

School Libr*: A Review of Published Research Articles from 2019

[Sue C. Kimmel](#), Professor, Department of STEM Education & Professional Studies, Darden College of Education and Professional Studies, Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Virginia

Jennifer Moore, Associate Professor, Director, School Librarian Certification Program, Department of Information Science College of Information, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas

Rebecca J. Morris, Teaching Associate Professor, School of Computing and Information, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Audrey Church, Professor of School Librarianship, Department of Education and Counseling, College of Education, Health, and Human Services, Longwood University, Farmville, Virginia

Ann Dutton Ewbank, Professor, Department of Education, College of Education, Health and Human Development, Montana State University, Bozeman, Montana

Abstract

In 2019 the American Association of School Librarians adopted a strategic plan with three goals, including “AASL advances research that informs school librarian practice.” Members of the 2020 Community of Scholars Committee undertook this study to pilot an annual aggregation and systematic review of research related to school librarian practice. The AASL Strategic Plan (2019) also included five core values: learning; innovation; equity, diversity, and inclusion; intellectual freedom; and collaboration. This review also explores how published research in 2019 reflects the core values. A scoping literature review and the search string “school libr” were employed to provide a broad sweep of potential studies. Fifty-nine studies were identified as “in scope” and were categorized using the AASL core values. Of the 59 articles published, 24 applied to the core value of learning; 14 to innovation; nine to collaboration; three to intellectual freedom; two to equity, diversity, and inclusion; and seven to a category of “other.” Subsequent systematic annual reviews of published research in the field should serve to not only document patterns and trends but also to provide guidance or inspiration to practitioners and to the faculty who prepare practitioners.*

Introduction

In 2019 the American Association of School Librarians adopted a strategic plan guided by the mission “AASL empowers leaders to transform teaching and learning” (AASL, 2019) and five core values: learning; innovation; equity, diversity, and inclusion; intellectual freedom; and collaboration. Three goals were drafted; the third, “AASL advances research that informs school librarian practice,” included objectives to communicate and increase the visibility of research regarding school librarianship. Thus, the strategic plan recognized that advancing research should include raising awareness about that research, not simply facilitating the research itself. Various strategies have been implemented to advance these objectives, including a Research into Practice strand at the AASL Annual Conference and a column in *Knowledge Quest*. In this study we seek to contribute to advancing implementation of the AASL Strategic Plan through a systematic scoping review of published research related to school librarianship from the year 2019. The AASL Strategic Plan (2019) asserts that all aspects of the association’s work reflect the five core values: learning; innovation; equity, diversity, and inclusion; intellectual freedom; and collaboration. Therefore, this review also explores to what degree the school library research published in 2019 reflects these core values.

Background

AASL has undertaken numerous research initiatives over the past decade. The Community of Scholars, a committee appointed by the Educators of School Librarians Section, resulted from initiatives known as CLASS I and CLASS II (AASL, 2014; AASL, 2021b). In 2014 a forum of 50 researchers concerned with research in school librarianship was funded through an Institute of Museum and Library Sciences grant (IMLS grant number LG-62-13-0212-13) to articulate “a national research agenda to investigate causal phenomena in school library instruction, resources, and services” (AASL, 2014, p. 3). Resulting from the forum, a white paper entitled *Causality: School Libraries and Student Success (CLASS)* established three goals. The third goal, to “outline mechanisms by which a community of scholars could be cultivated and nurtured toward furthering the research agenda and its activities” (AASL, 2014, p. 20), sought to sustain the relationships and conversations developed at the forum. A task force was named within AASL to institutionalize this effort. In fall 2018 the AASL Board of Directors approved establishing a Community of Scholars committee within the Educators of School Librarians Section (ESLS) in Policy L-5 (AASL, 2018). The first Community of Scholars committee was named by ESLS in spring 2019, and the charge to the committee was revisited and revised in 2020. The objectives of the committee included “highlight accomplishments in school library research” through activities such as the aggregation of annual research related to school librarianship and publication in *School Library Research* (AASL, 2018). As members of the 2019 Community of Scholars committee, we undertook this study to pilot such an annual aggregation and systematic review. We recognize that the 2022 publication of a review of research dating to 2019 reflects some delay and acknowledge the challenges of conducting an initial study such as this one with researchers across numerous institutions during the early days and continuing era of the COVID-19 pandemic. We hope this first study will serve as a model for a continuing annual review and dissemination of school library research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is a history of compiling reviews of research in the field of school librarianship. Grover and Fowler (1993) searched dissertations and published research for school library studies published between 1987 and 1991, and located 153 studies. Forty percent were questionnaires, close to 17% were literature reviews, and very few of the included studies employed interviews or other qualitative methods. Grover and Fowler did note that the number of literature reviews were a positive development since Fitzgibbons and Callison, who reviewed the school library research from 1927 to 1989, concluded, “existing research does not build on previous research in the field. Needed are reviews of research that synthesize findings and offer recommendations” (as cited in Grover and Fowler, 1993, p. 2). Wirkus (2006) examined research studies published in *School Library Media Research* (1998–2004) and studies located via the ERIC database with publication years 1992–2003. That investigation collected statistics about the methods, topics, and grade level studied. Close to twenty-seven percent of the identified studies employed a literature review as the primary method, following survey (40%) and qualitative methods 38.7%; some studies employed more than one method so the totals exceed 100%. Neuman (2003) visualized school library research as a diamond shape with student learning at the center and the following four questions forming the corners of the diamond:

1. What are the contributions of library media programs to student achievement?
2. What are the roles of the library media specialist in today’s schools?
3. How do students use electronic information resources for learning?
4. What has been the impact of the Information Literacy Skills for Student Learning on library media programs? (p. 504).

Neuman considered these questions as key for the upcoming decade and expanded upon them with a discussion of existing research at the time of the publication.

Johnston and Green (2018) revisited Neuman’s (2003) extended essay to consider research conducted since Neuman’s study. Their analysis reviewed articles published in 15 refereed (peer-reviewed) journals including *School Library Research* and *School Libraries Worldwide* for the period 2004–2014 and analyzed those studies using a modification of the framework used by Neuman to conduct a systematic search and review. Their search located 110 articles, which were then categorized according to the four categories identified by Neuman’s diamond. Nearly half of the studies (52) were categorized as related to the roles of the school librarian. The smallest set of studies, at 13 studies, was related to student achievement. Johnston and Green identified the following areas needing future research: the role of the school librarian in social justice and community activism, technology-enabled learning, the AASL Standards introduced in 2017, and the impact of school library programs on student achievement.

Many reviews compile descriptive statistics regarding the methodologies employed. Morris and Cahill (2017) examined 217 studies published between 2007 and 2015 from two journals: *School Library Research* and *School Libraries Worldwide* to analyze the research methodologies employed. Their examination found numerous case studies and exploratory studies but few directly involving Pre-K–12 students, and no experimental or quasi-experimental studies.

Beesoon and Branch-Mueller (2015) located 98 school library research studies published between 2009 and 2013. Most were in *School Library Research* or *School Libraries Worldwide*. The most common method was survey, followed by interview or content analysis. Fourteen categories for classifying LIS research were identified, ranging from methodology to information literacy and collection management. Ford (2020) conducted a review of studies in library and information science (LIS) employing one particular methodology: narrative inquiry. She found very few studies; two were about school librarianship, and another three related to information literacy among students. Other researchers have chosen to review the research for a particular topic of interest, such as Soulen et al. (2020) who focused on resilience. Buchanan et al. (2016) shared a review of the literature about inquiry-based learning in K–12, drawing from the extensive literature used in Buchanan’s dissertation.

Other library researchers have conducted systematic literature reviews of research in other fields that might inform librarianship. One of these is the CLASS II research, focused on causal research published in the field of education. The CLASS II research sought to answer the question, “What causal relationships between school-based malleable factors and student learning are present in published research?” Two publications summarized the CLASS II findings using the Shared Foundations of the AASL Standards as a framework (AASL 2021a; AASL 2021b). Haycock and Stenstrom (2016) examined the research in public administration, social psychology, and economics, along with research in librarianship. Haycock and Stenstrom sought to identify effective advocacy strategies in these other fields with applications for school librarians.

Most systematic reviews follow a similar approach of reading and classifying abstracts and full articles, an approach that requires human judgment and interpretation. Recently Joo and Cahill (2018) used a novel approach in the field of school library research employing a text analysis to look at word frequency and patterns. Those researchers used text-mining software to explore titles and abstracts in *School Library Research* and *School Libraries Worldwide* published between 2006 and 2015. Twenty topics emerged, including library programming, information literacy, professional roles, and technology leadership. Joo and Cahill’s analysis included trends over the period of years on which they focused, and they identified professionalism, advocacy, and information specialist as “hot” recent topics and reading motivation, information literacy, and principal support as declining or “cold” topics.

Divisions of ALA, including the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA), the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), and the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) have also conducted scans or reviews of current research. Between 1995 and 2012 YALSA’s Research Committee published four selected bibliographies of research related to young adult services. These bibliographies included master’s and doctoral theses as well as published research articles (YALSA, 2021). Both YALSA (2017) and ALSC (2019) have published research agendas with priority areas for research related to children and youth. ACRL published *The Value of Academic Libraries: A Comprehensive Research Review and Report* (2010) that provided a wide-ranging review and summary of research related to the value of libraries within the context of colleges and universities. A summary of relevant school library research was also included in that wide-ranging ACRL report.

Core Values

According to the American Library Association (2019), “The foundation of modern librarianship rests on an essential set of core values that define, inform, and guide our professional practice.” These values are expressed in numerous documents from the Association such as in the *Library Bill of Rights*. In 2004 ALA adopted a set of twelve core values: access, confidentiality/privacy, democracy, diversity, education and lifelong learning, intellectual freedom, preservation, the public good, professionalism, service, social responsibility, and sustainability. These were identified along with relevant policies and statements (ALA, 2019).

Writing upon the 65th anniversary of the American Association of School Librarians, former AASL President (2012–2013) Susan Ballard described core values as an “organizational compass” for AASL, one which “underlie(s) our communications and interactions with one another and with our various constituencies” (2016, p. 28). In addition to reflecting upon how the 12 core values of parent organization ALA hold historical significance and value for future directions, Ballard identified additional core values particularly influential to work of librarians working with young people. These values are instructional responsibilities, collaboration, design of meaningful and relevant learning opportunities, continuous improvement through evaluation, standards-based practice, integration of new resources and technologies, advocacy, leadership, and research and evidence-based practice (2016, p. 29).

AASL’s current five core values—learning; innovation; equity, diversity, and inclusion; intellectual freedom; and collaboration—were identified in early 2019 as part of the strategic planning process that began at ALA Midwinter Meeting. Various invited AASL leaders worked with AASL Board members to unpack survey and phone-interview results, identifying priorities that became goals and objectives in the strategic plan. During the process, the AASL Board and the AASL Executive Committee worked to identify core values that transcended goals and objectives and were considered integral not only to what and how AASL operates but also to the field and were at the core of what school librarianship stands for (S. K. Norton, personal communication, October 21, 2021).

Moreillon (2021b) in a blog post about her (then) forthcoming book stated that the four core values of equity, diversity, inclusion, and intellectual freedom offer a combination unique to school librarians who, as the sole library professional in a building, may be the one person holding this specific combination of values. Core values, she defined as “who we are” and “evidenced in what we do.” Moreillon’s book, *Core Values in School Librarianship* (2021a) applies these values to today’s technological and social contexts and inequities.

Other ALA divisions have also identified core values in their strategic plans. The new ALA division of Core identifies these core values: transparency, diversity, inclusion, knowledge sharing, collaboration, sustainability, and innovation (CORE, n.d.). The other youth divisions have identified core values with interesting convergences and divergences as depicted in Figure 1. ALSC (2020) and YALSA (2015) share similar core values with AASL: collaboration, inclusiveness, and innovation. To these, both ALSC and YALSA add values of excellence and integrity.

Figure 1
Overlapping and Distinct Core Values for AASL, ALSC, and YALSA.



METHODS

This pilot study employs a scoping literature review to provide a broad look at all published research related to school libraries in a calendar year. Literature reviews may be classified as traditional or systematic. The traditional literature review is often included in a research paper and is constructed to build a framework and to situate the study within existing scholarship and theory. More-systematic literature reviews may include meta-analyses of quantitative studies or other systematic syntheses of evidence related to a topic. A scoping review is a third type of review used in the health sciences (Karam et al., 2021) and by some in the information field (Pionke & Graham, 2021; Stapleton et al. 2020). Arksey and O'Malley (2005) have contrasted the scoping review with other forms of systematic review and noted that the scoping review addresses a broad topic rather than a specific research question, is inclusive of multiple methodologies, and is not focused on evaluating the strength of individual studies or evidence. Arksey and O'Malley identified four common reasons to undertake a scoping review, of which two are most relevant here: to summarize and identify research findings and to identify gaps in existing literature (p. 21). This study applied the following five steps of a scoping study as identified by Arksey and O'Malley:

- (1) identifying the research question,
- (2) identifying the relevant studies,
- (3) study selection,
- (4) charting the studies, and
- (5) collating, summarizing and reporting the results. (2005, p. 22)

The following subsections detail our application of each step.

Step One: Identifying the Research Question

The research question for this study developed from the charge given to the Community of Scholars Committee to engage in activities such as an aggregation of annual research in school librarianship. Thus, as members of the Community of Scholars Committee, formed in 2020, we decided to start with the most recently completed year of 2019 publication. The following research question was developed:

What research related to school librarianship was published in 2019?

This broad question bounded the inquiry to published studies and research, and to a specific publication year: 2019. The topic of interest, research related to school librarianship, allowed the inclusion of multidisciplinary research. No geographic bounds were established.

Step Two: Identifying the Relevant Studies

To identify potentially relevant studies, two members of our research team conducted independent searches using their respective university libraries' databases, focusing on seven databases specific to LIS and education. One researcher searched six databases, while the other searched five databases, with an overlap of four databases (Table 1).

Table 1
Reference databases searched by each Researcher

Researcher A	Researcher B
Library Literature	
Library and Information Science Abstracts	Library and Information Science Abstracts
ERIC	ERIC
Education Source	Education Source
Education Research Complete	
Academic Search Complete	Academic Search Complete
	Library & Information Science Source

To ensure maximum return for the searches, each database was searched independently from the others. In a scoping review, the aim is to scope the field, being as broad as possible. To this end, the search string "school libr*" was used without any additional search terms. Criteria also included:

- year of publication: 2019
- full text availability

- English language
- articles (to eliminate books and other media)
- academic journals, and
- peer-reviewed.

Titles and abstracts were then reviewed for key words indicating the article was a research study. These included terms such as “study,” “research,” “methodology,” “survey,” “interview,” and “findings.” This study followed criteria for inclusion developed for the scholarly refereed research journal of the American Association of School Librarians, *School Library Research (SLR)*. Articles selected for inclusion in that journal must be “based on original research, an innovative conceptual framework, or a substantial literature review that opens new areas of inquiry and investigation” and represent “high-quality original research concerning the management, implementation, and evaluation of school libraries” (AASL, n.d.).

Step Three: Study Selection and Preliminary Coding

After removing duplicate records, the researchers reviewed abstracts to identify all items that potentially met the criteria for inclusion. During the review, studies were examined for key terms such as “method,” “survey,” “findings,” and/or “interviews” and then all that appeared to be reports of scholarly research (meaning not anecdotal experiences or how-to guides) were tagged for further examination. Citations from the two individual searches were placed in a spreadsheet. Duplicates were eliminated, resulting in a set of 84 articles for this stage of the work.

Full texts of these articles were located and divided among the five members of the Community of Scholars team such that each article was reviewed in full by at least two readers. Readers were charged with (1) determining if the study met the criteria for inclusion and (2) preliminary assignment of relevant core values. At this point, one criterion for inclusion was whether the article had a methodology and findings, which in several cases eliminated practitioner reports, in-house surveys, or broad evaluative reports of specific programs. Systematic literature reviews or methodological papers were not automatically excluded.

In addition to *SLR* criteria previously noted, further considerations for inclusion in the final data set were parameters expressed in *SLR*’s manuscript policy.

The purpose of *School Library Research (SLR)* is “to promote and publish high-quality original research concerning the management, implementation, and evaluation of school libraries. The journal will also emphasize research on instructional theory, teaching methods, and critical issues relevant to school libraries and school librarians. . . . The primary audience for *SLR* includes school librarians, academic scholars, instructors of pre-service school librarians, and other educators who strive to provide a constructive learning environment for all students and teachers Manuscripts may be based on original research, an innovative conceptual framework, or a substantial literature review that opens new areas of inquiry and investigation.” (AASL, n.d.)

These characteristics served as reference when discerning whether articles were “related to school librarianship,” as set forth in this study’s research question.

Looking at methodological precedent, Levac et al. (2010) expanded Arksey and O'Malley's 2005 framework for scoping studies by suggesting that the selection of studies be an iterative, team process. According to this method, the research team meets multiple times to review the inclusion/exclusion criteria. Further, according to Levac's approach, each abstract—and eventually each full study—is reviewed by at least two researchers who meet to resolve any disagreements. The current study followed this iterative team review process and much discussion throughout each stage concerned whether articles fell within the scope of the study. An example of a study that was determined to fall outside of the scope of the study was Capotosto (2019), an article concerning an intervention conducted by an English Language Arts teacher to scaffold student selection of and motivation to read books provided for summer reading. At one point, the teacher engaged students in a speed-dating-like activity held in the school library. After much discussion, the researchers agreed the school library was not a key component of the study but simply a location chosen for one of the activities. The books were not referred to as library books, and the school librarian was not mentioned. While literacy research is relevant for school librarianship, this study did not fall within the range of research related to school library practice.

Step Four: Charting the Studies

From the identification through the selection steps, studies were charted in the shared Google spreadsheet created in Step Three. Data regarding bibliographic components such as author, article title, and journal title were extracted, and data such as type of study, age of participants in the study, geographic location of the study participants (not of the researchers or authors) were identified and charted in the spreadsheet. Descriptive statistics were compiled from these data. The spreadsheet served as an organizational tool throughout the coding process as preliminary and final codes were tracked.

Step Five: Summarizing the Results

As a means of summarizing the content of the studies, a deductive coding frame was applied using the core values from the AASL Strategic Plan to categorize what each study was “most about.” Codes were deductively assigned to each study using the AASL core values of learning; innovation; equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI); intellectual freedom; and collaboration. We convened multiple times beginning with Step Three to discuss and develop a shared understanding of the criteria for inclusion as well as the meaning and application of the core values. Disagreements about inclusion were discussed and coded by a third researcher if needed. Reasons for exclusion included articles that mentioned school libraries but were not about school libraries, articles missing a methodology, or articles reporting on practice rather than empirical research. Of the original 84 studies identified in Step Three, 59 were determined to be in scope. Full citations for each article are listed in Appendix B.

We consulted numerous documents from the American Library Association such as the “Library Bill of Rights” and the *National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries* to initiate discussions about how to assign the core values. An additional category of “other” was also created to code studies that did not fit any code. Multiple coding

meetings were held to discuss the meaning of the core values as represented in the studies, and scope notes were included in meeting minutes. The core values were not always an easy frame to use to categorize research. Early on we wondered where topics of frequent concern such as reading, leadership, collections, or technology belonged. In multiple instances, team members reviewed articles several times and engaged in multiple discussions to carefully identify and categorize what each study was “most about.” The core values—often like the research studies themselves—were rarely about a single idea or concept. Rather, multiple values tended to be woven together, such as “equity, diversity, and inclusion” along with “learning” in a study about students’ equity of access to information for school needs, college and career readiness, and reading (Oyediran-Tidings et al., 2019). Innovation included but was not limited to technology (for example, a study about genrefication by Moeller and Becnel), and technology was part of studies about student learning (for example, Baker and Lastrapes’s study of a digital writing tool). Articles that did not fit any core value were assigned to the category of “other” and further analyzed. A deeper dive into all the articles revealed potential subcategories of the core values, such as the varying explorations of reading and literacies that were assigned the core value “learning.” These sub-themes are included in the syntheses below.

In a final phase, teams of two or three of the authors named on this paper were assigned to each of the core values. These teams re-examined every study within the code looking for patterns or sub-themes and developing a synthesis of the findings related to each core value code. One team was also assigned to examine those studies assigned to the code of “other” to determine any patterns in those studies. We then reconvened as a full team of authors to talk through the syntheses for each core value code including “other” to develop the findings.

Findings

This presentation of findings begins with descriptive statistics about the journal articles: disciplines of the articles, locations of research, and the general methods used. This research did not attempt to evaluate the methodologies employed or the study findings. According to Arksey and O’Malley, “whilst a scoping study will need some analytic framework, or thematic construction in order to present a narrative account of existing literature, there is no attempt made to present a view regarding the ‘weight’ of evidence in relation to particular interventions or policies” (2005, p. 27). The study goal was to “scope” out the kinds of research conducted in a given year, 2019, as it might apply to the core values expressed by the field.

The 59 articles were published in 35 journals (Appendix A) in multiple disciplines. The journals were categorized into three general fields of study:

- Library and information science/studies (19 journals)
- Education (early childhood through higher education, including varying content-area specialties such as science and math) (13 journals)
- Literacy (3 journals)

As to be expected, two of the three most-frequent journals were those devoted entirely to school librarianship: *School Libraries Worldwide* (11 articles) and *School Library Research* (5 articles).

A third journal, the *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*, also had five articles. Although only articles available in English were considered to be within the scope of the study, multiple studies were conducted outside the United States. The predominance of research locations in the United States is to be expected because one criterion was that the articles must be available in English. Table 2 lists the studies' locations and their frequency.

Table 2
Study Locations and Frequencies

Countries with 3 or More Studies	Countries with 2 Studies	Countries with 1 Study
United States: 31 Australia: 6 China: 3	Bangladesh: 2 India: 2 South Africa: 2 Sweden: 2	Botswana: 1 Canada: 1 Hungary: 1 Ireland: 1 Kenya: 1 Multiple (Hong Kong, Taiwan, New Zealand, Australia and Japan): 1 Philippines: 1 Russia: 1 Singapore: 1 Spain: 1 Turkey: 1

Methods reported in the studies varied. Most frequently (25 studies) the researchers used qualitative methods, such as case studies, interviews, and content analysis. Twenty studies used mixed methods; ten studies relied on quantitative research, and four were conceptual.

Core Values

The 59 studies were distributed among the core values as shown in Table 3. The core value of learning was assigned to the greatest number of studies while the core value of equity, diversity, and inclusion was represented by only two studies. Seven studies were coded as “other.” Below we synthesize the findings for each core value code and “other.”

Table 3
Core Values Frequencies

Learning	Innovation	Collaboration	Intellectual Freedom	Equity, Diversity, Inclusion	Other
24	14	9	3	2	7

Learning

The largest set of 24 studies applied to the core value of learning. Of these, 11 concerned information literacy, six were about reading, four were about instructional media, and three addressed methodological issues related to research concerned with learning outcomes (Kimmel et al.; Pasquini & Schultz-Jones; Stefl-Mabry et al.).

Information Literacy. Standards such as the AASL Standards and the ACRL Framework for Information Literacy in Higher Education were featured in many of the studies related to information literacy. Burns et al. compared the two and found a lack of shared vocabulary. Other studies also concerned the pipeline from kindergarten through college, finding disruptions as students moved from one level to the next (Correll; Diekema et al.; Laretive). Another issue was the call for collaboration between librarians and teachers with authors noting teacher resistance (Correll; Diekema et al.), indifference (Dipetso & Moahi), or misunderstandings about whether the teacher or the librarian was responsible for teaching (Phillips & Lee). Garrison et al. reported on student perceptions of information literacy instruction taught collaboratively with a teacher and librarian. A difficulty collaborating with teachers may have been uncovered by Shannon et al. in their survey of teachers in Northern Ireland. Many teachers reported not knowing much about information literacy, and those who were familiar did not learn about it in their teacher preparation but rather through professional workshops. Overall, the teachers reported they did not teach information literacy, although 22% did say it should be taught by both teachers and librarians. Some authors dealt with interesting subsets of information literacy, including digital citizenship (Phillips & Lee), news literacy (Farmer), and philosophical approaches to information literacy in story times (Lenart & Lewis). New technologies also require new literacies. Ragan et al. attended particularly to explicit instruction in the meta-skills and features available with e-reading.

Reading: Reading achievement is often associated with access to school libraries. Huang et al.'s large study in Hong Kong reaffirmed the positive impact of access to reading materials in the home, school, and public library as significant predictors of reading attainment in fourth-grade students. Their study found that classroom libraries were not significant. Merga and also Mahwasane et al. looked at the kinds of practices librarians reported to support readers. Both studies found that school librarians were involved with remediation and other kinds of support

for struggling readers. Other studies looked at more-specific aspects of reading. Lo et al.'s study examined school librarian's perceptions of comic books and an overall perception that they were useful for motivating readers rather than as an educational resource. The Pappu and Sawhney report regarding a library program considered innovative in India illuminated the privileges taken for granted elsewhere in the world, including being able to browse and borrow library books along with access to a library space and a librarian. Beyond these basics, Merga and Mason explored factors needed to build a culture of reading within a school.

Instructional Media. Instructional media or the application of technology were addressed in four additional studies. In a study conducted in the Philippines, Capuno et al. looked at utilization of the library by teachers of mathematics as a component of instructional media and found teachers of third-grade students made little use of the library for mathematics instruction. Students using a digital writing tool under the collaborative instruction of a teacher and librarian in a study by Baker and Lastrapes had more time for writing, were more motivated, wrote more, and produced writing of better quality when their writing was compared before and after the intervention. Two studies dealt with reading (Combrinck & Mtsatse; Council et al.) and were deemed of interest to school library researchers. Combrinck and Mtsatse was the larger study, comparing student achievement reading on paper or reading digitally and found no statistical difference in literacy achievement between reading online or on paper. Instead, other factors were identified as significant including a measure of the school literacy environment that addressed whether or not the school had a library. In the Council et al. study a paraprofessional serving in the position of school librarian was the subject of a study regarding whether trained paraprofessionals could implement with fidelity computer-assisted instruction to second-grade at-risk readers. Students enrolled in the study did show academic gains, but one finding was that the person serving as librarian was available only about 50% of the time due to other duties.

Innovation

Innovation was a challenging category. Does innovation refer to the provision of an innovation such as a service, resource, or other opportunity? During the analysis, it also became apparent that "innovation" may be a relative term. What constitutes innovation in one location may not be so in another location. Fourteen studies were classified as innovation. Three of us examined these articles and identified multiple sub-themes: social media (three articles), changing roles and perceptions of school librarians and libraries (five articles), genrefication (two articles), digital resources (two articles), professional growth (one article), and perceptions about reading behaviors (one article).

Social Media. The three studies categorized within the sub-theme of social media were all conducted outside of the United States: Hong Kong (Choi et al.), India (Patra), and Spain (Faba-Pérez & Infante-Fernández). Using mixed methods, Choi et al. investigated school librarians' use of Yahoo! Groups for professional networking and found the functions of conversation, polls, and files were used most frequently. Some participants foresaw a move to more mobile-friendly platforms such as Facebook or Google. Patra analyzed the Twitter activity of librarians from a variety of library types, including school libraries, finding that school librarians tweeted the most. Comparing the content of the tweets as well as the intended emotions perceived to be

expressed in the tweets, the study found that “book” was the most frequently used term in the school librarians’ tweets and, overall, the tweets were positive in tone. Faba-Pérez and Infante-Fernández explored whether school librarians in a region in Spain use social media and found that 65% use at least one of the platforms: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest, Google+, or Instagram. Facebook and Twitter were used most frequently, and the content of posts was most often to foster engagement in reading and writing.

Roles and/or Perceptions of School Librarians. Five articles addressed the changing roles and/or perceptions of school librarians related to updating technology and facilities. Phillips et al. presented a conceptual framework, the Innovative Library Activities Framework, whereby they discussed the school librarian’s “sense of librarianship, resource community, and conception of library space” (p. 21), which may be applied in practice to help librarians build and evaluate programming and facilities. Moorefield-Lang’s content analysis of interviews with six librarians engaged in planning for a second makerspace revealed themes of more-focused planning in second makerspaces, intention that came from their previous experiences in makerspaces, importance of recognizing the community as collaborative partner, finding success in patrons’ outcomes and the makerspace overall, and common challenges such as storage, budget, and facilitating self-directed learning. Hossain et al. investigated Bangladesh’s non-government secondary school librarians’ levels of expertise with information communication technology (ICT) and the availability of facilities and services in their school libraries. More than half the 82 responding school libraries reported not having technology equipment such as computers for catalog searching and Internet access, copiers, or printers. A majority of the 62 assistant librarians in the study indicated they had knowledge and skills for teaching digital literacy and online safety, with fewer reporting advanced skills in blog or website development, software, and multimedia presentations. Alver investigated students’ and teachers’ perceptions of the recently established Enriched Libraries, or Z-Libraries, in Turkey to determine if additions and improvements in access to facilities, technology, and literature improved students’ and teachers’ perceptions of the school library. Among the findings were that the teachers believed that the design of the new libraries drew more students, that students use the library to read and research, and that the resources were adequate, current, and more technologically equipped than previous school library iterations. Yi et al. surveyed school librarians in Kentucky regarding technology practices and competencies as aligned with the *ALA/AASL Standards for Initial Preparation of School Librarians* and also the topics tested in the Library Media Specialist Praxis examination. They found that activities related to Preparation Standard 2, Literacy and Reading, showed the most-frequent technology integration of the five standards, although implementation across the standards was fairly even. Among the study’s findings regarding technology competencies in seven areas was that school librarians in Kentucky had relatively high competency levels across the areas (including computer equipment, phone-based tasks, display tools, and wifi), with the lowest competency levels being communication equipment (such as servers and routers) and audio/video equipment (such as satellite receivers and cable boxes).

Digital Resources. Related to the changing roles and perceptions of school librarians but within the context of digital resources, Baker et al. examined school librarians as change agents when adopting new technologies, in this case open educational resources (OERs). They found that while only 40% of the schools in the study reported using their librarians in the creation and utilization of OERs, many of the survey respondents acknowledged that librarians’ skillsets

(knowledge of databases and other resources, copyright, etc.) would be very useful in the process. Dawkins and Gavigan also addressed digital resources in the form of e-books, investigating e-book collections and usage in high school libraries. In the eight high school libraries in the study, e-book percentage of collection exceeded e-book percentage of circulation, and Dawkins and Gavigan concluded that usage is heavily impacted by purchasing practice and marketing strategies.

Genrefication. The two studies focusing on genrefication included three groups: school librarians, students, and teachers. Moeller and Becnel interviewed school librarians to determine the factors motivating school librarians to genrefy their fiction collections, as well as the challenges and benefits associated with this task. Reasons participants cited for genrefying their collections were decreasing time students need to select library books, providing ease of access so students would be motivated to continue reading topics they enjoy, and requests from coworkers to genrefy. Benefits for students included increased speed in finding books, ease of access to favorite genres, and empowering students to find books with minimal or no assistance, and benefits for the participants included improved interactions with students. Participants expressed challenges as well, noting the time required to identify each book's genre, to physically rearrange the collection, and to update the records in the circulation system. Taylor, Hora, and Krueger observed the browsing behaviors of sixth-grade students in a genre-fied collection and interviewed both students and teachers about genrefication. While students did initiate browsing for a specific genre, they browsed multiple genres and they were more likely to check out a book if they browsed with a peer. Teachers appreciated that the organization by genre supported readers and reinforced instruction about literary genre.

Professional Growth: Boulden et al. developed a professional development initiative teaching school librarians how to engage in action research for the purpose of professional growth. As a result of participating in this initiative, the school librarians experienced improved collaboration with stakeholder groups, received additional support for their library programs, utilized data to improve the library program and their practice, and engaged in self-reflection.

Perceptions of Reading Behaviors. Nichols and Loh compared online stock photos of youth reading to actual reading behaviors in multiple secondary school libraries in Singapore. Those researchers found that, although the stock photos display reading as an isolated activity, observations revealed reading to be a more social activity.

Collaboration

Nine articles applied the core value of collaboration. Six articles explored relationships, two articles explored perceptions, and one explored teaching effectiveness.

Relationships: Focused on developing meaningful collaborative relationships in an online context, Kimmel et al. integrated a community of practice model in an online, graduate-level school librarian preparation program finding the cohort model—with opportunities to meet face to face—was important in developing trust and a sense of mutual enterprise. Rinio worked with secondary school librarians, using social network analysis to illustrate existing relationships with colleagues on their respective campuses. Participants found that mapping social relationships

allowed them to visualize and target collaborative relationships. Two articles by Crary surveyed secondary education teachers about collaborating with school librarians on information literacy lessons; many reported a division of instruction rather than true collaboration with assessment the job of teachers. Teachers were open to change, but they identified a lack of time as a major impediment. Merga interviewed secondary school librarians about their collaborative experiences with teachers, and found that support for collaboration that included mitigating of constraints such as lack of time and creating a norm for teacher/school librarian collaboration were important to successful relationships. In their ethnographic study of school librarians in Russia, Green and Johnston found practices and challenges related to collaboration, co-teaching, and information technology were similar to those identified by school librarians worldwide. Relationships with teachers and with public librarians were important factors in successful collaborations.

Perceptions of School Librarians: The two articles about perception focused on both self-perception and external perception of the school librarian. Through interviews with secondary school librarians, Centerwall explored how participants performed their identities as librarians, particularly when engaging in collaborative relationships with teachers. Analysis of narratives demonstrated that librarians used discourse and their competencies to perform their identities, expressed as six tasks: “to express, to position, to make visible, to remind, to inform and to explain” (p. 147). Lewis explored school librarians and instructional coaches as instructional leaders in the context of the perceptions of administrators, including why their administrators appointed one or the other to serve as instructional leaders, the collaborative relationships administrators do or do not have with each, and how administrators evaluate each group’s instructional leadership effectiveness. The results showed that administrators’ previous experience with librarians and instructional coaches and cooperative work relationships led them to view instructional coaches “as extensions of themselves as instructional leaders” and to value them more than teacher librarians, who were seen as resources.

Teaching Effectiveness. Related to the theme of teaching effectiveness, Thompson et al. addressed teaching effectiveness within the context of STEM, studying collaborative teaching involving a university professor teaching pre-service science teachers and one teaching pre-service school librarians. Findings from the study not only contributed to interdisciplinary educational theory for science education and library science education but also attributed high student achievement of learning outcomes to the intensity of effort of the collaborative professors.

Intellectual Freedom

Three articles were coded as being primarily about intellectual freedom. Two articles explored the lack of alignment between school librarians’ attitudes and behavior about information restriction and the profession’s tenets, while one article discussed notable court cases pertaining to censorship in school libraries.

Lack of Alignment between Attitudes and Behavior. Kimmel and Hartsfield analyzed online discussions about censorship among pre-service teachers and pre-service school librarians

enrolled in a graduate-level children’s literature course, finding both groups have a propensity to preemptively censor a book recently identified as controversial. Using case study research involving one school librarian and three students, Rumberger found the librarian censored access to information by discouraging students to select texts she deemed inappropriate, either based on level or her perceptions of literary quality. The librarian also censored by depriving students of time to select books if the students did not follow behavior rules.

Court Cases: Waggoner provided a thorough literature review discussing *Island Trees School District v. Pico* and related court cases related to intellectual freedom.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Two studies were identified for the category of equity, diversity, and inclusion. One was set in the United States and the other in South Africa. Both addressed inequities in access to information, particularly in rural settings. Adkins et al. focused on how school libraries might support mental-health literacy in rural areas where access to libraries is limited. School librarians were aware of the needs and willing to provide access to resources and a safe space for students. They identified their need for training and knowledge about roles and when to make referrals. Oyedira-Tidings et al. identified the problem of the public library being far from learners’ homes while the school library offered limited hours in rural areas. Guidance and counseling were also identified as areas of high need in these rural schools, affirming the need for mental health literacy identified by Adkins et al.

Other

The researchers reviewed and agreed that seven studies published in 2019 did not fit any of the core values. Rather than force these into a core-value category, they were classified as “other.”

Professional Roles and Visibility. Several of these studies addressed the professional roles and visibility of the school librarian. Centerwall and Nolin applied infrastructure theory to an analysis of interviews with school librarians in Sweden and concluded that the institution of the school library along with the materials and media in the school library were more visible than the school library professional or their professional competencies. Merga found similar themes in her interviews with school librarians in Australia who felt their work was invisible and their positions were at risk because they were outside the classroom. Whitton examined job advertisements for school librarians and found that very few directly aligned with the AASL Standards. On further analysis of the roles identified in the AASL Standards, teacher, instructional partner, and program administration were most aligned with the qualifications sought in job ads. Leader and information specialist were aligned with fewer than 25% of the ads.

Perceptions of Standards: Zhang et al. examined perceptions of the IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions) Standards held by school librarians in China. Participants perceived most standards were relevant. However, some standards were viewed as insensitive to the political context in China.

Cataloging: Engelson looked particularly at the professional practice of cataloging by school librarians in the U.S. and found that 85% reported they were responsible for the majority of cataloging and classification yet only 75% reported some training was part of their graduate education.

National State of School Libraries and Librarians: Two studies concerned the national state of school libraries and librarians: one in the United States (Farmer & Safer) and one in Bangladesh (Hossain). In Bangladesh, Hossain found minimal services and facilities, and little engagement of school librarians with teaching and learning. Farmer and Safer used School Libraries Count data and found declining spending by school libraries in the period of 2009–2012. Most schools did have a school librarian and/or a paraprofessional, and overall these people reported spending about 40% of their day in instruction.

DISCUSSION

As we look in the rearview mirror, 2019 was very different from the three years that followed, a year in which we were unaware of what disruptions the future would hold: Covid-19, a contested election, and growing social unrest and division. In the final year of the decade, AASL published a new strategic plan that embraced five core values and three goals related to leadership, policy, and research (AASL 2019). Among the actions in 2019 was the creation of a Community of Scholars committee within the Educators of School Librarians Section in AASL. Among the charges to the committee was to provide an annual aggregation of research related to school libraries. The Community of Scholars committee chose the publication year of 2019 to pilot a methodology and attempt to capture a year of research. In this discussion we share what we learned about the core values in the process and what we accomplished with the method.

“School Libr*”

The decision to use a simple search string in the databases from two universities cast a wide net for any article with a publication date of 2019 that included the phrase “school library,” “school librarian,” “school librarianship,” or variants. This search string resulted in some false hits such as articles about a law or medical “school library,” for example, but also meant that we examined all articles in the database that addressed school libraries and were peer-reviewed articles. By omitting the term “research” from the search string, we hoped to capture case studies, interviews, or surveys that might have omitted the term “research” in any searchable fields.

Unlike other systematic reviews, this search strategy did not limit the findings to particular journals or nationalities. Close to 50% of the identified studies reported on research conducted outside the United States. The global pandemic has demonstrated how interconnected and interdependent we are, and attention to the status of school libraries and school librarians around the world is an important contribution of a study employing this strategy.

Publication Venues

An anecdotal refrain in conferences and professional gatherings of school library-focused researchers is the need to publish outside of familiar venues to introduce our work into new and related disciplines, uncover common interests, share opportunities for applied research in practice, and reap other potential benefits. The findings of the current study may suggest possibilities for publication of school library research in terms of disciplines, journals, and researchers for whom school library research may be relevant and of interest. While *School Library Research* and *School Libraries Worldwide* were the most frequent sources, school library research was also published in other journals in librarianship such as the *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*, *Qualitative and Quantitative Methods in Libraries*, and *Library Quarterly*. Journals outside of the field such as the *Gender and Behaviour*, the *Journal of Teacher Education*, and the *Research in Higher Education Journal* were also sources of research related to school librarianship. Researchers might consult the full list in Appendix A for potential publication. As journal metrics are important to the tenure and promotion aspirations of many school library scholars, a future analysis might examine the rankings of journals where school library research is published.

Core Values

The core values of AASL were not derived from empirical research but from stakeholder input and multiple discussions within the AASL Board of Directors. The strategic plan asserts that all aspects of the Association's work should reflect these values. In the 2019 published research about school libraries, this study found that each of the core values had at least some representation. Learning was the largest set of studies with 24, or 42.1% of the studies. Information literacy and, to a lesser degree, reading were primary focuses within this set. Yet learning also permeated many of the other categories. For example, learning might occur as the result of collaboration or of implementing an innovation. Joo and Cahill (2018) found information literacy to be a "cold" or declining topic in their review of research over a period of years, yet 2019 may reflect a resurgent interest in the topic both in the category of learning and of innovation. Previous systematic reviews have called for further investigation of standards (Johnston & Green, 2018; Neuman, 2003). Standards, both the AASL 2007 and 2018 sets, were addressed in the information literacy discussions along with the ACRL standards. Standards were also included in studies found in the innovation category. The IFLA standards were a topic addressed in a study classified as "other" for its more-general concern with awareness of the standards rather than their application in practice.

Reading was a consistent theme among the studies in the data set, among them articles pertaining to e-book collections, digital reading preferences and behaviors, and librarians' innovations, opportunities, and activities involving student reading. Because reading is not represented by a specific core value, studies centering reading were assigned a code reflective of other aspects of the research, such as "learning" or "collaboration."

Neuman (2003) identified the roles of a school librarian as one corner of the "diamond" needing additional research, and Johnston and Green (2018) found these to be the topic most represented

in their review. Of interest in this study is that many studies regarding roles were classified as innovation because they dealt with the changing roles of the school librarian related to technology. Many of the studies regarding collaboration naturally addressed the collaborative role as well as the role of leader. Several of the studies in the “other” category identified the problem of the visibility of the role of school librarian. Whitton’s (2019) analysis of job advertisements for school librarians identified leader and information specialist as the roles least aligned with the qualifications specified in the ads.

The core value of collaboration and the collaborative role of the school librarian appeared in numerous studies related to teacher-librarian collaboration. Several of the studies concerning student learning also probed teacher perceptions or knowledge related to working with the school librarian. Unfortunately, many of these studies uncovered misunderstanding, indifference, or resistance to working with the school librarian to teach information literacy (Correll, 2019; Diekema et al., 2019; Dipetso & Moahi, 2019; Phillips & Lee, 2019; Shannon et al., 2019) or to utilize the library’s multimedia resources (Capuno et al., 2019). Two studies in the learning category focused on student learning in lessons collaboratively taught by the school librarian and a teacher (Baker & Lastrapes, 2019; Garrison et al., 2019). These studies demonstrated the challenge of deductively assigning the core values to the studies. When a study was most about the learning outcomes for students, we coded it as “learning,” but when the emphasis was on the work of collaboration and collaborative relationships, the study was coded as “collaboration.”

As we noted previously, innovation was a challenging category because of the relative nature of the term. Almost 50% of the studies (six of 13) coded as innovation were international. These included technologies taken for granted elsewhere such as Twitter or Yahoo groups. ICT and libraries enriched with media access were studied as innovations in some settings. Similar to the collaboration discussion, if a technology was included in a study examining student learning, it was categorized as learning. A frequent topic of professional development in Pre-K–12 education is the adoption of technological or pedagogical innovation.

As mentioned previously, Moreillon’s (2021) book addressing core values in school librarianship focused on equity, diversity, inclusion, and on intellectual freedom as those values that set library professionals apart from other educators. Yet these two core values were the least represented in the 2019 research. Three studies were coded as related to intellectual freedom, and two of these explored the willingness of school librarians to enact censorship. Of the studies examined, only two were coded EDI. With increased attention to issues of racial injustice and violence, social justice, and equitable opportunities for learning—and school librarians’ efforts to address these and other issues toward equity, diversity, and inclusion within their school communities—such a small number of studies was unexpected. With inequities in educational technology, learning settings, and access exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic in the time since the 2019 publication of these works, EDI seems to be an area primed for further work by researchers interested in school libraries and school librarianship. Earlier this century, Neuman addressed equity—particularly as related to technology—as an important area in need of more research. She suggested such research would align with the field’s ethical principles but could also demonstrate school libraries’ “unique role in the achievement of all our students—disabled and disadvantaged as well as ‘typical’” (2003, p. 507).

A persistent theme within the analysis was the relevance of infrastructure to the topics being investigated. Elements of infrastructure include budget, facilities, staffing, leadership, school structures, scheduling, and professionalism, including professional development. Although not a core value or dedicated code, numerous studies stimulated questions and observations among our group of researchers as to whether infrastructure was addressed within the research, to what extent it might affect the rationale for research and the findings, and how infrastructure is currently—and might in the future—be studied within research pertaining to school libraries.

Limitations

The decision to use university databases to identify potential articles for this study came with limitations. A search of a given database can identify only those publications indexed in the database. We were alarmed when we found that two 2019 *School Libraries Worldwide* articles with which we were familiar were not included in our original dataset. A quick check revealed that these two articles were missing from the databases. Other errors in indexing and inclusion may have impacted the findings for this study. Human fatigue and error in reviewing the hundreds of items returned from the search string “school libr*” to identify those that were potential for this study is a definite possibility. An effort was made to mitigate this by having two researchers independently conduct the initial search through their individual university databases. Additionally, database access varied among researchers, so it is possible access to additional databases may have increased the number of relevant hits.

We acknowledge that qualitative analysis such as that conducted to assign core values to the included studies is an interpretive activity. The core values themselves are difficult to operationalize. YALSA has expanded their core values with defining characteristics and what “a person practicing this value” would do. A similar effort within AASL might further illuminate the meaning of these values.

Core values also raise the question of “whose core values?” In particular, we note the large international representation in this dataset and issues that might arise in applying core values of an association in the United States to studies from other countries.

CONCLUSION

An annual scoping review of published research offers researchers some concrete tools, such as authors whose work might inform current research or with whom we might collaborate. A broad review such as this one provides ideas for potential international and interdisciplinary venues to disseminate research related to school librarianship. A summary of findings may provide guidance or inspiration to practitioners and to the faculty who prepare practitioners. Such systematic reviews may help to identify gaps in existing research. In this case the low number of studies related to the core values of EDI and intellectual freedom point to areas for future inquiry. In the handful of studies for which researchers were unable to assign a core value, we found ourselves discussing infrastructures such as budget, staffing, resources, administrative support, and advocacy as necessary supports for each of the core values. Future reviews might

analyze studies that cut across multiple core values and point to the kinds of support and advocacy needed to achieve our core values.

Today, school librarians find themselves in a particular moment in history. Book challenges are on the rise. Issues related to equity, diversity, and inclusion urgently demand our attention. The number of school librarian positions may be declining. More than ever, school librarianship needs school librarians' voices to lift up our core values. In this study, we found these core values to be tightly intertwined in the research. Learning outcomes were a focus in nearly 50% of the studies, but learning was a component of much of the remaining research in innovation and collaboration. We would also argue that the kinds of representation and access inherent in EDI and intellectual freedom are also essential components to a learning society. Subsequent annual reviews may reveal trends and patterns in research supporting these endeavors.

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