

# SMQ Current Research

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## A FUTURE EDITION OF NATIONAL STANDARDS: CAN LOCALLY BASED RESEARCH HELP?

Let me be among those who are recommending the need for a new edition of national standards for school library media programs. Editions of the standards have appeared five times in this century: 1920, 1945, 1960, 1969, and 1975. The last two editions have been joint ventures between the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) and the Association for Educational Communications and Technology (AECT) and have been a vehicle for mutual understanding between the two associations.

The most successful edition of standards was the 1960 edition. That document was the best for three main reasons:

1. The library media program it envisioned was forward looking but achievable by many schools in the country.
2. The standards communicated the library media center (LMC) concept without using jargon to administrators, parents, school boards, and teachers. This helped when many professional organizations representing these groups were asked to endorse the document and did.

3. The standards communicated so well to library media specialists that they rallied as individuals and groups to translate the vision of the document into reality.

The 1975 edition, while successful in many respects, has not done as well in any of the three areas listed above as the 1960 edition. A new edition of the standards is inevitable sooner or later. And instead of detailing the faults of the present edition, I would like to point out several tasks that must be accomplished before any new document is written.

Standards for a profession such as ours should be the very best statement of our collective judgment—a clear and unequivocal vision of what a library media program should be. This professional judgment should be based, in my opinion, on a solid foundation of research. Research has contributed somewhat to the formulation of past editions, but not to the extent it should have contributed. The research base we need should come from two sources: (1) from top-notch professional researchers assigned specific topics in preparation for the standards, and (2) from those library media specialists actually on the firing line in the buildings, the districts, and in the state departments of education.

If we are to create a document that is research-based and will communicate as clearly as the 1960 edition, then a number of areas need to be explored before the first pen is set to paper:

- A thorough state-of-the-art needs to be done in the areas of learning and media and of the intellectual, social, and emotional climates that are necessary for learning.
- Thorough probings of other disciplines need to be done to find information, methodologies, and results directly applicable to library media programs.
- The best of experience-based LMC programming needs to be collected. We must realize, however, that a standards document based solely on an experience base will contain many untested "truisms." Experience-based standards also tend to be static since so many routine approaches to services seem to get stuck in the concrete of tradition.
- More needs to be done to collect the

best of creative LMC programming. We need to identify the best professionals and study the way in which they meet their challenges and problems. Studies like that being done by Jody Charter\* at Florida State should provide some valuable insights in this area.

- There are many interesting, formal studies, most of which are doctoral dissertations that need further testing. I am thinking not necessarily of formal research replication, but rather of field testing done by practitioners.
- There is a need for practitioners who are looking for more rational ways to deal with the problems they encounter every day who will engage in locally based research and communicate their findings to the profession.

Locally based research has an advantage over formal research that gives it value for standards writers. It is an analysis of the real world rather than a contrived world that is so easy to create in formal research. If we could test theories, research findings, and new ideas more systematically in actual schools and compare the success of these ideas across more local situations, then our body of theory would grow more rapidly. Right now, many of the findings of formal research remain uncommunicated to and untested by the practitioner in spite of ERIC, professional journals, and conference programs.

There are many practitioners who have had a basic research course, and all library media specialists have been schooled in the basic components of the scientific method. In my experience, these individuals, given a little encouragement and a few uncomplicated rules, can do some very worthwhile studies. These studies can be useful both for the local LMC program and for formal researchers. These are the practitioners who can label a philosophical standards statement as inappropriate. They can also cheer when the standards add to their vision and

\*Charter, Jody B. *Case Study Profiles of Six Exemplary Public High School Library Media Programs in the South*. A dissertation study now under way to include Florida, Kentucky, Oklahoma, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Texas. Charter is assistant professor at the University of Arkansas, Peabody Hall #201, Fayetteville, AR 72701.

stimulate their creativity.

I have worked with a number of practitioners, particularly in evaluation research where we follow a few basic steps: (1) find a question, (2) decide how you will find an answer, (3) carry out your research, (4) analyze your findings, (5) draw your conclusions, and (6) communicate the results.

At first, some library media specialists have a hard time trying to decide on a meaningful topic to probe. A little time and a lot of brainstorming can turn up such topics as:

- How does the library media specialist get a teacher to plan a unit of instruction jointly for the first time and on subsequent occasions?
- What happens to a collection when the popular saying "Spend 50 percent on books, 50 percent on AV" is applied?
- Is it a two-way share or a one-way raid by the school on the public library or vice versa (when school and public libraries join together in formal or informal networks and sharing)?
- Under what local conditions is networking successful?
- Are book talks or other promotional efforts really worth the effort?
- Do students do better on the standardized test of study skills when library skills instruction is integrated into classroom units?
- What happens in term-paper referencing when the LMC allows and even promotes the circulation of reference books?

One of the big problems the library media profession has is getting practitioners to communicate their research findings. Those I have talked to seem to feel a sense of inferiority to formal researchers. They assume that no one is really interested in what they have done. I encourage practitioners in three ways:

1. Don't be bashful. Tell someone active in AASL or AECT who is interested in research about your locally based study.
2. Keep a brief diary on the study, procedures, and results.
3. Remember that state professional journals are often clamoring for persons to write short articles. Write up your study and submit it to the editor for possible publication.

It is important to remember that ERIC will often input its data-base materials dealing with local situations and problems. These are then available to the profession as a whole.

The AASL Research Committee headed first by Ruth White, then David Loertscher, Shirley Aaron, and now by Jacqueline C. Mancall has made an effort in the last ten years to encourage practitioners to engage in and report research. Most of the annual research forums at ALA conferences have included a practitioner as a presenter. The committee also sponsored a preconference in Dallas in 1979 on locally based research. Recently the committee sponsored a four-hour session at the AASL Louisville Conference.

Today, a number of very famous educational researchers are calling for more field research. These experts seem to sense that formal research can and does get out of step with reality. It is time to have both formal and locally based researchers join hands in the school library media field to produce a more realistic view of program components. The session at the AASL Louisville Conference on locally based research addressed this joint venture. Other avenues of cooperation and stimulation need to be explored. A successful research link between theory and practice can be the foundation for a new horizon in standards for the '80s and beyond.

## NOTES FROM ERIC

*This column is prepared by Barbara B. Minor, publications coordinator, ERIC Clearinghouse on Information Resources, College of Education, Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York.*

*The reports reviewed in this column can be ordered from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS), P.O. Box 190, Arlington, VA 22210. Order by ED number and enclose payment for the price quoted plus postage. For additional information about ERIC, write to the ERIC Clearinghouse on Information Resources, School of Education, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY 13210.*

Materials recently entered in the ERIC (Educational Resources Information Center) files include guidelines to media programs,

teaching media skills, and services for the handicapped; a handbook on intellectual freedom; a survey of bilingual programs; a directory of federal funding sources; and resources on human sexuality.

Merit ratings for school media programs that exceed state requirements in Kentucky are explored in *Guidelines for Merit Media Programs* (ED 179 229), and standards are provided for administrative support, facilities, resources, personnel, and programs. Procedures for conducting a self-study prior to an on-site visit are also given. The self-study instrument, which is the major part of the document, covers such areas as community background, administrative support, a facilities inventory, resources available, personnel profiles, program activities, and recommended attachments. A glossary of terms completes the form. This fifty-five-page guide published in 1979 is available from EDRS in microfiche for \$.83 or in paper copy for \$4.82.

Designed as an aid for librarians and teachers in elementary and secondary schools, *Library Media Skills for Students. Curriculum Guide* (ED 180 428) includes a detailed sequential list of these skills and a list of books and media on the philosophy of teaching media skills or the materials used in developing skills programs. Exercises are arranged developmentally so that students can progress from one to the next in a logical manner, with skills introduced at one level and retaught or reviewed at a higher level with increasing complexity. Resources mentioned consist of professional books, workbook and skill-sheet materials, audio-visual aids, ERIC publications, and individualized self-instructional study units. Addresses of publishers and distributors are provided. This thirty-one-page guide published by the Alaska State Department of Education in 1977 is available from EDRS in microfiche for \$.83 or in paper copy for \$3.32.

*Kangaroo Kapers or How to Jump into Library Services for the Handicapped* (ED 179 214), a guide to educational and library resources for handicapped individuals, cites agencies, organizations, and bibliographies of children's and adult/professional books in separate sections for the aurally, visually, and mentally handicapped, and in a general