



Association for Indiana Media Educators



## The K-12 School Media Specialists

*Data and information for Indiana School Boards on the role  
and value of the school librarian*

*12APR2010*

*Indiana Library Federation*

*Association for Indiana Media Educators*

*"The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write,  
but those who cannot learn, unlearn and relearn."*

*- Alvin Toffler, American writer and futurist*



**“SHHH!”** – that was the sound of *yesterday’s libraries* (both public and in our schools) – places where silence was expected and students typically checked out books and had limited access to information from magazines, journals and newspapers.

Compare that to *the modern school library* in today’s Information Age where collections are available in print and electronically, and school librarians are graduates of nationally-accredited institutions of higher learning. Librarians are trained to guide students with using technology and to provide assistance to them for **all types of research projects**, both paper-based and **multi-media** projects. School librarians administer programs that encourage reading and create lifelong learners, and very importantly, they work closely with teachers to identify appropriate content to **support the educational curriculum**.

- Today’s school library is a virtual information center where students not only seek information but **apply information** in many ways to their lives.
- Our students need **professional staff** involvement in their academic success plans.
- Schools with better staffed- and stocked libraries **perform better** on ISTEP+ tests
- Our school libraries need **qualified, committed** media specialists (school librarians) who are professional partners in this society’s learning and teaching efforts.
- Indiana Library Association and the Association for Indiana Media Educators are jointly requesting your careful, thoughtful consideration in declining a proposal for cuts in staffing and/or decreasing professional qualifications needed to serve library users.

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## The Problem

In today's economic environment, schools (as with all public entities) are facing serious cuts in budgets. School librarian positions are an easily identifiable target for cuts.

The Association for Indiana Media Educators (AIME) in collaboration with the Indiana Library Federation (ILF), is conducting an ongoing study on Indiana School Corporations that are considering cuts, or who have made cuts, in School Librarian positions. This study has found that as of March 2010, over 37 school corporations (some corporations include many schools), have cut or are seriously considering cutting over 120 school librarian positions.

In fact, some Indiana school corporations are paring down their school librarians and staff by over 75%. One Indiana county has eliminated 18 librarian positions leaving only 1 certified school librarian to cover twenty different schools.

The next step of this study would be to attempt to relate these cuts to their effect on the Librarian/Student ratio.

## Why Should We Care?

The value of the school librarian is synergistic and directly relates to the quality of the library, the quality of the librarian, and the librarians : student ratio.

A good, certified school librarian can improve the total effectiveness of all teachers and students. Their value is unique in that when a school librarian collaborates with teachers, the academic effectiveness of the school is greater than the sum of its parts. Without the support of a trained library specialist, the teachers and students, while not helpless, are less effective than they could be.

The information below is provided :

- to help you understand the school librarian's role in an academically successful school.
- to give you samples of the current research and statistics on the value of school libraries and librarians.
- to give you some general information on school libraries as a critical component to the K-12 educational system and the school library's role in helping to educate students to be 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Learners.

## The 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Learner

The American Association of School Librarians (AASL) is one of many corporate and educational partners involved in the "Partnership for 21st Century Skills" (P21) effort. P21 is a national organization, started in cooperation with the US Department of Education and several major corporations. P21 advocates for 21st century readiness for every student and for local, state and federal policies that support this approach for every school.

The AASL has created a set of standards for the 21st-Century Learner to support the P21 effort. Although backed by the US DOE, a state's acceptance of these guidelines and standards is voluntary.

The AASL's "Standards for the 21st-Century Learner" offer vision for teaching and learning to both guide and beckon school librarians as education leaders.

The standards for the 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Learner provide a set of philosophies, but more importantly, give school librarians methods and tools to help teachers and students to reach the goals of a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learner.

The basic skills needed of a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learner are the ability to:

1. Inquire, think critically, and gain knowledge.
2. Draw conclusions, make informed decisions, apply knowledge to new situations, and create new knowledge.
3. Share knowledge and participate ethically and productively as members of our democratic society.
4. Pursue personal and aesthetic growth.

The learning and acquisition of these skills is an intimate part of a certified school librarian's training and education.

# The Role of the School Media Specialist

## *What does a School Librarian Do?* <sup>13</sup>

A School Librarian is a teacher, an instructional partner, an information specialist, and a program administrator.

- As teacher, the library media specialist collaborates with students and other members of the learning community to analyze learning and information needs, to locate and use resources that will meet those needs, and to understand and communicate the information the resources provide.
- As instructional partner, the library media specialist joins with teachers and others to identify links across student information needs, curricular content, learning outcomes, and a wide variety of print, nonprint, and electronic information resources.
- As information specialist, the library media specialist provides leadership and expertise in acquiring and evaluating information resources in all formats; in bringing an awareness of information issues into collaborative relationships with teachers, administrators, students, and others; and in modeling for students and others strategies for locating, accessing, and evaluating information within and beyond the library media center.
- As program administrator, the library media specialist works collaboratively with members of the learning community to define the policies of the library media program and to guide and direct all activities related to it.

## *Role of the School Librarian:*

from : <http://www.ala.org>

"For many children, the school library media specialist is their first experience with a librarian. These information professionals play a critical role, teaching students how to select, use and understand information in all formats. National guidelines recommend that every school building have at least one full-time certified library media professional with appropriate support staff."

## Does your child's school library measure up?

The best way to find out is to pay a visit and ask the following questions suggested by the American Association of School Librarians, a division of the American Library Association:

- Is there a state-certified full-time school library media specialist?
- Does your child have access to the school library anytime during the day that he/she needs to use its resources? Does the library offer remote access from home via computer?

- Does your child visit the school library frequently with his/her class? Individually? In small groups?
- Does the school library have a wide range of resources in a variety of formats–books, computers, audio and videotapes–that appeal to different learning styles?
- Are the resource materials in the school library current?
- Are children encouraged to read, view and listen both for understanding and enjoyment?
- Are school administrators knowledgeable and supportive of the school library?
- Does the school provide ongoing training to support teachers and staff in learning about new technologies?
- Are teachers encouraged to work with the school library media specialist to extend learning opportunities beyond the textbook and classroom?

## Stories from the Trenches

### *Indiana Teachers and Librarian Stories:*

#### Comments from an Indiana Rural High School Band Director:

"As the middle school band director, I also teach two periods of 7th grade general music. I have found the resources of our library to be invaluable to my students and to me. Each nine weeks I have my general music students spend approximately five days in the library researching and writing music history reports. In addition to learning about our cultural and historical heritage, this project provides an excellent opportunity for students to practice the research and writing skills they learn in their English and Literature classes. These reports will simply not be possible without a fully-functioning and fully accessible library.

"... school-wide efforts such as Silent Sustained Reading (SSR) will be much more difficult to maintain without ready access to reading materials. Since the inception of SSR a few years ago, I have seen a dramatic increase in the number of students who read for pleasure on their own. For instance, in my classes on quiz/test days, students who finish early invariably pull out a book to pass the time. Students carry reading books with them everywhere they go. I've even seen students reading while walking home from school. This enthusiasm for reading is a relatively new phenomenon that did not regularly occur before we started SSR."

#### Comments from an Indiana Rural High School Librarian:

"When crunch time comes for scholarship applications, students depend on the Media Specialist to help them download applications, and file them electronically. The Guidance office can help them find scholarship possibilities, but when they can't get an application to open, or can't save a file, or get something to print, I am the one who is here before and after school, or during lunch to help them when they come in panicking."

Comments from an Indiana Elementary School Librarian:

"I read a portion of *The Lightning Thief* to the 4th grade classes before I even knew about the movie coming out. One student, Isaiah, checked it out and then enthusiastically began to read the other books in the series. He also branched out from there and has checked out any books that we have related to mythology. The culminating moment was when his mother stopped by after school one day to let me know how happy she was that I had read something to get Isaiah interested in reading."

Comments from an Indiana Middle School Literature Teacher:

"During the last 36 years, the number of students coming from homes where they do not read or even value education has increased alarmingly. It is because I hear from parents statements such as, 'I never liked to read and neither does my kid'. I don't see why they need to read and write at all," that I'm more and more convinced that the library must be available to students and staffed full time with a person who feels passionately about reading and can help inspire and support each student as he/she searches for information.

"For my students, the library is one place that helps level the playing field for them. They may not have transportation to get to the public library, money to purchase their own books, or internet access at home, but the students know that the Librarian will find a way for them to be able to access information or obtain a copy of a novel they 'just have to read.'

ALA | Partner in Learning: The School Library Media Center Stories ([www.ala.org](http://www.ala.org))

"A group of 4th graders goes to the school library media center to learn about a proposed surface coal mining operation on top of Black Mountain, the only mountain in Kentucky tall enough to be a real mountain. They research the topic using books, the Internet and other library resources. But they don't stop there. With guidance from the school library media specialist, the students contact representatives of the coal companies, environmental groups and the Kentucky Coal Council. They present their findings to the State Legislature and attempt to convince the coal company to switch to deep mining."

"The library media specialist at Cherry Drive Elementary School in Thornton, Colo. collaborates with teachers on curriculum so the library media center is an extension of the classroom. She teaches alongside the classroom teacher in the library and oversees student projects."

# Statistical Studies on the Value of the School Media Specialist

## *Introduction*

Several statistical studies have been conducted throughout the past decade on the topic of the statistical relationship between School Media Centers (the school library) and student performance on standardized testing. These studies have been performed in many of the 50 US states including Indiana.

The studies quoted in this paper all use excellent statistical methodologies. The data and conclusions of these studies also take into account the effect of covariates -- or those factors outside the study that could be part of the observed variation.

These studies all agree that there is a statistically significant correlation between the quality of a school library system and student academic performance. Additionally, this correlation was maintained when controlling for all school and community variables.

Listed below are several of these studies and a brief summary of the results. To find the complete document and data, sources have been included in the appendix of this paper.

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## *Haves, Halves, And Have-Nots: School Libraries And Student Achievement In California, Douglas Achterman*

2008 Doctoral Dissertation Excerpts:

" This descriptive, non-experimental study examines the strength of the relationship between California school library media programs and student achievement, using data from California criterion-referenced state-wide tests, publicly available school and community demographic data, and a state survey of school library programs.

"At every level, certificated and total staffing levels were associated with the strength of library program elements."

"Haycock (1992) concluded from his review of doctoral dissertations that students gain more competence in research and study skills when these skills are integrated into collaborative lesson plans created by classroom teachers and library media specialists."

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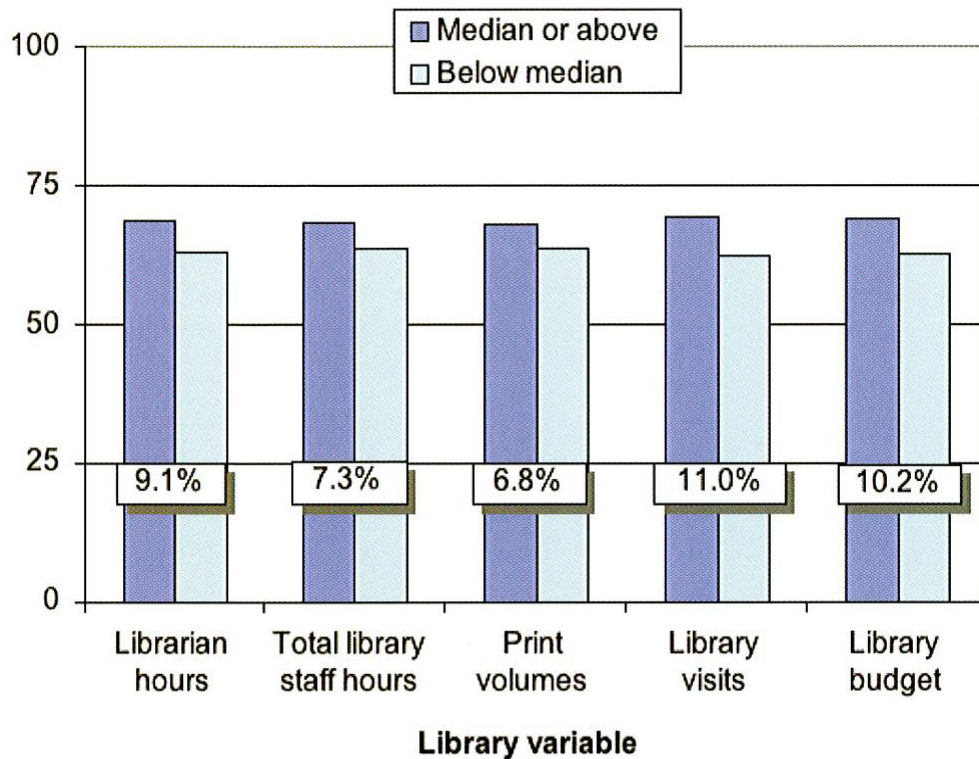
*From: How Students, Teachers, and Principals Benefit from Strong School Libraries – The Indiana Study, Lance et al.*

<http://www.ilfonline.org/index.php?src=gendocs&ref=AIMEStudyInformation&category=Units>

This study was conducted by the premier experts in School Library statistics, the RSL Research Group. Keith Curry Lance has been consulted by many states and by the Laura Bush Foundation.

The key findings of this study, supported by similar findings in California, Alaska, New Mexico, and Michigan (to name some), are clear; schools tend to "perform better on ISTEP+ tests where there were better-staffed, better-stocked, and better-funded school library programs. This finding takes into account the influence of poverty and race/ethnicity, which otherwise obscure the impact of school library programs."

**Chart. ES-1. Combined 3rd Grade ISTEP+ Results for Elementary Schools Above & Below Median on Library Variables**



Due to the depth of this study, and the detailed findings on the role of the Library Media specialist as a benefit to Principals, Teachers, and Students, it is highly recommended that the complete report be read (see link above).

*From: How School Librarians Help Kids Achieve Standards, Lance et al. <sup>1</sup>*

- Program Development: Test scores increased in direct proportion to the ratio of students to library media center staff and library media center resources.
- Information Technology: Test scores increased in schools in which networked computers linked

library media centers to classrooms and other instructional areas. The percentage of increase was related to the number of computers and the extent to which those computers provided access to library resources, informational databases, and the World Wide Web.

- Collaboration: Test score increases were directly related to the degree to which library media specialists and teachers worked together and to the amount of time media specialists spent training teachers to use information technology.
- Flexible Scheduling: Test scores increased when students had greater freedom to visit the library media center on their own and to use media center resources at home.
- Leadership: Although no direct correlation was found between test scores and the degree of leadership shown by the library media specialist, leadership involvement was found to result in greater collaboration between teachers and media specialists. Greater collaboration resulted in higher test scores.

### *The Importance of School Libraries, Keith Lance*

<http://www.laurabushfoundation.org/Lance.pdf>

Excerpts:

"Looking across the six studies we have completed most recently, three major sets of findings figure prominently. These findings concern:

- the level of development of the school library,
- the extent to which school librarians engage in leadership and collaboration activities that foster information literacy, and
- the extent to which instructional technology is utilized to extend the reach of the library program beyond the walls of the school library.

### **Summary: Key Talking Points on School Libraries**

1. A school librarian is more than someone who checks out books. They are teachers, collaborators, and information specialists.
2. School librarians are a synergistic component of a school's academic system. They help the whole to be greater than the sum of its parts.
3. Many statistical studies covering a broad base of US states and socio-economic environments all support the fact the student performance in the academic environment is directly correlated to the quality of the school library and its librarians.
4. The ratio of certified school librarians per student is also a significant factor in academic

performance of the students. It is important to have a certified Library Media Specialist, but it is equally important that the number of librarians is appropriate. Per the American Library Association, the state with the best ratio of librarians to students is Montana with one school library media specialist for every 184.5 public school students. California, with the worst ratio, has one media specialist per 4,326 pupils.

5. School Librarians are an important component for teaching our children how to be information literate in the 21st Century.

## Appendices

### *The School Library Media Center: Quotable Facts*

<http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/aasl/aaslissues/toolkits/schoollibrarymedia.cfm>

The highest achieving students come from schools with good library media centers.<sup>1</sup>

Libraries are at the heart of the learning experience for almost 44 million elementary, middle and high school students in schools with library media centers.<sup>2</sup>

In the United States, sales of video games and other entertainment software (\$7.3 billion in 2004<sup>3</sup>) total more than nine times the amount spent on books, periodicals, audiovisual, and other materials for school library media centers (\$771.2 million in 2004<sup>4</sup>).

Collections are often much out of date with little available funding for replacement.<sup>5</sup>

2002 saw the first direct (non tax-based) funding for school library materials in almost thirty years (Improving Literacy Through School Libraries Grants, U.S. Department of Education). On average, schools annually spend about \$15.00 per student, less than the cost of one hardcover book, on print and non-print library resources.<sup>6</sup>

The median per pupil expenditure of local funds by school library media centers for books in 2001-2002 was \$8.87 for elementary schools, \$8.60 for middle schools, and \$9.55 for senior high schools.<sup>6</sup>

More than 98 percent of public school libraries and more than 90 percent of private school libraries provide Internet access.<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, this fact is often used to justify decreased budgets for books and other materials.

School library media specialists across the country report that library funding for staff and materials is being dramatically cut back in financially troubled areas of the United States.

Elementary school libraries have all but disappeared in some school districts.<sup>5</sup>

As a rule, this does not mean that the rooms and shelves of books have disappeared, but there is no

professional staff to assist teachers and students with learning. In some districts, library media specialists are stretched among two, three or more schools.<sup>5</sup>

## *Sources:*

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12. Keith Curry Lance, Marcia J. Rodney and Christine Hamilton-Pennell, "How School Librarians Help Kids Achieve Standards: The Second Colorado Study," <http://www.lrs.org>, April 2000
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14. Keith Curry Lance, "The Importance of School Libraries",  
<http://www.laurabushfoundation.org/Lance.pdf>

15. Lance, Rodney, Russell, "How Students, Teachers, and Principals Benefit from Strong School Libraries – The Indiana Study", funded by AIME, Indiana Department of Education and a grant from the Indiana State Library, February 2007.

<http://www.ilfonline.org/index.php?src=gendocs&ref=AIMEStudyInformation&category=Units>

### *Web Sites of Interest*

1. Indiana Library Federation

- <http://www.ilfonline.org>

2. Association for Indiana Media Educators

- <http://www.ilfonline.org/index.php?submenu=mediaEducators&src=gendocs&ref=AIME&category=Units>

3. American Association of School Librarians (AASL)

- <http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/aasl/index.cfm>

4. American Library Association

- <http://www.ala.org>

5. Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills (P21)

- <http://www.p21.org/>