Analysis of Selected Research, 1993 [helmick2]

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Concepts and directives espoused in *Information Power: Guidelines for School Library Media Centers*[1] continue to exert considerable influence on research activities. The national guidelines, directly or indirectly, provided the framework for several of the research publications among this selection. Although intrastate-based research is undoubtedly easier to focus and more doable because of state jurisdiction for educational standards and funding, about one-half of the following analyses were national in scope or extended beyond state geopolitical boundaries. However, the majority of the studies conducted by individual researchers, as opposed to those performed by corporations or agencies, were based within state boundaries.

NATIONAL AND MULTISTATE

Of those studies that analyzed data collected nationally or across state boundaries, Garland's perception of the importance of the relationship between statistical information and accountability, decision making, and political impact led to the investigation of the patterns of collecting circulation data from school library media centers among state education agencies to compare with patterns of collecting circulation information among elementary and middle school library media specialists at the local level.[2] Findings revealed that nearly one-half (24 out of 49) of the participating state agencies did not regularly collect library statistics and that there was a considerable lack of consistency among those that did. "If we can assume that the statistics states choose to collect reflect their perceived importance, we can also conclude that state agencies are concerned with budgets, collection size, and staffing patterns."[3]

Approximately 53 percent of the 2,597 elementary and middle school library media specialists in public and private schools across the nation who responded indicated that they did keep circulation statistics. Middle school librarians collected circulation data more frequently than did elementary librarians. Enrollment size was also an indicator of the frequency with which circulation data were kept; the greater the enrollment, the more likely that such data were collected to become a component of the decision-making process.

Officials in state education agencies were also queried for *School Library Journal*'s annual survey to determine staffing patterns in school library media centers across the country.[4] Officials from 42 state education agencies, including the District of Columbia, responded. For those states that did not respond, 1992 statistics were reported. Four of five states with the highest ratios of students per librarian were among the western states. California reported the worst-case scenario with 8,512 students per librarian; Nevada's ratio was 1,765:1; Utah, 1,466:1; and Idaho, 1,356:1. Exceptions to geographical patterns were

noted: for example, Massachusetts was in 49th place with a ratio of 1,482:1. At the opposite extreme, the five states with the best ratios were Montana, reporting an average of 447 students per librarian; the District of Columbia's ratio was 451:1; Arkansas, 465:1; Kansas, 469:1; and Oklahoma, 463:1.

Pressures exerted across the nation, primarily by the "religious right," continued to take their toll. Challenges to library media and curricular materials increased 50 percent in the past year, according to People for the American Way, who announced that its annual survey revealed the greatest yearly increase of any such survey that the organization has conducted during the past decade. Nationally, 376 incidents in 44 states were reported in which pressure was exerted to remove or restrict materials. Censors succeeded in 41 percent of the incidents. Challenges occurred with the greatest frequency in the Midwest; the fewest were in the Northeast. Arthur Kropp, president of People for the American Way, stated that the "rising attacks on public education" are part of the "national climate of intolerance" in which there is "animosity toward any idea, thought, book, painting, film or piece of music that anyone anywhere finds objectionable."[5]

Among the studies at the national level, the distribution of technological access, expenditures for technology, and levels of involvement in the decision-making process were profiled cumulatively and state-by-state. According to findings revealed in the *Electronic Learning* technology survey,[6] directors of library or media services were involved in 52 percent of the districts in technology-purchasing decisions at the district level. Library media specialists were involved in 66 percent of the schools that reported involvement at the building level, second only to the principals, who were involved in 96 percent of the decisions at the building level. Over half of the districts spend 50 percent or more of their computer budgets on hardware, only 12 percent of the districts spend that much on software, and only 2 percent spend that much for training. The survey also found that "schools and districts agree [that] schools will become more responsible for buying instructional software in the next two years. . . . Districts are shifting curriculum materials decisions to schools, while maintaining control over larger purchases."[7]

Lighthall reported a tightly focused study of the distribution of cataloging and circulation management software systems among school library media centers in Canada.[8] Few changes were noted from findings of the two earlier surveys of vendors of automated systems in terms of market share and geographic distribution among school libraries. Vendor responses to the third annual survey represented 11 Canadian and 4 American products that were sold to and installed in schools during 1991. At least 501 new installations were made during the year, resulting in automated catalogs or circulation systems or both in a total of at least 2,002 school libraries. The researcher made no attempt to evaluate the quality of the systems, only to measure the frequency of purchase and installation. At the time data were collected, Utlas's M/Series 10 system had been installed at a total of 759 sites. Sixty-five of the 129 circulation modules installed in 1991 were added to previously installed OPACs. Utlas held 38 percent of the market and 27 percent of the installations that year. CTB/Columbia ranked second with 105 additional installations during the year, bringing the total to 144 sites. Eloquent Systems moved into third place with 86 site installations during the year, reflecting 17 percent of the 1991 market share and 12 percent of the total market share. TKM Software installed 54 new MicroCat systems (approximately a 100 percent increase over the previous year) capturing 4 percent of the total market share and 11 percent

of the 1991 market share.

Allen sought to determine the degree of access to children's literature by Spanish-speaking children in elementary schools in 8 urban areas in the United States with large Hispanic populations.[9] A total of 62 schools from two school systems in Arizona and Texas and one each in California, New Mexico, Florida, and Colorado were included in the study. Allen found that 62 percent of the library media center personnel had no knowledge of the Spanish language; another 28 percent reported "medium" fluency; only 10 percent perceived themselves as "highly fluent." More than half of the collections had relatively few Spanish books. Data were compared with those of the Department of Education's Center for Education Statistics data reported in *Information Power.* In more than half of the schools' collections, less than 10 percent of the books were written in the Spanish language. Data revealed that schools with large Hispanic enrollments had far fewer books per Hispanic student than books per Anglo child. There was also a large discrepancy between dollars expended for materials to support Spanish-speaking students and Anglo students, both cumulatively and on a per-student dimension. A similar pattern emerged for the purchase of nonprint resources.

Building-level school library media specialists in 12 states who were involved in at least one multitype, multistate network participated in Van Orden and Wilkes's study to explore the benefits of and barriers to networking.[10] The population included 63 elementary schools, 38 middle and junior high schools, 52 senior high schools, and 6 all-grade schools or schools for specialized students. A primary advantage noted was greater access to resources. Among other benefits reported were the use of products such as network newsletters, directories, training packets, and copyright guidelines. In-service programs, technical assistance, and consultation services were also cited as benefits. Networking also produced positive psychological impacts including increased opportunities for communication and a decrease in feelings of isolation. Although respondents borrowed materials most frequently from other libraries within the district, they also engaged in interlibrary loan activities from other types of libraries, from members in the network, and from schools in other districts. In decreasing order of frequency, ILL borrowing privileges were extended to teachers, administrators, high school students, middle and junior high school and elementary school students, parents, school board members, and members of the community. Although respondents perceived that teachers are slow to accept networking and automation, whole language programs in the elementary schools benefited from ILL services, science teachers encouraged students to use networking, and increased availability of resources was a catalyst to curriculum revision.

Problems in implementing networking were attitudinal, political and legal, technical, budgetary, and physical. Attitudes about networking varied from high levels of enthusiasm to perceptions of no need, lack of staff commitment, and reluctance to loan materials. Among the perceived political and legal barriers were cautions about contractual agreements, lack of leadership, and awareness of the benefits. Lack of communications equipment was a problem as exemplified by the fact that only 54 percent of the building-level libraries had telephones, and fewer than 8 percent had fax machines. One "frightening aspect" is the reallocation of funds from purchasing materials to funding networking activities.[11] It was also observed that centralized cataloging and processing had negatively affected the building-level librarians' knowledge about bibliographic standards and practices. The researchers concluded that the

study offered evidence of the "have and have-not" paradigm, frequently within school districts between elementary and secondary schools.

STATE AND LOCAL

Lance, Welborn, and Hamilton-Pennell, responsible for the Colorado Study, a landmark research effort, sought to determine the relationship between expenditures for library media materials, number and level of media center staffing, and the amount of collaboration between teachers and librarians and test performance.[12] Based on data from 221 schools, 17 percent of the total number in the state, the following conclusions were reached:

1. The best predictor of academic achievement is the size of the library media center staff and the size of the collection.

2. The instructional role of the library media specialist influences the collection and, in turn, student achievement.

3. Teacher/pupil ratio affects the degree of collaboration between library media specialists and classroom teachers.

4. Among school and community predictors of achievement, the size of the library media center staff and collection is second only to the absence of at-risk conditions.

Zimmerman explored attitudes of building-level school library media specialists in New York state toward the use of technology.[13] Instruments used to collect data included a Technology Attitude Scale (TAS), a 5-point Likert scale consisting of 12 items, and a demographic survey. Variables investigated included experience, education, involvement in professional associations, school assignment, school location, and availability of technologies in the school library. Fourteen hundred sixty-nine usable returns were analyzed. Although school librarians in the state had "extremely positive"[14] responses about using technology, almost 71 percent expressed concerns about inadequate funding, and 38 percent commented on the lack of human support, including clerical help. Respondents also expressed the need for continuing education courses and workshops. All variables except years of experience and level of education correlated significantly with attitudes about the use of technology; however, those "significant factors were so weak that they tell us little about what factors influenced the attitudes" of the respondents.[15]

The perceived importance of the instructional consultant role of the library media specialist in the DeKalb County, Georgia public schools was investigated by Pickard.[16] She organized the 11 levels of Loertscher's taxonomy into reactive, proactive, and interactive philosophical categories. Using a 5-point Likert scale, subjects rated their job performance of 18 items in order of importance and rated them a second time according to their own practice. Based on data reported by the 83 respondents, she concluded "only 8 [approximately 9 percent] of the respondents appeared to be practicing the instructional role

to a great extent."[17] More elementary librarians (11 percent) fit interactive profiles than did secondary librarians (9 percent). Activities of a greater percentage of secondary librarians fit the reactive (88 percent) and proactive (50 percent) profile roles than did elementary librarians (68 percent and 35 percent, respectively).

A serious and continuous concern of library media specialists is the theft and mutilation of materials. Baine found that 43 percent of the students in a private girls' high school admitted to having stolen, mutilated, or marked library materials during the school year. Seniors were significantly more likely to abuse materials (or, at least, admit to it) than were students at lower grade levels. Although students perceived the actions as morally wrong, it did not prevent their negative behavior, nor did it cause them to report others who engaged in destructive activities. Students indicated that more than one-third of the thefts were accidental, and another one-third cited administrative barriers as the reason (e.g., "reference book—couldn't check out" or "bell rang"). Although electronic detection devices and education campaigns are generally favored among librarians, implications from this study are that the most effective preventive measures may be improvements in photocopying services and warning signs that specify penalties.[18]

One hundred fourteen school library media specialists in Minnesota responded to a lengthy survey that was designed to collect information about the extent of and satisfaction with automated circulation, cataloging, and reference.[19] A relationship was observed between the size of the school and the grade level served and the presence of automated systems. Schools with enrollments in excess of 500 students were more likely to have automated circulation and catalog systems than were those with smaller enrollments. Elementary schools were less likely to have automated cataloging, automated circulation systems, or reference services than were high schools. Curiously, although only 75 percent indicated that they were satisfied with the electronic catalog and circulation systems they had, 96 percent of the respondents indicated they would recommend the circulation and catalog systems they were using to others who might be considering a purchase. The sequence for implementing automated functions followed a sequence from circulation to catalog and, finally, reference. Only 18 percent of the schools had implemented online database searching or were using CD-ROM products; 5 percent of those were at the elementary level. Library media specialists who had not yet automated any functions perceived either a lack of need to do so or a lack of funds.

Meyer and Newton interviewed 18 teachers in one school system to explore their subjective meaning of and level of implementation of resource-based teaching.[20] Each school had a full-time teacher-librarian "who was knowledgeable about cooperatively planned resource-based teaching methodology."[21] It was concluded that administrative support is critical and that teachers in the schools without clear administrative expectations functioned at lower levels on the Loertscher taxonomy. Continuation of resource-based methodologies can be accomplished with leadership shared by teacher-librarians and administrators.

CONTENT ANALYSES

Since John Donovan's *I'll Get There: It Better Be Worth the Trip*,[22] the first young

adult novel that specifically addressed homosexuality was published in 1969, approximately 60 novels for the young adult audience with gay or lesbian themes have been published in the United States. Jenkins analyzed those novels to determine what messages were presented and to profile the attitudes of characters about homosexuality.[23] The 31 books published during the 16-year span from 1969 to 1984 were compared with the 29 published from 1985 to 1992, an 8-year time frame. Gay and lesbian characters in titles in both historical time frames were middle-class and white. Only 3 of the 60 books portray people of color as gay or lesbian. Although the settings in the earlier time period were primarily in rural or small towns, settings for books published after 1984 were mostly in urban or suburban geographical environments. Occupationally, gay and lesbian characters follow careers or have strong interests in the arts or related fields; eight characters were teachers who frequently lost their jobs in the earlier books, but only rarely did that happen in books of the more recently published group. Lesbian characters appeared in about 25 percent of the books, while males with homosexual orientation were presented in 75 percent of the books; this disproportion of representation increased among titles in the more recent publication group. Many of the young gay or lesbian characters led lonely, isolated lives. It was noted that, since the mid-1980s, there has been a trend toward treating homosexuality as a subplot or as a circumstance of secondary characters rather than as a major issue.

Among Krashen's many assertions resulting from an exhaustive analysis and compilation of research relevant to free voluntary reading and literacy, several are directly applicable to school libraries and school library media specialists.[24] Krashen's analysis of the literature revealed that there is a positive relationship between the number of books available and the amount of reading that students do; the implication is that students who have access to a school library media center and a public library read more than students who do not. The size of the school library collection and access to a public library correlate positively with reading comprehension test scores. Providing access by keeping the school library open for more hours resulted in increased circulation; however, the increase was greater in the high school than in the elementary school library media centers.

NOTES

1. American Association of School Librarians, *Information Power: Guidelines for School Library Media Programs* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1988).

2. Kathleen Garland, "An Analysis of School Library Media Center Statistics Collected by State Agencies and Individual Library Media Specialists," *School Library Media Quarterly* 21 (winter 1993): 106-10.

3. Ibid., 108.

4. Michael Sadowski and Randy Meyer, "States of Inequality: School Library Staffing Survey 1993," *School Library Journal* 39 (June 1993): 34-36.

5. "Survey Shows School Censorship at Record Level," *Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom* 41 (November 1992): 179, 184.

6.   Isabelle Bruder, "Technology in the USA: An Educational Perspective," *Electronic Learning* 13 (October 1993): 21-28.

7.   Ibid., 25.

8.   Lighthall, Lynne, "Automated Systems in Canada's School Libraries: The Third Annual Survey," *Canadian Library Journal* 49 (October 1992): 378-88.

9.   Adela Artola Allen, "The School Library Media Center and the Promotion of Literature for Hispanic Children," *Library Trends* 41 (winter 1993): 437-61.

10.   Phyllis Van Orden and Adeline Wilkes, "School Library Media Centers and Networks," *Library Resources and Technical Services* 37 (January 1993): 7-17.

11.   Ibid., 11.

12.   Keith Curry Lance, Lynda Welborn, and Christine Hamilton-Pennell, *The Impact of School Library Media Centers on Academic Achievement* (Castle Rock, CO: Hi Willow Research and Publishing, 1993).

13.   Nancy P. Zimmerman, "Compromise in the Information Age: The Attitudes of School Library Media Specialists Toward Technology," Focus on Research, ed. Frances F. Jacobson, *Journal of Youth Services in Libraries* 6 (spring 1993): 305-11.

14.   Ibid., 308.

15.   Ibid.

16.   Patricia W. Pickard, "The Instructional Consultant Role of the School Library Media Specialist," Current Research, ed. Michael Eisenberg. *School Library Media Quarterly* 21 (winter 1993): 115-22.

17.   Ibid., 120.

18.   Martha S. Baine, "Causes and Prevention of Theft and Mutilation in a High School Library Media Center: A Survey of Students' Attitudes and Practices," *School Library Media Quarterly* 21 (summer 1993): 221-26.

19.   Doreen M. Keable, Sandra Q. Williams, and Christine D. Inkster, "Facing the Library Media Challenge of the Nineties—Automation: A Survey of Minnesota Library Media Centers," *School Library Media Quarterly* 21 (summer 1993): 227-36.

20.   Jeannette Meyer and Earle Newton, "Teachers' Views of the Implementation of Resource-Based Learning," *Emergency Librarian* 20 (November-December 1992): 13-18.

21.   Ibid., 13.

22. John Donovan, *I'll Get There: It Better Be Worth the Trip* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969).

23. Christine A. Jenkins, "Young Adult Novels with Gay/Lesbian Characters and Themes 1969-92: A Historical Reading of Content, Gender, and Narrative Distance," *Journal of Youth Services in Libraries* 7 (fall 1993): 43-56.

24. Stephen Krashen, *The Power of Reading: Insights from the Research* (Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited, 1993).