being open to the public. Nevertheless, the librarians understand that there are improvements to be made and that it is always possible to improve some services, including the collection, which needs to be more up-to-date, one of the main requests of the users at Arthur Vianna, identified through the library's survey forms.

Since the public library is a space that should be prepared to receive everyone, without restrictions, based on the responses of the participants, we understand that libraries are concerned about being able to receive everyone, and not only considering the physical accessibility of users, but also the concern that the collection is accessible and up-to-date. In this context, the Public Library Manifesto (IFLA, 2022) supports the need to provide specific services and materials to users who, for whatever reason, cannot use regular materials, and to ensure equal access to the services provided by libraries. The research subjects highlighted the fact that some aspects still need to be improved.

Chart 5. Library partnerships

Library	Partnerships
Avertano Rocha Library	It does not have training partnerships, but it does have partnerships with NGOs (non-governmental organizations). The library is a space that promotes the integration of indigenous Venezuelan refugees. It is attended by indigenous people of the Warao ethnic group living in Belém, Icoaraci, and Pará. The City Council provides listening and guidance. Partnership with the Pop Center and nearby schools that visit the library.
	CRIE (Gabriel Lima Mendes Reference Center for Educational Inclusion) of Belém City Hall, which works with people with disabilities; Álvares de Azevedo School for Inclusive

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Biblioteca Arthur Vianna	Education; Public Archives - Secult (State Department of Culture). Partnership with the Universidade Federal do Pará through lectures. Partnerships with other secretariats, such as Sectet (State Secretariat for Science, Technology and Professional and Technological Education).

Source: Research data (2023).

From the responses, we conclude that it is important for the public library to maintain a dialogue with other institutions, organizations, etc., to create partnerships that can benefit the community. In the case of the Avertano Rocha Library, we found that it provides a space for Venezuelan immigrants to meet, talk, and demand changes to improve their lives. Through an Internet search, we also found that in 2021, the library hosted a handicraft course for Venezuelan refugee women, with the aim of strengthening the handicraft production chain, run by the International Education Institute of Brazil (Instituto de Educação Brasileira - IEB) in partnership with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Cultural Foundation of the Municipality of Belém (Fumbel) (Santos, 2021).

At the Arthur Vianna Library, since 2019, they have been working on projects that are articulated between the library's departments and the Cultural Center, which is responsible for following up and monitoring the activities. These activities are decided jointly by the librarians and their staff, with the support of the Cultural Center. In addition to the library's own projects, there are also programs in partnership, since the library has an auditorium that is used for various events by other institutions. The partnership is established through contact with the institution that will be organizing the activity (meetings, lectures, seminars, etc.), on the premise that the event held there will not be charged to its participants, as the library understands that there will be no cost for the event held in its space, often events in the area of culture and education, for example. We would also like to point out that there are partnerships in the sense of service, for example, the library is digitizing all the collections of laws that are in the space belonging to the Public Archives of the State of Pará, to become part of the digital collection of both institutions. Another partnership is being established with Wikipedia to update the Arthur Vianna Library's data on the platform. One of the librarians highlighted the reach of the library through official social networks, with 5,000 (five thousand) followers on Instagram and Facebook.

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The public library is not indifferent to the interests of its users. We can see that decisions are made collectively, with the opportunity for the community it serves to express itself and participate, and that suggestions are considered to offer a better service to everyone.

Chart 6 raises questions about the teams that work in libraries.

Chart 6. Characteristics of library staff

Library	Staff
Avertano Rocha Library	Reduced staff, only 4 librarians and this July only one, two on vacation and one on sick leave. The assistants take care of attendance, user registration and loans on Biblivre (the library's management system). There are three assistants with other backgrounds and one librarian trainee.
Library Arthur Vianna	A team of librarians and educators, administrative assistants, audiovisual and theatrical professionals, writers, historians, IT and design professionals, as well as trainees from these fields who are trained by the technician in the sector in which they work. They are sent to the sector and there the technician will develop the whole routine and how they should carry out their activities in that space, and there is also the possibility for trainees to gain experience in different sectors. The Braille team also has a blind librarian who assists users.

Source: Research data (2023).

At Arthur Vianna, the routine manual for the sectors is being updated, as it is understood that processes must be constantly reviewed to improve the execution of activities. According to one of the interviewees, this manual is not rigid, it simply guides the technicians, trainees, and consultants so that everyone can work in the best possible way, but without rigidity, achieving the goal of providing a complete service to users.

Despite the changes that have taken place recently, the panorama of professionals working in public library teams is diverse in terms of training. Therefore, it is necessary for librarians to develop continuous training, not only that received during the graduate course, in addition to sharing information and experiences with other professionals, it is important to maintain contact with other areas, as well as managing the team in a harmonious way.

In chart 7 we highlight the challenges faced by library staff.

Chart 7. Challenges faced

Library	Challenges
Library Avertano Rocha	The greatest challenge is the lack of staff, which means that the current opening hours are reduced (from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.).
Library Arthur Vianna	The budget issue is one of the most difficult challenges, as is the reduced team.

Source: Research data (2023).

The challenge we identified in the librarians' speeches, not only in this specific question, is the budget issue. One of the librarians interviewed said: "There are many (challenges), we've already managed to overcome some, but the big challenge, the difficulty is the budget issue. We know everything we need, the ideal doesn't exist, but at least we are getting closer to more tangible things".

In both libraries, there are requests to the sectors responsible for improving the Internet connection for users, replacing damaged equipment and the need to hire new staff, which shows that the librarians are looking to solve problems and that some changes have already been made as a result of these requests. The Arthur Vianna Library underwent a furniture modernization process that improved the structure of the library as a whole and brought more comfort to the users.

Among the challenges reported are the insufficient number of people to carry out the work and the financial conditions. Again, the lack of budget is one of the greatest challenges. From this, we conclude that the library, although linked to the need to acquire up-to-date books, considers other considerations about the whole set of needs that public libraries have, and that the process is often time-consuming, but the search for improvement is constant.

We also note that there is a shortage of librarians in the two institutions, which have not held public examinations for some time. Hiring more librarians could alleviate this problem, as the work of this professional should be oriented towards the interests of the users, changing the old image of the passive attitude of the public library.

In chart 8 we focus on the information needs that users most seek in libraries.

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Chart 8. Users' information needs

Library	Answers
E1	They're looking for an internet connection. Those who enjoy reading are looking for literature. Others began to enjoy reading after they started going to the library. And those who don't want to read also stay in the library to interact.
E2	Printing psalms, hymns, and bulletins. Occasionally, they come with personal and professional demands, such as printing lesson plans in Braille, or students asking for books and handouts in Braille. It also caters for specialization students. There are three categories of service: the service desk receives everything from reading documents, preparing CVs, and sometimes buying tickets. Other services include contact with companies, access to

	health care, and referrals to doctors. The sector has individual booths for those who wish to be independent, with computers with voice synthesizers that make it easier to navigate and access the internet, digitize texts, loan audiobooks, periodicals, and books in braille, oral reading, braille printouts, and an electronic magnifying glass for those with low vision, and a braille machine, among others.
E3	In the phonotheque sector, users mainly search for genres such as MPB, pop rock, international and romantic music. Updating the catalog helps these users search independently.
E4	Users request new materials for the collection, with more current books, and complain about the delay in providing them (through the library's satisfaction survey). The librarian cites the difficulty in achieving this due to the lengthy acquisition process. They also ask for a place to eat, as many users spend all day in the library. Another problem is the very slow Internet, which is also referred to the NTI (the sector in charge of information technology). The librarian informs us that she communicates the needs of the users to the relevant sectors, including the reports from the library to the institution. She is currently reviewing the reception area of the library, which needs to be improved in terms of service, as she believes that in addition to improving the aesthetics of the space, it is essential to take care of the reception area so that the user arrives well cared for. Another issue is the registration for Internet access at Navega Pará, which requires a phone number to register. She says, "We are speaking with the social worker and the NTI to find another way of access because homeless people can't access it that way. We are searching for an answer through a document with the sector because no one is obliged to have a cell phone to access Navega Pará, so there is no inclusion."

Source: Research data (2023).

The results showed that in one of the libraries, according to E1, a quality connection (good speed) is essential for Internet access. Therefore, if the public library is left out, it tends to be unimportant for young people, who are the ones who complain the most about this aspect.

In the perception of E4, other needs were also mentioned, such as being in a comfortable place to read, to socialize and interact with other people, to satisfy a personal need, such as printing a CV, or even how to access or indicate the contacts of a good professional for a medical consultation (in the Braille section), also to watch movies, listen to music and other activities. From the answers given we can see that the two public libraries are also concerned with satisfying information needs; the public library is a place for socializing, leisure, exchange of ideas and experiences, culture and knowledge.

The interviewees were also asked about the actions carried out by the library that contribute to the development of continuous learning for the users. The responses are shown in chart 9:

Chart 9. Continuous user learning

Library	Answers
E1	Users receive initial training when they register, and the library's rules are currently being revised. The library receives an average of 200 people per day. There are quieter days, with an average of 1,500 per month.
E2	There are some specific situations in the Braille section, of users who are diagnosed with blindness after they have become adults, and the library helps them with information on guaranteeing their rights, on which institutions provide these services, the public library helps them to seek these rights.
E4	There are activities to promote reading, activities that only take a few hours, such as storytelling, and workshops that anyone can participate in. It has now started a partnership with the State Secretariat for Science, Technology and Vocational and Technological Education (Sectet), which has a Maker Space that provides training in computer courses, robotics and 3D printing, certified by Sectet.

Source: Research data (2023).

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Reading the librarians' responses, we identified some aspects of user training, as shown in Figure 9. At the Avertano Rocha Library, there is no specific project, but all users receive an orientation about the library when they enter. Discourse E2 refers to the Braille section of the Arthur Vianna Library. Here we see a concern to guide blind users in their search for social rights, and the library makes itself available for such guidance. Arthur Vianna, in partnership with SECTET, also offers technological training to its users.

In figure 10 we present the ideas of the librarians interviewed about the contribution of the library to the development of CoInfo in its users.

Chart 10. The library's contribution to the development of CoInfo in users

Library	Answers
E1	Training on how to access the collection, how to browse the collection on your own, how to go to the shelves and get what you need. The talks are one-on-one and explain how to take care of the books without damaging them.
E2	Some users only come across the library when they enter university, and it's a moment of discovery. The library contributes to autonomy. There are students studying for the ENEM and public exams.
E4	"Everything we do is to give them the opportunity to find other things on their own, based on what we offer. We're happy when users come back to say thank you because they passed the entrance exam or a public exam after studying in the library, and that happens a lot. The library has contributed, not only in terms of physical space, a space where they are free, there is air conditioning and a clean bathroom, but we also try to give them all this support so that they can develop their study activity".

Source: Research data (2023).

As mentioned before, we emphasize the need to understand CoInfo as an ongoing process, as autonomy to decide and satisfy their main needs, including the needs of education and work. This is evident in the three statements (interviewee E3 chose not to answer this question).

Finally, to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the concept of the protagonist librarian, we chose to read the definition by Farias and Varela (2018) to the participants to clarify the concept and to take into account the length of their training, some of whom have more than 40 years of professional experience.

Authors Farias and Varela (2018) understand that being a protagonist librarian means having the courage and decision to express ideas and desires, while maintaining and expanding their cultural identity. To do so, they need to understand the social reality and the relationships that shape it, both for themselves and for their users. This requires in-depth knowledge of their field, specialization, and awareness of the social context. By becoming protagonists, librarians also promote the protagonism of users, encouraging the idea of otherness and caring for others.

In this context, we asked the interviewees if they recognized themselves as protagonists in their work and what they could add to this concept of the protagonist librarian.

Chart 11. Protagonist Librarian

Library	Answers
E1	The librarian recognizes that she is the protagonist, that she has been through many situations, that she learns a lot from the users every day, that she listens to their suggestions for purchases, that she gets close to them, and that these are moments of listening. They also ask for changes in the library, updated books, and Internet access. The public has never abandoned the library, they participate in the programs, and there have been times when people have queued up to enter the library. She feels fulfilled, the exchange is mutual. She also discusses young people who have a different profile, situations of emotional fragility.

E2	"We are not the protagonists of what we do," recalled a School of Library Science professor. "The purpose will always be in the other. We are facilitators, we are the bridge." She makes analogies with a holistic vision, comparing the pipe that carries water or electricity. This water is brought to those who are thirsty, water is essential, it's like quenching the thirst for knowledge. The user is thirsty for many things, for his rights, for self-knowledge, for recognizing himself, for discovering himself. All that knowledge brings to the user's life. "The relevance of a librarian's work is essential. They have to drive this energy, they have to enjoy it. A job is not about showing up, it's about the job having no meaning without you. The light bulb at the end doesn't go on.
E3	She sees herself as a protagonist, "We live in an eternal apprenticeship". She has always participated in events, congresses, and seminars because she understands the importance of sharing experiences. She defends culture and the cultural role of the public library, the importance of the support of the coordinators, citing the example of the implementation of the Boi Paraense project. Workshops with vulnerable people are a great contribution to their coexistence and guaranteeing their rights, involving them in all the activities of the library. "This is the living library" because the projects develop artistic language, literature, photography, and music, with different artistic languages in these people. "I am passionate about my profession. Everything I've learned, everything I've done in my career, makes me happy as a librarian." She mentions that a good professional recognizes himself even as a trainee.
E4	The librarian is active in the Brazilian Federation of Associations of Librarians, Information Scientists and Institutions (FEBAB), among others because she understands the importance of the participation of people from the northern region in national movements and believes that new librarians should be involved in these movements. She has attended national and international courses, and during the pandemic, she tried to learn more. She remembers that she is about to retire, but she would rather not stop because she likes to interact with people and participate in events because it broadens horizons and brings good experiences, and she says that a good professional is constantly updating. For example, she specializes in library administration, and it's a field she thoroughly enjoys. She says, "You have to be proactive, you have to know how to relate because today the motto is: You can be a wonderful professional, but if you don't know how to relate, all your work will fail. Working with people requires a lot of calmness... I don't make hasty decisions. I think and talk; I listen so that I can decide; I don't do anything on impulse... because librarians have to relate to everything, to all areas. [...] I look after the users when I go to the salon to sort something out, and every day is a different day! I'm still working because, for me, [...] no day is the same. Some days we even have to mediate in confusions. I try to calm the user when a difficult situation arises. You have to have a mediator's mentality. I coordinate a large team, I speak at universities and wherever I'm invited. And he concludes: "To provoke and encourage people to update themselves. Librarians graduate from university with a technology-oriented perspective, and no one can replace the relationship with the user. The library has to go to the edge, develop the social side, and have the balance to deal with situations. And over time, you learn to deal with those situations.

Source: Research data (2023).

According to chart 11 and the perceptions of E1, E3 and E4, and as shown, the interviewees were unanimous in their view that they see themselves as protagonists.

This protagonism is intrinsically linked to the exercise of citizenship in all spheres (individual, group, and social), and its purpose is not to dominate, compete, or vie for individual interests, but to defend issues that affect individuals in their community (Almeida; Farias; Farias, 2020).

We can see in the statement of interviewee E2 that librarians are mediators. This reinforces Gomes's (2019) idea about information mediation and the social protagonism that takes place through the dialogical process, in which it is possible to promote a rapprochement between agents and information devices, highlighting the protagonist condition of the

mediating agent. The mediator acts, builds and intervenes in the environment, carrying with him the characteristic of a social protagonist, contributing to the aesthetics, ethics and humanizing production of the world. In this way, the information mediator is characterized as a political agent.

Perrotti (2017) notes that the term protagonism, which originally indicated a place in an order, has acquired new meanings, something visible, exposed, and made explicit. Protagonism in the public space, in the relational territory, implies interests that belong to everyone but to no one in particular. It also means resistance, struggle, confrontations produced by the physical and/or social world that affect everyone.

For Gomes (2017, p. 28), the subject who works in information environments "[...] is characterized as a subject of protagonist action, both because they support this whole dynamic and because their action intervenes in this process". Thus, the librarians who are the targets of this research have shown through their experiences that they know the information environment in which they work and the users they serve, and they seek through their professional work to combine projects to develop the community around these libraries.

Public libraries face many challenges, staff reductions being one of them, but despite this, libraries continue to strengthen their communities by networking to ensure that all people have access to the resources they need to learn, to develop CoInfo, and much more.

In developing CoInfo in users, social protagonist librarians are great allies in the face of challenging circumstances. These characteristics will help public libraries play an active role in developing their capacity to respond to society.

5 CONCLUSION

We began this research with the awareness that the public library, because of its social function and its proximity to the community, is different from other types of libraries. The differentiated attitude of the librarians who work in them, in terms of their sensitivity to their social function, is very evident, and their role as protagonists is much more present than imagined. We realized how much the interviewee's value information, whatever the medium, as the most valuable thing they can offer their audience.

Another thing we noticed during the interviews was that even though all the interviewees have been studying library science for a long time and have been working in the public sector for a long time, there is no discouragement in their professional work. They understand the importance of the library's social role and the need to take a firm stance in the face of everyday challenges, as well as working on projects to increase user participation.

The concern of the Avertano Rocha and Arthur Vianna Libraries to provide a pleasant environment, quality service, an up-to-date and accessible collection, as well as the implementation of projects in the two libraries studied, was demonstrated. All interviewees expressed a constant interest in keeping up to date through events in the field and partnerships with other professionals, which indicates that they recognize the importance of professional development and training.

Another point to highlight is the dissatisfaction of librarians with the challenges they face, especially in terms of budgets. Because they work in public institutions, much of the investment in libraries depends on the budget the library receives. Although in some cases it is not possible to repair equipment that has deteriorated or solve the problem of slow internet, problems like these are not so easy to solve, but we can see that the work continues, and they seek changes through conversations and requests to the responsible sectors.

It is worth noting that the problem of the budget is revealed in the difficulty of solving everyday problems, but in general, it is not given due attention as part of the planning, and the

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difficulty stems from the fact that maintenance and other necessary expenses were not even included in the organization's budget.

We believe that the study achieved its objectives and that it was possible to relate the actions carried out in the libraries and the attitudes of the librarians, who are protagonists in the face of the challenges they face. We found that the social aspect of the public library is effectively carried out and that the professionals who work there carry out their work effectively, focusing on the users who demand their services, as well as their individual responsibility to be updated and willing to learn new things based on the best execution of their activities.

We have observed that there is a need to better develop the necessary competencies of the public libraries studied in this article, since their work goes beyond cultural activities; it is essential to promote the reception of homeless people as well as their inclusion. We have identified limitations and weaknesses in terms of guaranteed access, but we have also identified librarians who are persistent in changing the reality.

A broader reflection is that perhaps the biggest problems related to access to information and the development of CoInfo do not stem from a lack of technical competence or social commitment for librarians in public libraries, but rather from the inadequacy of these institutions, especially on the outskirts of large cities.

This is not an individual task or even the cause of a category, but it would be commendable if librarians also sought to play a leading role in the world of politics, in the broadest sense, so that they could influence the definition of public policies on access to information, reading, books and libraries, to expand this field, but above all in terms of how it can contribute to the development of people, communities, and society.

Therefore, public libraries are considered as living spaces for access to knowledge and culture, as it is believed that this enables the construction of a critical conscience, the democratization of information and the exercise of citizenship.

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