



The Impact of New York's School Libraries on Student Achievement and Motivation: Phase III

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Abstract

*This article reports the results of the third and final phase of a two-year research study on the impact of New York State's school libraries on student achievement and motivation. Results of **Phase I** and **Phase II** are briefly reviewed to provide the context for phase III methods and findings. Phase III comprised (1) qualitative research that included focus groups and interviews held in ten selected schools with school librarians, classroom teachers, building principals, students, and parents; and (2) a more ethnographic approach in two exemplary school libraries, including observations over a period of ten weeks and interviews with principals and classroom teachers. Results are reported in the areas of Learning and Motivation (including Research & IL Skills Development/Motivation and Reading Skills Development/Motivation), Librarian-Teacher Collaboration, Technology Use, Inclusion, Administrative Support, Outreach, and Library Environment. The article culminates with implications for practice.*

Introduction

A two-year research study on the impact of New York State's school libraries on student achievement and motivation, funded by a National Leadership Grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, included three phases. The research began broadly with an online survey to all school librarians and building principals in the state (phase I) with a response rate of more than 38 percent of librarians and 13 percent of principals. A representative sample of 47 schools was selected to participate in the phase II in-depth surveys. This article focuses on the results of phase III of the research, in which interviews and focus groups were conducted in ten selected schools and an ethnographic study was conducted in two additional schools.

Prior Research

This research is the final phase of a three-phase research study on the impact of New York State's school libraries on student achievement and motivation. Phase I consisted of a general online survey administered to 1,612 school librarians and 562 building principals from schools throughout the state (Small, Snyder, and Parker 2009). The general survey consisted of Likert-type multiple-choice items, demographic items, and one open-ended comment item (Small and Snyder 2010). Phase II consisted of in-depth surveys to probe more deeply into some of the areas of interest uncovered in phase I (Small and Snyder 2009). Surveys were administered electronically to 47 school librarians, 134 classroom teachers, and 1,153 students in 47 schools throughout New York State that had participated in the general survey. The in-depth survey consisted of Likert-type multiple-choice questions, a ten-item rating question, and an open-ended critical-incident probe (Small and Snyder 2010).

Results from the previous two phases of this research study supported previous research efforts (e.g., Lance, Wellborn, and Hamilton-Pennell 1993; Todd 2006) by demonstrating a positive relationship between school libraries and student achievement, regardless of educational need (school district or student poverty) or the financial resources of the school district. A summary of findings for phases I and II are presented below. Results are categorized by five main areas of research interest: Learning and Motivation, Librarian–Teacher Collaboration, Technology Use, Administrative Support, and Inclusion (services, technologies, and resources for students with special needs).

Learning and Motivation

- A majority (69 percent) of participating fifth, eighth, and eleventh grade students visit their school library at least once a week, and most students (72 percent) use the library for research.
- Elementary students in schools with certified school librarians are more likely to have higher English and language arts (ELA) scores than those in schools with noncertified school librarians.
- Certified school librarians are more likely than noncertified school librarians to make a point of selecting materials for their library collections that represent different points of view and that support the general curriculum.
- The school librarians' perception of the library program's ability to motivate students to learn is significantly correlated with the importance he or she places on teaching information literacy (IL) skills.
- After controlling for needs-to-resource capacity (poverty level), elementary school librarians use more motivation strategies in their teaching than school librarians in either secondary or K–12 libraries.
- School librarians' perceptions of their impact on teaching IL skills (using and evaluating information) are greater than the perceptions of classroom teachers.
- All who responded to the critical-incident item reported situations related to school librarians teaching students to find useful information.
- Classroom teachers' perceptions of the impact of school librarians on teaching IL skills (finding and using information) are greater than the perceptions of students.
- School librarians' perceptions of their impact on teaching IL skills (finding, using, and evaluating) and technology use are greater than the perceptions of students.

- School librarians rated “providing information resources for teachers and students” as their most important role whereas classroom teachers perceived “motivating students to read” as their librarian’s most important role.

Librarian–Teacher Collaboration

- School librarians perceive a greater level of collaboration with classroom teachers than classroom teachers perceive.
- Although it was not one of the highest scoring areas on the in-depth survey, both school librarians and classroom teachers described frequent librarian–teacher collaborations in their critical-incident responses.

Technology Use

- The school library plays an important role in many aspects of technology use in their schools.
- Both students and classroom teachers rated “motivating teachers to use computers” as the least important role for school librarians.
- Fifth and eighth grade students’ perceptions of the impact of the school librarian and the school library on their Learning and Motivation are greater than the perceptions of eleventh graders on all scales except technology use.
- Both school librarians and classroom teachers ranked technology support for teachers as least important.
- As indicated by responses to the critical-incident item, all groups reported frequent use of technology and resources in multiple formats for helping students find information they needed for assignments.

Administrative Support

- Principals have perceptions of higher autonomy supportiveness for their school librarian than school librarians’ perceive they have.

Inclusion

- School librarians report lower levels of technology and physical accessibility to resources for students with disabilities than other services and resources.
- Mean scores by school librarians for services to students with disabilities accounted for several of the lowest scores on both surveys.
- The provision of assistive learning technologies in the school library and attention to individualized education programs (IEPs) received the two lowest scores from the school librarians.
- Elementary school librarians’ perceptions of their use of IEPs to provide differentiated instruction to students with disabilities were greater than perceptions of secondary school librarians.
- No school librarian reported providing separate instruction to students with IEPs.

Phase III Research

The purpose of the phase III research was to focus on a small number of school libraries and their librarians who had participated in the previous two phases, which would allow us to probe areas of interest and identify specific examples where school librarians are having an impact on

members of their school communities and beyond. In phase III we selected ten of the 47 schools that participated in phase II to be a part of audio-recorded focus groups and interviews. We held sessions with school librarians, principals, teachers, students, and parents.

Subsequently, using ethnographic research methods (observations and interviews), we selected two schools in which to further study areas of interest identified in previous research. Observations over ten weeks were conducted to document the school librarian's interactions with school administrators, classroom teachers, and students, and a series of six interviews with principals and classroom teachers was conducted in those two schools. Based on findings from the two previous phases, phase III focused on six areas of inquiry: Learning and Motivation (in the areas of Research & IL Skills Development/Motivation and Reading Skills Development/Motivation), Librarian–Teacher Collaboration, Technology Use, Inclusion, Administrative Support, and Outreach.

Instruments

Focus group and interview protocols were developed, tested, and revised before implementation (see **Appendix**). We developed protocols for school administrations to volunteer school librarians, principals, classroom teachers, students, and parents. Some questions were identical across all protocols (e.g., “If you could only use one word or phrase to describe your school library, what would it be?”), some were identical except for only slight wording changes (e.g., “Can you tell me how you use your school library?” was changed to “Can you tell me how your child or children use your school library?” for the parent focus group and “Can you tell me how your teachers use your school library?” for the principal interview), and some were unique to a particular focus group (e.g., “Have you ever collaborated with your school librarian?” for classroom teachers and “Has your school librarian ever taught you something you didn't know before?” for students). Each question had one or more follow-up questions.

Participants

From the 47 schools that participated in phase II, we chose ten for phase III on the basis of geographic location, need/resource capacity (N/RC) level, size (small < 400 students; medium 400–900 students; large > 900 students) and grade level (elementary, secondary, or K–12). Enrollments in the selected schools ranged from 208 to more than 2,000 students. One urban school was located in a mid-sized city whereas four were in different sections of a large city. The participating schools were described as follows:

- Small, urban elementary school (pre-K–5)
- Small, rural elementary school (K–5)
- Small, rural all-grade school (pre-K–12)
- Medium, urban elementary school (K–5)
- Medium, urban elementary school (K–5)
- Medium, suburban middle school (Grades 6–8)
- Medium, urban elementary school (pre-K–5)
- Large, rural junior/senior high school (Grades 6–12)
- Large, suburban high school (Grades 9–12)
- Large, urban elementary school (K–5)

In these ten schools, we held focus groups with fourth, eighth, and eleventh grade classroom teachers; fifth, eighth, and eleventh grade students; and parents, all of whom volunteered to participate. The grade levels are consistent with those targeted in phases I and II (see Small and Snyder 2009; Small, Snyder, and Parker 2009). One-on-one, face-to-face interviews were held with building principals whereas online focus group sessions were conducted with the librarians because their schools were distributed in locations throughout New York State.

We selected two schools to participate in the ethnographic part of this study. Selection for this final part of the research focused on characteristics of the librarian rather than the school—the two selected school librarians were categorized as “exemplary” by their library administrators using New York State Department of Education criteria. The sites represent elementary and secondary levels; both are suburban, low-needs schools. Both librarians are tenured, experienced professionals; one has teaching credentials, the other has public library experience. Both librarians are proactive members of school committees and professional organizations; one is more focused on technology, the other is more focused on leadership activities. Each of the sites and librarians is described in more detail below.

Site 1

Site 1 is a suburban elementary school with approximately 900 students in grades K–5. The student stability rate is 94 percent, and about 16 percent qualify for free or reduced-price lunches. Ninety percent of the students are classified as white, and only two students have limited English proficiency. This is a school in good standing on all of the required state tests. The Site 1 Librarian has been the school librarian for more than nineteen years after working for more than seven years in different roles in other libraries. She has a mixed schedule of classes, each with a specified time in the library and open access for “just-in-time” use. She is active with the school and serves on different committees, including the Curriculum Committee and the Building Technology Committee. She is also active in professional organizations focused on providing technology support.

Site 2

Site 2 is a suburban middle school with approximately 850 students in grades 6–8. The student stability rate is 97 percent, and about 23 percent qualify for free or reduced-price lunches. Ninety percent of the students are classified as white, and only six students have limited English proficiency. This is a school in good standing on all of the required state tests. The Site 2 Librarian has been a school librarian for eight years after working as a teacher in public schools for more than ten years. Her library is on a completely flexible schedule. She is active within the school and serves on different committees, including the Strategic Planning Committee. She is also active in professional organizations serving in various leadership roles, presenting in numerous conferences, and writing for professional publications. In addition, she serves on a public library’s board of trustees and is on the advisory board for an educational institution. She has also submitted for and received numerous grants.

Methods

After conducting a general survey of librarians and principals in more than 1,600 New York schools and follow-up, in-depth surveys of 47 selected schools, we determined that a third phase of research using a more qualitative approach was warranted. This approach would give us a

more intimate look into areas of interest that have an impact on student Learning and Motivation with a broader range of stakeholders.

Phase III comprised (1) qualitative research that included focus groups and interviews held in ten selected schools with school librarians, classroom teachers, building principals, students, and parents, and (2) a more ethnographic approach in two exemplary school libraries, including observations over a period of ten weeks and interviews with principals and classroom teachers. Ethnographic research allows direct observation of the person of interest's behavior over time, supplemented by interviews with key others. We selected the two exemplary school libraries because their school library system directors graded them as "exemplary" library programs using New York State Department of Education criteria.

Qualitative Research

Focus groups were conducted by trained research assistants living near the selected schools. The research assistants audio-recorded and later transcribed all sessions for analysis. The focus groups included 33 classroom teachers, 37 parents, and 53 students from the ten schools, and each building principal was interviewed. A translator (the school's parent coordinator) was used as an interpreter for one focus group in which all participating parents spoke only Spanish. Seven of the ten school librarians took part in two separate focus group sessions held and recorded electronically using Elluminate, a real-time online collaboration software, and moderated by the primary researcher of this study. The three other librarians were unable to participate in either of the Elluminate sessions because of scheduling conflicts.

Ethnographic Research

Two research assistants, trained in ethnographic-data-collection techniques, were each assigned to one of the two selected sites. Each spent ten weeks on-site (90 hours), observing the school librarian's activities and interactions with administrators, classroom teachers, parents, and students. Observers were instructed to take notes on the school librarian's interactions (particularly those demonstrating support from others) and activities (e.g., collaboration, instruction, technology use, and service to students with special needs). While observations were mainly based in the library, whenever possible the researcher observed the school librarian when she went to other parts of the school building. At site 2, the researcher was excluded from some of the librarian's meetings with principals and library aides because of confidentiality issues.

In the final week of observations, the research assistants conducted a series of audio-recorded interviews with the building principal, school librarian, and four classroom teachers at each school. The research assistant selected the classroom teachers on the basis of having had multiple interactions with the librarian during the period of observation. Research assistants recorded notes from observations and interview responses electronically using word-processing software on notebook computers. All data were collected in electronic format.

Results

The research assistants transcribed all of their recorded observations, focus groups, and interviews. Two independent coders, trained in content analysis methods, analyzed the focus group and interview data and observation notes using the six code categories of interest that were derived from the findings in phases I and II: Learning and Motivation, Librarian–Teacher Collaboration, Technology Use, Inclusion, Administrative Support, and Outreach. Once all data

were analyzed, the coders compared their analyses to identify any instances of disagreement in the coding scheme. All such instances were resolved, resulting in 100 percent coder agreement.

Results of the analyses are presented by category, integrating examples from observations and interactions with classroom teachers, building administrators, students, parents, and school librarians. This section concludes with a summary of phase III findings.

Learning and Motivation

The category Learning and Motivation addresses examples that demonstrate ways in which the school librarian has influenced student Learning and Motivation to learn. As one might expect, this category had the largest number of activities and comments of the six coding categories. Learning and Motivation data were first identified by this broad category but were later broken down into two subcategories, Research and IL Skills Development/Motivation and Reading Skills Development/Motivation.

Research and IL Skills Development/Motivation

With the rise of electronic resources, school librarians are educating students how to find, select, use, and evaluate reliable resources on the Internet. The subcategory Research and IL Skills Development/Motivation was used to classify data that revealed education around research concepts such as IL skills; the ability to find, evaluate, and cite both print and electronic resources; and the motivation to use those skills. In her interview, a rural elementary-level principal recalled with a smile her sixth grade daughter telling her, “Mom, you can’t just put into Google ‘manatees’ because [our librarian] said that anything can pop up. You really have to go to direct sources on that.”

Another principal described with pride an example where the librarian worked with both students and the teacher to create an exemplary learning product.

The librarian helped the students and the teacher research information on the Iroquois using the Internet and with the books in the library. They researched the information for the project and they created a PowerPoint presentation . . . that is able to be used with any class in the building and students outside of [our school].
(Urban elementary principal)

The Site 2 Librarian’s principal stated in an interview:

I see very much already that she is considered an instructional leader, teacher leader within the building. Staff members go to her for curricular support, instructional support. When she is in the library she will often team teach with teachers’ lessons. She provides more than just stereotypical assistance and support. (Suburban middle school principal)

Classroom teachers provided some rich examples of situations in which the school librarian had an impact on student learning of research skills.

Twelfth grade anatomy and physiology. Used online databases. [Our librarian] presented how to assess the materials (primary and secondary research, to expose them to what is happening at research facilities, universities, medical centers,

Department of Energy based online sources). [Our librarian] was more than helpful in teaching them how to differentiate what is primary or secondary research. Next semester I'll bring my AP bio class and she'll teach them video streaming. (Rural junior/senior high school teacher)

Yeah, a concrete example for me is I had a student work on a government project, he wanted to interview other students about school violence and bullying, and so [our librarian] walked him through how to use a digital video camera, and [the student] did interviews, brought it back to a computer, downloaded it, and he created this moviemaker ten-minute thing. . . . So I think [our librarian] is willing to lend those different pieces of technology and sit down with students and help them. And when other students see them using that: "Hey, how'd you do that? I'd rather do that, that's kind of cool, how'd you do that." Then I think word spreads kind of quickly: "Hey (our librarian) will help, go talk to her and check it out." (Suburban high school teacher)

*I've also seen [our librarian] deliver a lesson on using reference materials on a certain unit we were doing in language arts. She was showing the students where different information could be found, how to use that information, and what to do with it once they've finished with it, but also in her lesson she was very personable with the students. I mean she has a rapport with all the students here, so she was trying to engage them and make the reference material interesting to them because it was a biographical research paper that they were doing and she had a plethora of books that she was throwing out on the table and calling out topics like *Women in Sports and Military Leaders*. The students were flocking to the books and calling out "I want that one!" which was great, and I was trying to damper my students' enthusiasm for it but [our librarian] said it was fine and let them have it. I thought that was great, and it was a clue to me that sometimes you have to step back and let kids be kids. So it was a great lesson in terms of showing them how to find the reference materials, but also to get them interested in that material, which could sometimes seem a little dry. (Suburban middle school teacher)*

Students were also enthusiastic about ways in which their school librarian helped them learn important research skills. One student remarked, "One thing she taught me is how to use a search engine. Now I know Google and Ask and also Dogpile. They help you to find information you want." (Urban elementary student)

Parents also demonstrated an awareness of how their school librarian was improving their child's learning. Here are two examples:

While in here [the library], [students] have assistance of a librarian to help them focus on what they need to find. Classes have to present projects with outside information, and my son gets this information off the Internet. [He] has learned skills in finding information and seems to use it successfully. I have seen papers which show he knows how to do this. (Rural junior/senior high school parent)

Yeah, reputable sources is big. You know the kids can go on the Internet and find God-knows-what, and you don't know if it's really good or not. I know they've checked, the [librarian] helps them check. (Suburban high school parent)

During the online focus group, librarians were asked to describe a situation in which they taught research skills to students. A few examples are provided below.

I try to teach students . . . how to put some thought and planning into their research project and how to gain information. Thinking about what exactly it is that they are looking for and what types of things are appropriate for them . . . also to know that they have support, that I can help them whenever they need it. I always stress with my students that they can call me at home. I put my phone number on the research guides that I give them, and I periodically do get calls at home with students that are having trouble getting into a database or have questions about how to do a bibliography. (Rural junior/senior high school librarian)

A lot of my students don't understand how to, why it's so important that they know where they had gotten their information from, and giving credit. And plagiarism is a huge issue in my district right now. And just teaching them how it's okay to use information other people have put out there but you have to let others know where they get their information. (Rural pre-K–12 librarian)

I don't know if it's a skill or not but I would say respect. Respect for books, for each other, for information, for equipment. (Urban elementary librarian)

In our ethnographic data, observation notes reveal many examples of librarians teaching IL skills to students, often using a variety of motivational strategies. For example, the Site 1 Librarian explained to a group of students what intellectual property is and what it means to steal someone else's intellectual property. She used *The Simpsons* as an example and the kids immediately started asking more questions.

In another example, the Site 1 Librarian began a lesson on Boolean logic and Venn diagrams using hula hoops. After a quick review of the Venn concept, she divided students into groups and used the hula hoops to form the Venn diagram. This grabbed the students' attention from the beginning and engaged them both intellectually and physically in the lesson. When some students had trouble grasping the concept, she asked, "Would you like to borrow an expert?" She sent them a student who really understood the concept, allowing the expert student to perform the highest level of learning (teaching others), and the students that were having trouble had the concept explained in terms they could understand by one of their peers.

The Site 1 Librarian's principal described her teaching of IL skills in this way:

Last year [she] did something very interesting. She did a series of lessons on Boolean operators, and she just taught that every way possible. She did this great lesson—you know candy bars and it's chocolate AND nuts! And you know which ones—and it is just a rip. And she had color transparencies and I mean it was—

and I don't mean this in a derogatory way—but it was the dog and pony show! Boy the kids, you know! They will never forget but it was all about Boolean operators and why/what they were built for, and Internet searches. (Suburban elementary principal)

The Site 1 Librarian has also held several workshops for teachers about fair use of materials.

The Site 2 Librarian was teaching a class on “citing your source.” She began by stating, “When you find the tool, that perfect book, the first thing you are going to do is cite your source.” She then asked the class, “What does that mean?” Once students understood the concept, she provided immediate relevance by explaining, “Next week you may be talking about your career choice and someone asks you where you found the information, and if you haven't cited the information, you will not be able to provide them the answer.” Later, when she was in her office eating her lunch, a student walked in asking for help with his presentation's works-cited page. She stopped eating and showed the student how to get to the MLA citation maker page, how to fill out the form, and how to cut-and-paste the citation into his presentation.

Reading Skills Development /Motivation

The act of promoting (through various strategies) reading and writing; introducing new genres, concepts, and authors; and motivating students to read appears to be the most important aspect of the school librarian's role to all groups. In an environment where standardized tests serve as a performance benchmark, school administrators have found that library circulation statistics reveal behavior patterns that may be strong predictors of a student's ELA performance. This is reflected in the following responses from two different principals.

The biggest different in that our ELA scores and reading scores have gone up steadily from when we got the library. This is great because we . . . have a large population of students with special needs. In addition, the students all want to go to the library and get books for their independent reading. That shows they are enjoying reading. . . . I correlate library visits and book circulation with children's test scores and I look at student scores, and if children are not progressing I look to see how many times they circulated a book from the library or how many times their teacher has taken them to the library. And I found there is a direct correlation with the number of books circulated and the scores on the ELA assessment. (Urban elementary principal)

Well, you know part of what I think is special about [our librarian] is that she just has this high level of commitment to making the library a hub of the building . . . for the children for the teachers, for the families, and it is not just a place to come a pick out a book, you know it is a place to—it is an incredibly supportive place to come a listen to a story because . . . that is the best place to hear someone read to you. So [our librarian] said why don't we all just pick our favorite books and we will take a picture of everybody and you know put it on [our website]. So that is what we did and that was her brainchild and it was really great. (Rural pre-K–12 principal)

Most of the interactions with classroom teachers in the library were during reading and literature appreciation activities (this was the librarian activity that received the highest rating of importance by teachers in phase II). In the teacher focus group, one teacher described a motivating strategy the librarian used to stimulate reading:

[Our librarian] has a PowerPoint slide of book reviews, puts them on the TV, when kids are in library, they can see book reviews by other kids in the school, encourages them to see what their peers are doing. During study hall my students have books for enjoyment, reading on their own for pleasure. (Rural junior/senior high school teacher)

Students at all levels recognized the important role their school librarian plays in stimulating their reading and fostering an appreciation of literature. This area elicited the most frequent comments from students. A few examples are provided below.

[My librarian] showed me some articles on the Internet about haikus and poetry, and I'd never seen anything like it before. I actually have my favorite poems and I look at them sometimes (Suburban high school student)

[My librarian] always introduces me to great books because she knows about me and she knows what I like. She recommends good books for me and then I get lots of reading practice. That makes me a good reader. (Urban elementary student)

She knows me so well, she points me to the books that I'd want every time. She's like "I know what you'd like" and she nails it. (Rural pre-K-12 student)

She taught me how to find books of the same genre and also how to look for books by the same author. That is a good thing. That helps me find books I like. If you like this book then you might like this other book. If you like this author then you might another book by this author. It helps me to do this to find more books I like to read. (Urban elementary student)

So if you're like my sister who inherited all the athletic skills in the family . . . but I don't like to run around and stuff like that. I am a very avid reader, and it only takes me a very short time to read a very thick book, so I'm always in the library for a new book I haven't read. I've read Harry Potter, I've read A Series of Unfortunate Events, and I started Harry Potter in third grade and I've been reading books like that ever since (Suburban middle school student).

One suburban high school student explained how the library allows him to access books that he could not otherwise afford. He states, "I only like a certain type of books and they're really expensive and, um, my mom and I we really can't afford it, so she'll let me know that they actually have them here and they get new ones and stuff, so she said that if I come in advance, I can get one saved for me." A similar example was provided by an urban elementary parent about books and her child: "I cannot afford to buy my child books and the public library is not easy to get to, so this really helps my child because he always can get great books to read and the librarian can help him choose books he likes."

When asked to describe ways in which they motivate student reading, the librarians cited a variety of strategies, often involving students in the process.

One way that we have promoted books and reading has been in the displays that we have, both in the library and the display cases just outside the library. We target different types of books, have different themes, and I find that that has really—especially the displays that are in the hallway as people are passing by—that has really caught kids. And a lot of times they are coming and they are requesting the books that they are seeing in the display cases. So that has helped a lot. And I think that making displays attractive and interesting kind of motivates them also to look at the books that we have on display. Secondly, I have a PowerPoint of different book reviews that runs constantly—it just loops—in the library. And they're reviews that kids have written so as they've read a book, they write a very, very short review on it and it's there to help students as they come in and they are looking for a book. They can look at the screen and see, well, here's something that someone their age enjoyed. So, that's helped promote some of the books we have. (Rural junior/senior high school librarian)

The graphic novels we got in have a HUGE, huge draw. And the fact that we built the reading area in our library and now have magazines, popular magazines with the kids, so they'll actually come in on their free time, sit in their reading area and look at magazines, and they are reading them. They are reading Sports Illustrated, ESPN, and People and Teen and all those. And then the graphic novels, we can't keep them on the shelf. So when they are off the shelf, we try to get them interested in the others. But just ordering books that the kids request is another big draw. (Suburban high school librarian)

When I do my paperback order, I have some fifth graders come down and they go through the catalogs and they decide what books we should buy. (Urban elementary librarian)

One rural librarian mentioned interlibrary loan as an essential service for her library.

Interlibrary loan has really increased the amount my students are reading. They get a favorite author and there are sequels and we're able to get them in quickly. We do a lot of interlibrary loan. I try to order the things the kids are getting in that . . . they want to read, but it really adds to the depth of our collection. (Rural pre-K–12 librarian)

At our ethnographic sites, we found many examples of situations in which the librarians helped students with their reading choices and engaged students in helping decide which books to order for the library.

When helping students select which books are most appropriate for them, thereby increasing their reading confidence, librarians might do storytelling or book talks with groups of students, or guide students one-on-one. For example, the Site 2 Librarian walks around the library, helping students find that “perfect” book. As she does this, she

presents mini-book talks to convince a student to choose a book. While observing this, one student tells the Site 2 Librarian that she will trust whatever she finds for her.

Helping students “take ownership” of their library by seeking their input on library policies and book choices increases their engagement and self-esteem. For example, we observed the Site 2 Librarian asking a student her opinion of a graphic novel series that had been recommended and to provide a name of a graphic novel series she thinks will appeal to students in the school. The Site 2 Librarian also checked some books out of the local public library and had students read them to provide recommendations for purchases. One student said that the Site 2 Librarian should order the book that she had read.

Librarian–Teacher Collaboration

The category Librarian–Teacher Collaboration encompasses examples that demonstrate a collaborative culture in which librarians and classroom teachers see the value, importance, and benefits of collaboration to themselves, each other, and their students (Small 2002). The complexity of the collaborative activity falls along a continuum from simple resource provision to total design, delivery, and evaluation of instruction. The following examples, provided by building administrators, librarians, and classroom teachers, demonstrate various points along that continuum.

The most recent [collaborative] project I did with [our librarian] actually we just finished—the kids just finished it. We did a PowerPoint presentation on a reformer from the early 1900s, and like I said before, she’s really good at getting the resources we need to provide for the students to be successful. With her the collaboration usually comes up front, and then we talk about what we want to do and what worked well and something for future years so that the project can work even better. (Suburban middle school teacher)

The librarian has copies of all the standards and curriculum for every grade. The librarian will meet with teachers in the beginning of the year for teachers to sit down and talk about what are the curriculum needs and what are the standards that have to be met in each grade. The librarian will set her schedule up to meet the teacher’s need and will meet with the teachers periodically to make sure those needs are carried out. (Urban elementary principal)

Yes, we have worked together. I come with my class to do research. The librarian does a mini lesson that involves research or searching on the Internet. She also sometimes uses videos that connect to the curriculum, and this really helps my students. She also helped a lot with the social studies curriculum to help to prepare for the social studies statewide test. (Urban elementary teacher)

In collaboration with the lessons that we might be focusing she’ll do a lesson to follow-up, which might also include some work on the computer to do it differently. Whereas with the book-learning they get to see things on the computer, for instance when we did a trip to the dentist they go to actually do a little trip with a little girl and boy going to the dentist [on the computer] and that was fun. (Urban elementary teacher)

I have a living environment teacher who brings her class in to do research on disease, and I create a research guide—kind of a pathfinder-type guide that follows the basic process, and so it gives them guidelines on how they, on the steps they should take to follow their research. And within that guide I will—I give them suggestions of where they could go to find information. I give them help with passwords for databases, things like that, suggestions on different keyword searches they might want to do. But at the same time, I also provide typically in like a computer lab with projection, I show them how they can access, how they can search—just how the resources are used, basically. (Rural junior/senior high school librarian)

There also were several examples of higher-level collaboration in which the librarian and teacher co-planned and co-taught lessons. One collaboration led to a principal deciding to institutionalize higher-level collaboration as a regular librarian–teacher activity.

Something new with [our librarian] is the fact that she demands that they [classroom teachers and librarians] co-teach. So it isn't just, "You're coming to do a content on topic x, here's some resources, here are some books on a cart." It's, "We're going to do this together, and the kids are going to see both as instructional leaders," which then—when the kids do something outside of class—they can access [the librarian] because they know she'll have the information as well. (Suburban high school principal)

I try to imbed my instructional program into the curriculum and into what each of the classroom teachers is involved in as much as possible. That's sort of the point . . . where I begin collaboration with the teachers, is first to support them with the resources they need, and then to tailor both my informational technology skills that I would like to pass on to the students as well as my information literacy goals to align with standards and to use what they are doing to support and extend the teaching and the curriculum that we have going in our school. (Rural elementary librarian)

I use the library in many ways. First, I use it for my own research when planning my lessons. I also plan collaboratively with the school librarian to teach students skills that help them to be better readers and information users and researchers. I also bring the class here to do research and to choose books for their independent reading. (Urban elementary teacher)

Yes, [the school librarian and I] collaborate and we always have these collaborative discussions. We are able to have discussions with [the librarian] about regular curriculum and what we're doing and how can we translate that to what we're doing in class. For example, in February we're going to be doing biographies in my class, and we are going to translate the biography into reader's theater. We're going to be doing reader's theater in my class. We are going to be highlighting Marion Anderson. She is one person we are going to be focusing upon. The kids are very excited about it. The kids are interested in singing. I have several kids in my class that like to sing, and it's because of [the librarian] being so enthusiastic about it and I'm being so enthusiastic about it. Yes, they are really excited! (Urban elementary teacher)

We use the library as an enrichment model. It is not a cluster or a special position. It is the opportunity for enrichment and to promote the love of literacy through the building.

So we have collaborative team teaching classes—co-teaching I should say—where the teacher and the librarian teach together around science and/or social studies to enrich those opportunities for our kids and give them the opportunity to do research on the computers we have here. (Urban elementary principal)

A unique example of collaboration occurred in the ethnographic elementary school. The Site 1 Librarian asked members of the community to bring different kinds of trucks that are present in the community to the school one evening. Students and parents were invited to the event to learn about the uses of the trucks in the community. The event was a huge success, and although there wasn't collaboration within the school, there was collaboration between the community and the school librarian.

A number of librarian–teacher collaborations were noted in the research assistants' observations. For example, the music teacher came to the Site 1 Librarian's library to plan the events for Veterans Day, something they have done for many years. The music teacher brought an agenda and wanted the Site 1 Librarian to take a look at it when she had a chance.

The Site 2 Librarian collaborated with a classroom teacher to teach a unit that would require students to use library resources (both print and online) to find information that would eventually be synthesized into a PowerPoint presentation. This is a unit that they have taught together several times, and each time it is adapted for improvement. The unit is frequently team-taught, but at certain times either the school librarian or the classroom teacher will take the lead. Both are responsible for assessing the students' work at the completion of the unit. Soon thereafter, the Site 2 Librarian and the collaborating teacher meet to discuss what worked and what didn't and to make notes for improving the unit.

In interviews, teachers described their experiences collaborating with the Site 2 Librarian. One teacher remarked that the Site 2 Librarian takes on a leadership role when they are teaching a particular unit and that she also provides support role to the teacher and the students as necessary. Another teacher commented that it was nice to have someone else in the classroom that has knowledge different from her own.

Technology Use

The category Technology Use represents those instances in which the school librarian serves to promote technology and share its benefits with students, classroom teachers, and building administrators. In phase II, classroom teachers rated “motivating teachers to use computers” as the *least* important role for librarians out of ten choices, but many of the phase III focus group comments from teachers appear to contradict that opinion. For example:

I know that I benefited because . . . I am not computer literate, computer savvy. So I actually benefited by being a part of lessons that [the librarian] has done. Actually, about a year or so, I had a third-grade class . . . doing a unit on Russia and [our librarian] did a streaming video—a beautiful presentation where he had a clip of a typical little boy expressing what his day is like in Russia. It was exciting; rather than just reading about it you can see it. That brought it alive! (Urban elementary teacher)

I was just recently doing this type of research with our government papers, [the librarian] was talking about new online databases that she had and she was using the

smart board to do it, so she was demonstrating the appropriate technology. Like we said before, she's really engaging, outgoing, students respect her, and respect the fact that she knows the answers to a lot of questions they're gonna have. So I think it's like a mini-lesson, ten or fifteen minutes—we went over bibliography format and things like that—for her to take control of that and me to not have to worry about that. I don't know how to use a smart board necessarily. I don't know how to tell what databases are going to be best for this research. For her to do all that ahead of time and come in for fifteen minutes . . . and present that in a way for students to relate, I think is beneficial for them and for me. (Suburban high school teacher)

The librarians also provided a number of examples of ways in which they teach and support classroom teachers in the use of technology:

Last year our school asked the teachers what kind of professional development they wanted, and 90 percent of them wanted to learn more on technology. So that's where I spent my Tuesdays after school, . . . teaching teachers ways that they can integrate technology into their classroom. I greatly enjoyed it. It was fun. It was very fun. (Suburban high school librarian)

I do projects with the teachers. We have one teacher who is technologically deficient, and after I went to a library meeting and learned about culture-grams, I brought it back to the school and I talked to the teacher, and we had a class use that program to do a project. And I showed her how to do video conferencing and she started teaching lessons with it. (Urban elementary librarian)

I like to be a technology advocate because I'm on technology committees here with our district. So when our occupational therapist and our physical therapist found that they didn't have the type of IT equipment that they needed, . . . I really pushed for them to get what they needed. So kind of in an off-handed way [I] helped to support them in what they did in their jobs. I also included MP3 books this year, added to my collection in a limited way to see how they hold up, for the kids who have a hard time reading. I also brought in two Alpha Smart portable computing carts so that the kids can use those for those that have really poor hand-writing skills and processing skills and things like that, and they've taken off like wildfire. (Rural elementary librarian)

I feel I sometimes model for teachers the different types of technology they can be using in their classrooms, like the Elmo and overheads, to put together slide shows, helping them on their web page. We're a very small district, K–12, 350 students. Technical help is far and few in between, so lots of times I act as the technician to help them solve their problems. (Rural pre-K–12 librarian)

Librarians recognize the importance of both using technology themselves and teaching students how to effectively and ethically use technology. One librarian stated,

I'd like to think that I've impacted the students in a few different ways. One way would be the fact that I always use technology when I'm teaching them. Typically it's the computer and a projector—not terribly sophisticated technology, but I think they see me using it and that that helps them. And in my instruction I also try to promote as a type of resource

databases and Web evaluation because they're all very excited to jump on and Google, but most of them have really not learned how they could best use the Internet for research. And so providing them with some instruction with that and providing them with other choices such as databases I think has opened the eyes of many students. (Rural junior/senior high school librarian)

Collectively, administrators perceive their school librarian to be a primary facilitator of technology integration and use within their buildings and districts, which in many poor urban and rural districts can make all the difference for their graduates. While funding technology is a challenge for some institutions, administrators across the board agreed the benefits are worth the investment and were struck by the breadth of technology-enhanced learning opportunities that their school librarians have integrated into the school curriculum. The importance of the librarian's technology role is reflected in comments from several principals:

We're a poor rural school district with some of the best instructional technology for teachers . . . when we spend money on tech it has to be well spent. People respect [the librarian's] opinion, she's well informed, open minded, and has a clear sense of direction. [Her graduate] program introduced her to cutting-edge tech and gave a mindset for her to move in "How do we prepare kids to graduate and survive a school like [University X], what type of tech should we put in place?" This is how we think. (Rural junior/senior high school principal)

It's the regular, it's computer use, it's iPod use. I mean it's presentations, it's software...So if anything, [the librarian] has moved this building into more of the electronic use and the Internet use and appropriate uses than anybody...we've come a long way in just the last couple of years. (Suburban high school principal)

[The librarian] has been pretty much the sole implementer as far as technology is concerned in the building. She has raised the levels of our students in terms of technology and their use of technology. (Urban elementary principal)

I see the responsiveness in [Mr. O'Bryan, the librarian's] understanding of technology, which is our children's language. . . . And Mr. O'Bryan kind of cherishes that and draws it out, so that when he is doing these little podcasts or the kids are working on things, he kind of creates this wonderful repertoire with them. He understands their inside knowledge and he blows on those embers that are warm and gets them all fired up. (Rural elementary principal)

[The librarian] may just show a new technology to a teacher, and then usually she knows the strengths of the people in the building and who would take off with it. And usually it becomes then ten more people want the same thing in the classroom. (Suburban high school principal)

One building administrator even acknowledged how his librarian helped *him* with technology in this way:

She has been a tremendous resource and research assistant to me . . . more technologically advanced, helped me improve technical presentations. I use the library

differently as an administrator. I'll call and say I need quick info on this on any number of topics—time management, architectural suggestions. She helped me retrieve ILL materials; she can search the Web better than I can. (Rural junior/senior high school principal)

Students also expressed the importance of their librarian in teaching them how to use a variety of technologies:

She teaches us about finding information using the computer. I learned to find books about the topic. I learned to use different databases. I learned how to research on the computer by trying different keywords. If you put different keywords you can find more information about your topic (Urban elementary principal)

I'm in camera club [a library activity] and I learned how to download pictures from the camera to the computer. We learned to edit them. (Urban elementary student)

The importance of this student support was acknowledged by parents:

[My son] uses computers whenever [he] needs to do research. My son gravitates right to computers, not so much books—checks out books when there is a requirement to use a book. Comes during study hall and after school. Has a computer at home. Easier to do in school because he gets help and OPAC is at school. The Web is so overwhelming that without the assistance of people in the library he wouldn't know how to focus. (Rural junior/senior high school parent)

Her son has learned how to do research on the Internet from the library. When they need information to research in books they ask the librarian. They know how the library is pretty much, is cataloged, you know, the categories of, like say science or history. The children are aware of that and if they can't find the book they go to the librarian. (Urban elementary parent)

One example of how important and pervasive technology has become in many schools, largely because of librarians' efforts, comes from our observations of the Site 1 Librarian, the elementary librarian. She receives computer magazines to keep up-to-date with technology and admits she does so as much for the teachers as for the students. "I am trying to stay, if not ahead of the game, at least with the game." During the fall semester, she took an extended trip to China while school was in session. While away, she posted a blog about her trip to all of the classes in her school; the students followed her adventures daily. The blog served as a teaching tool for the entire school, and when she returned, the Site 1 Librarian provided a number of follow-up activities.

One of the middle school teachers described the Site 2 Librarian's commitment to making sure students have the technology skills they will need in high school: "She has the goal of not just offering print media to students but also making sure that they are well equipped to use technological advances when they leave the library."

Inclusion

The Inclusion category includes making accommodations for special-needs students and creating an environment that is open and accessible to all. It has become increasingly clear that having a solid understanding and ability to work with students of all abilities is an essential characteristic for today's school librarian, whether in an urban, suburban, or rural district. This is underscored by this comment:

We have an 8:1:1 class (8 students, 1 teacher, 1 aide) on campus, and now we have full inclusion in the library, and that's dealing with the kids who have pretty severe disabilities. (Rural elementary librarian)

In phases I and II, librarians were found to lack the knowledge and skills to provide adequate services and resources to special-needs students. When probed further, several librarians described ways they are attempting to serve their special-education population, mostly in terms of resource provision:

I just try to include our special-ed kids in every way we can. I order special books if they need it. They are usually staffed with aides who come in with them, and whatever the aides need I try to get or accommodate. (Suburban middle school librarian)

We do have a special-education population, and we have right now about four CTT [Collaborative Team Teaching] classes. We have special-ed children and regular ed together with two teachers and a para[professional]. And they participate in the library program we have, they come in for book circulation—they are often working on research projects and we use the computer a lot. We also have CDs and DVDs. And so we try to have materials in various formats. We had a blind student. Up until recently we had a Braille collection for her so she was also able to participate. And I feel that, you know, we are going more and more towards materials in different formats because many of our children have difficulty even if they don't have any disabilities. They have difficulty with the print and just sustaining their reading—you know—for fluency. So, really, all of these different varieties of materials have really helped a lot of them; especially e-books online, and things like that, has really helped prepare them for taking the test. (Urban elementary librarian)

Well, I have to say that our autistic kids are completely fascinated with the manga, and they were so excited when they came in the library and saw that we had it that they run, they literally run through the library to get to them. And if they are all signed out, they will come back every day until the book comes back even though we tell them we can put a reserve and let them know, they still come back every day. . . . I have one special-ed teacher who does her IEPs [Individualized Education Programs] and she includes the library as part of it. So every year, I start a project with the kids. We either do a puppet show or play with costumes. We do something relating to literacy. And she watches the kids so she can note their progress on their IEPs. We have six self-contained classrooms. What I do in the beginning of the year, is I take all the classrooms and see which regular classes are really good that I can I combine with special-ed classes. Sometimes you can combine them, sometimes you keep them separate, sometimes you split a class. Some kids will go with one grade and some with another. (Urban elementary librarian)

Our BOCES [Board of Cooperative Educational Services] has provided software on our computers that will take text and read it out loud to kids. So we have that available. We also have a lot of books on CD. We are members of the Talking Books for visually impaired students. (Suburban high school librarian)

I just discovered Play Aways that Follett has. They're MP3 players. Special-ed teachers love them. The kids love them. I can't keep them in the library. And looking into using special-ed money to purchase more for the library. (Rural pre-K–12 librarian)

We discovered from our prior data on this topic that this is perhaps the weakest area for school librarians in New York State. While some of the librarians mentioned various instances of their services to special-needs students, it is evident that these services tend to be more reactive than part a comprehensive plan to provide library and information services to this population.

Our finding of a lack of comprehensive special-needs planning was reinforced by our observations in our two ethnographic schools, where interactions with and services to this special population appeared to be somewhat brief and mostly focused on resources. For example, the Site 2 Librarian was observed doing a book talk for an eighth-grade resources class that contains many students who wouldn't normally visit the library. The teacher remained in the library but did not participate in the session. The class went to the library to choose a book for "free reading" in class. Later, the drug education teacher came to ask the Site 2 Librarian's help in recommending picture books that might improve a particular group of boys' self-esteem, and the special-education teacher asked her for copies of a particular magazine to show to sixth-grade teachers. The English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher praised the Site 2 Librarian for providing English language learners a space in the library to find materials that were on their level.

In her interview, the ESL teacher praised the Site 2 Librarian:

[She] has done so many things to help my ESL students I hardly know where to start. Both in terms of motivational things and educational things, and I've worked with her on projects. I could go on and on. . . . Whenever she sees something that needs improvement, she will come up with a strategy for that purpose. Like when I last year when I first started getting some very, very beginner-level ESL students but we still wanted to make it so that they could use the library—which is tricky—we worked together and she got she designated a special couple of shelves, and she even had some of the library club kids help going around looking for picture books and things. That was so that when I would have library day with my ESL language arts group we could go in and we had a spot where we could look for the books.

The middle school special-education teacher described a situation in which the Site 2 Librarian supported a lesson on feelings:

A lot of times I will go [to the library] if I am doing a unit on something and recently I just did a unit on feelings. Well I was having a hard time finding books even though my students—the group I have are like ten, eleven, and twelve year olds—I would try to find something that displays feelings that kind of looks appropriate for them, but got down on like a two- or three-year-old level. So I went in and they pulled out different kinds of

books for me to display these feelings, and my kids are very interested in this—in the pictures in the books. They were big picture books, which adds interest level to them, and that’s what I do—go in and say “I’m reading at this level. What do you have that I can do? We are doing this unit what kinds of books do you have that I can—what kind of movies do you have?” So I go in and use [the librarians] as a resource to apply some extra material to whatever unit I am doing.

The Site 1 Librarian tries to work with the teachers of inclusion students to reinforce behavior that is expected of them in their regular classroom and apply it to the library. One inclusion teacher stated, “It’s there and again with the inclusion kids—you know I feel like if I take her side and say I know this kid is a challenge, he is really challenging us in the classroom, but this is where we are trying to go with him and this is why we are going to let him get away with this behavior in library. Because right now we just need him to be with us. She is supportive of that, and you know she is open to that and will work with us the best she can.”

However, one classroom teacher in the Site 1 Librarian’s school stated that in his observations, the Site 1 Librarian didn’t seem to know how to deal with his students who might have problems at home or who have special needs: “I have another child who is ADHD and is off meds, and when he is off meds, he needs to be dealt with in a certain way...I trust [the Site 1 Librarian] to respect those kids and to understand that they—they have stuff that they are coming into school with that you have to also consider...and I don’t think she always considers that.”

While most librarians do their best to provide special-needs students with reading guidance and to identify appropriate resources for their teachers, it has been demonstrated in all three phases of this study that providing a range of appropriate resources, technologies, and services to students with special needs—particularly a group with a wide range of disabilities—as well as an understanding of how to work with these students continues to be an area in which librarians need additional training and support.

Administrative Support

In the first phase of this study we discovered that school administrators perceived themselves as being highly supportive of their librarian and library, but school librarians did not have the same perception. The nature of that support was typically described as financially driven (for example, expanded space, library aides, and additional resources).

[Our] library is the focus of the building. I expanded the library budget threefold from the one I inherited. I started requiring departments to purchase library materials, videos, CDs, slide show, etc., and took them away from the teachers and put them in the library where every kid and teacher had access. (Rural junior/senior high school principal)

I’ve tried to support [our library] with personnel and with money and resources...Typically what I do and probably in the next couple of weeks, I take a look at the building budget, and any money that’s left over I ask [the librarian] what everybody needs because she again has the pulse on what the high school community needs as far as technology or resources or books. So usually I try to filter as much money because I know that it’s going to be used and it’ll be used in the right manner. (Suburban high school principal)

This is a newly renovated library, and in the library portion itself I have fourteen computers and then there's the computer lab attached with twenty-seven computers. And along with that are the printers and a scanner. We have a wireless connection in the computer lab, a wireless projection so that we can bounce from computer to computer to project. We have podcasting equipment. The administration here has been a big supporter of databases and e-books, so we have, I think, a pretty good selection of those. I'm trying to think of what else. Our high is currently upgrading each classroom. All of them will have a computer, projection, and a write tablet. And . . . I'm supposed to be getting a write tablet but I have received it yet. (Rural junior/senior high school librarian)

If I had all the money I would have a library helper. [Our librarian] is usually here to 5:00 p.m. or 6:00 p.m. doing things that are clerical that she can't do during the day because [the library is] so busy with kids. (Urban elementary principal).

Both principals at the ethnographic sites encourage their librarians to participate in professional development and provided them with the funds to do so. Another important way that administrators show their support is by providing their librarian with the personnel assistance needed to keep the library running. At our two ethnographic sites, both librarians had at least two employees in full-time support roles. This allowed the librarians the time needed to provide library instruction and to collaborate with classroom teachers on projects as needed.

In addition, these principals demonstrated a strong sense of trust in their librarians to run the library and its programs. During the interview, the Site 1 Librarian's principal stated, "She tells me what she wants and gives a good rationale, and then I just try and get out of her way and clear hurdles if I can." The principal also related the following humorous anecdote that illustrates the support and respect she has for her librarian. One summer morning the principal received a phone call from the buildings-and-grounds superintendent who told her that she could go ahead with installing new carpeting in the library.

I said "Joe, if you think that I am going to pick out [the Site 1 Librarian's] carpeting, you have another think coming!" The only way—I said I hope she is in town because if she is not in town we are not doing it. . . . So I said "I will have to call you back," and I am dialing [the Site 1 Librarian's] number saying "please god please god let her be home." Well she picked up on like the second ring. . . . So she came in [at] eight o'clock the next morning, but she had a vision of what that carpet should look like, and—you know—and so she does all that because she loves the students and she wants the students to love the library.

The Site 2 Librarian's principal encourages her any time she approaches him with an idea, and he has come to appreciate the amount of help she can give to teachers in educating students. He stated, "Well, certainly in my role it's through encouragement and support; it's through funding; it's through allowing her to use her expertise in developing a program; it's through not micromanaging her position but trusting her that she will offer the best of what there is."

It is necessary for school librarians to understand the reality of the fiscal limitations of administrative support, particularly in difficult economic times. However, even with tight

budgets principals can support the school librarian by recognizing their critical value in the school's educational mission.

Outreach

Outreach describes those activities in which the school librarian communicates and interacts with the community-at-large. Data reveal that librarians use a variety of techniques to draw the community to their library (for example, newsletters; local, state and national competitions; collaborative activities; and special programs open to the community). Such libraries take on a hybrid role, fulfilling the needs of students, their families, and their communities. Rather than managing a closed, self-contained library learning community, school librarians perceive their role as inspiring broader communities of lifelong learners, particularly in areas where public libraries are not readily accessible.

While this category was not investigated in previous phases of this research, it emerged as an important category in the content analysis. The data revealed many creative ways librarians reach out to communities inside and outside their schools.

We're completely open to homeschoolers. And I have a family in today who was accessing, you know, anything that they want, taking anything they want out, which is completely logical since they are community members, open to them. I don't have a great deal of resources, but we are trying to start thinking about developing some community resources in the way of texts and books and things like that, and possibly working with our school psychologist and counselor to develop more of a collection of books that are germane to all those social issues that strike kids and what they can do about them: broken families, sexual issues, that kind of thing. (Rural elementary librarian)

I make sure I put information about the library in each newsletter that goes home. (Urban elementary librarian)

I have offered Internet safety classes to parents. We also promote databases, send out passwords, and explain what they are so the parents understand how students can—and how they can—use databases to get the information [they] want, for personal reasons or school-related reasons. At open-house nights I have the community come. The parents and the families come in, and [I] show them what we have here, what the students are able to access. There's nothing stopping them at any time from borrowing from us, but that seems to be a time in particular where I'll find some parents that will find something of interest that they'd like to borrow from our library. (Rural junior/senior high librarian)

One of the ways I've tried to (reach out) is through books for parents. I've got quite a collection of books for parents of ADHD [students] and some moms join me for lunch so we can talk some. I'll get interlibrary loan books for parents or other kids, just depending. It's a small community, so I try to respond if necessary. (Suburban middle school librarian)

In my school, I present at PTSA (Parent-Teacher-Student Association) meetings once a year. At open house I always give a brochure about all the services we have in our library and the fact that you can access the library page at home and the databases

online. And I give them the password, so they have all the information they need right there. (Suburban high school librarian)

We have an open-access library. We have children and parents coming in throughout the day, borrowing books. We have a very close relationship with the public library, and we have worked together to, you know, reach out to the parents. (Urban elementary librarian)

In terms of visibility, bringing people into our library, [the librarian] always holds professional development here. He has a partnership with many community-based organizations to help us enrich the learning that we have at the school. (Urban elementary principal)

In her interview, the Site 1 Librarian described some of the support she received from the community in the past. She hosts a Parents-As-Reading-Partners (PARP) month in the spring. During this month the library is open two nights a week for parents and students. The Site 1 Librarian reports that the program has been a huge success and that there is always a strong turnout.

During one observation at site 2 (the middle school), a parent and her son were quietly reading a book in the book nook area. The mother asked the Site 2 Librarian if she could check out one of the Christmas books on display, and the Site 2 Librarian agreed.

The school library's role in outreach to students' families and to the larger community appears to be increasing. In some communities, the school library functions as the community's information center.

Library Environment

A seventh category that emerged during the analysis is worthy of mention. The importance of this category—the perception of the library as a warm and welcoming environment for students and teachers at all levels—cannot be underestimated. Here are some examples from this category:

She like invites you in. She does. "Come on in!" It's almost like being over at someone's house. (Suburban high school student).

I come with my class. It is fun and everyone can't wait to go into the library! Everyone loves our school library. I like to use the library. (Urban elementary student)

[Our librarian] is ideal because he has that "yes, I want you to come through." He champions the teachers with writing grants or technology to support what they are doing. And because there is that nice collaborative nature between them, I think that it just makes them want to seek it out and be there that much more. (Rural elementary principal)

The elementary principal described how his librarian has made the library central to the school's mission:

Well, you know part of what I think is special about Jane [the school librarian] is that she just has this high level of commitment to making the library a hub of the building, and—you know—for the children, for the teachers, for the families. And it is not just a place to come and pick out a book. You know it is a place to—it is an incredibly supportive place to come and listen to a story because . . . that is the best place to hear someone read to you. (Rural elementary principal)

Observation notes verify that the Site 2 Librarian provided a comfortable and welcoming library space where both teachers and students were observed visiting, relaxing, reading a book, using the Internet, and having a quiet conversation. For example, a seventh-grade language arts teacher came into the library with his class. While students were picking out their books, the teacher completed a display on a table. The Site 2 Librarian took a picture and offered praise to the teacher for her efforts. Also, a seventh-grade social studies class came skipping into the library. The Site 2 Librarian explained that this was happening because all of the students did their homework, so they got to have a parade. When interviewed, the ESL teacher in the middle school stated, “In terms of the whole school, [the Site 2 Librarian is] always doing things to motivate the students to come into the library, giving them interesting motivation for reading, and for coming in, and for making the library a comfortable place to be.” Another teacher summed it up in this way: “I mean I *love* coming in here. I’ll come in here sometimes just on my free time, you know, just to chat, catch up.” It is clear from our data that the school library is mainly perceived as a place in which teachers, students, and administrators like to spend time.

Summary of Results

The phase III results were consistent with findings in phases I and II. The following statements summarize the data from each of the categories of interest. Using the data from the ten-week observations at two school libraries, we confirmed that school librarians perform a wide range of tasks and activities, such as changing bulbs in projects, teaching students how to use technology to complete assignments, organizing a school-wide mock presidential election, and serving as judge at the school spelling bee.

Learning and Motivation

- Librarians and library programs appear to positively influence students’ research-skills development and motivation for research and inquiry, particularly in the use of information technologies such as databases and the Web.
- Librarians and library programs appear to positively influence students’ reading skills development and test scores.
- Librarians and library programs appear to positively influence the development of students reading interests.

Librarian-Teacher Collaboration

- Librarian collaborations with classroom teachers range from simple resource provision to collaborative lesson planning and delivery.

Technology Use

- Principals often perceive their librarian as the technology leader in the school.
- Librarians have an impact on both teachers’ and students’ technology use.

Inclusion

- Librarians seek ways to provide appropriate resources but do not typically design programs and services to meet the needs of students with special needs.

Administrative Support

- Principals often perceive support of the library and librarian in terms of money for resources and facilities.

Outreach

- School librarians reach out to families and the greater community through a variety of programs and services.

Library Environment

- The library's welcoming, safe, and comfortable environment is a positive influence on library use for both students and teachers.

Implications for Practice

The results of this final phase of the three-phase New York State school library impact study have the following implications for practice in school libraries:

- All stakeholders recognize the profound ways in which school librarians can and do influence students to develop twenty-first-century learning skills and to embrace reading as a lifelong activity. This has not only been documented by the many statewide impact studies and but also by individual principals who recognize the relationship between increases in their students' ELA test scores and the presence and use of their school library. But this is not enough. School librarians must accept the additional role of school-based researchers and evidence-based practitioners, collecting data from their constituents about their library programs and information services and documenting their effects.
- The types of librarian–teacher collaboration that occur in schools vary from lower levels of activities (such as providing appropriate resources for teacher-led lessons and teaching research skills to students who have been given a research assignment) to higher-level collaborations in which librarians and teachers work together to plan, co-teach, and collaboratively evaluate instruction. Librarians should strive toward these higher-level collaborations in which both educators are equal partners in the process.
- Stakeholders, including parents, perceive the school librarian as the technology expert in their school and, as such, the source of support and training for both teachers and students. For teachers, this not only means learning to use a variety of Web 2.0 tools and other critical technologies, but also understanding how to integrate these technologies into their curriculum and lessons.
- Many school librarians lack the knowledge and understanding of what they must do to provide adequate library and information services to students with special needs. Librarians must not only be aware of the meaning of terms like “universal design for learning” and “individualized education programs,” but they also must recognize how those terms affect the quality of their programs and services.

- In phase I, data indicated that principals perceive themselves as strongly supportive of their librarians whereas librarians did not. In phase III, principals defined that support in terms of money, personnel, resources, and space. While these things are of critical importance, librarians need to make sure their administrators realize that the principal's enthusiastic vocal support of such things as flexible scheduling, librarian–teacher collaboration, and IL skills instruction is equally important.
- Some school librarians are reaching out to their communities by providing extended services and special resources to those outside of their usual constituencies, such as homeschoolers, parents and grandparents, and community leaders. The results of these services can have immensely positive consequences—higher visibility of the importance of the library, broader and increased use of library resources and services (demonstrating the need for more funding and support of school libraries), and greater good will in the community.
- The atmosphere and tone that the librarian establishes for his or her library can have a major impact on its use. When the library and librarian are seen as friendly, welcoming, and caring, both students and their teachers will want to spend time there.

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Appendix. Research Instruments

Teacher Focus Group Potocol Questions

School:

Session:

Participants:

Date

Time:

Facilitator:

1. If you could only use one word or phrase to describe your school library, what would it be?
2. Can you tell me how you use your school library?
3. How would you describe your school librarian?
4. Have you ever collaborated with your school librarian?
5. How do your students use the school library?
6. Have you ever seen your school librarian teach a lesson to your students?
7. How would you describe your school librarian's impact on the use of computers in your school?
8. What evidence have you seen that, by coming to the school library, your students have learned how to do research?
9. Can you give an example of how the school library has had an impact on your students' reading skills or enjoyment of reading?
10. Can you give me an example of how the school library has made a difference to you and/or your students?
11. What would you do to improve your school library to make it better for you and your students?
12. Is there anything else you would like us to know about your school library?

Student Focus Group Protocol Questions

School:

Session:

Participants:

Date:

Time:

Facilitator:

1. If you could only use one word or phrase to describe your school library, what would it be?

2. Please tell me how you use your school library.
3. Has your school librarian ever taught you something you didn't know before?
4. Has your school librarian ever helped you to learn to use computers?
5. What is an example of a project or activity you have done in the school library?
6. How has your school librarian helped you to learn research skills?
7. Has the school librarian helped you become a better reader?
8. How could your school library be improved to make it better for you?
9. Is there anything else you would like us to know about your school library?

Parent Focus Group Protocol Questions

School:

Session:

Participants:

Date:

Time:

Facilitator:

1. If you could only use one word or phrase to describe your school library, what would it be?
2. Please tell me how your child or children use their school library.
3. How would you describe your school librarian?
4. Can you give me an example of a time when your child or children used the school library and learned something new?
5. Can you give an example of a way in which your child uses computers in the school library?
6. How do you find out about what is happening in the school library?
7. Can you give me an example of how the school library helped your child learn how to do research?
8. Can you give me an example of how the school library has helped improve your child's reading skills or enjoyment of reading?
9. Is the school library ever open to parents and/or the community? If so, when and for what reason?
10. As a parent, do you feel comfortable coming to the school library?
11. Can you give me an example of a time when you used the school library?
12. Can you give me an example of how the school library has made a difference to your child?
13. What would you do to improve your school library to make it better for your child?
14. Is there anything else you would like us to know about your school library?

Librarian Focus Group Protocol Questions

Session:

Participants:

Date:

Time:

Facilitator:

1. If you could choose only one adjective to describe your school library, what would it be?
2. How would you describe your instructional program for students?

3. In your opinion, what is the most important skill you teach students and why?
4. Could you give a specific example of maybe a project they worked on where you found that to be a very important skill?
5. In what ways have you impacted the way that teachers in your school use technology for instruction?
6. In what ways have you impacted the way that students in your school use technology to learn?
7. Please give examples of the ways in which the school library program has had an impact on the types and amount of leisure reading that your students do, both in and out of school.
8. Please give examples of how you have affected students' curiosity and interest in learning new things.
9. How do you feel your instruction has affected students' enjoyment of the research process?
10. Do you think motivating kids at the elementary level is very different than at the secondary level?
11. What school library services and resources are offered to students' families and/or the community?
12. How do you create a learning community in the school library media center that recognizes and celebrates differences?
13. In what ways does your school library program provide services to students with disabilities?
14. Is there anything else you would like us to know about your school library?

Principal Interview Protocol Questions

School:

Session:

Participants:

Date:

Time:

Facilitator:

1. If you could only use one word or phrase to describe your school library, what would it be?
2. Can you tell me how your teachers use your school library?
3. Please tell me how your students use your school library.
4. How would you describe your school librarian?
5. Can you give an example of a time when your school librarian helped you?
6. Have you ever seen your school librarian teach a lesson to students?
7. How would you describe your school librarian's impact on technology use in your school?
8. What evidence have you seen that, by coming to the school library, your students have learned how to do research?
9. Can you give an example of how the school library has had an impact on students' reading skills or enjoyment of reading?
10. How would you describe your support of the school library?
11. Can you give an example of how the school library has made a difference in your school?

12. If you could, what would you do to improve your school library to make it better for teachers and students?
13. Is there anything else you would like us to know about your school library?



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