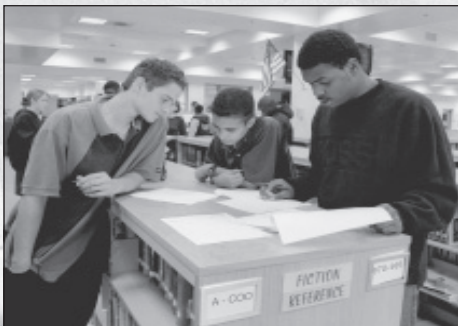


# Check It Out!

The Results of the School Library Media Program Census



DISCRIMINATION  
STOP  
STEALING  
INDIAN  
LAND

Final  
Report

January 2003

**Minnesota School Library Media Programs**

Metronet • 1619 Dayton Ave. • St. Paul MN 55104 • 651-646-0475

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Final  
Report

Susan J. Baxter  
Ann Walker Smalley

January 2003



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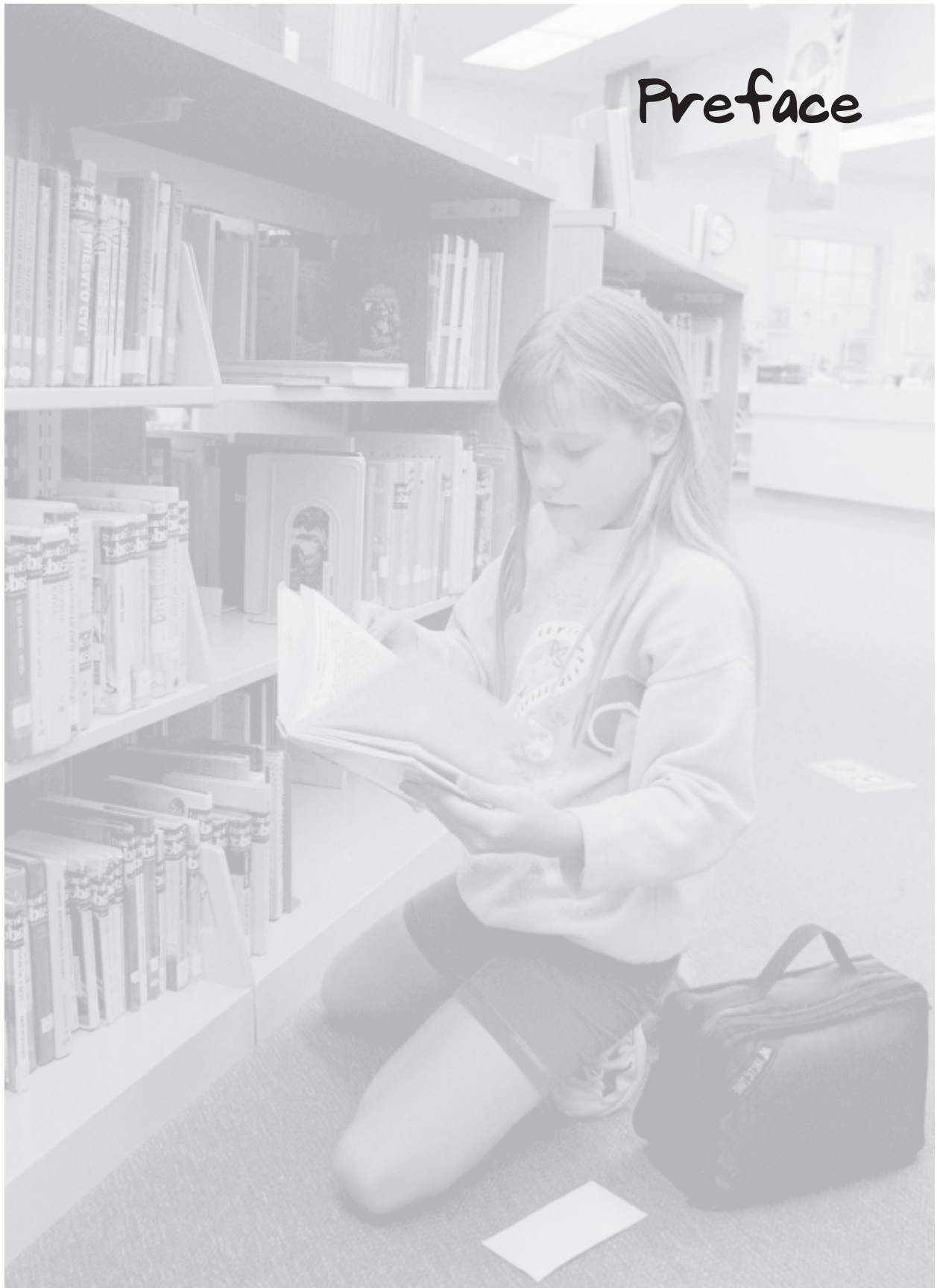
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# Preface







# Preface

The School Library Media Program Census Project came about as the result of the work of many people whose ideas coalesced in the Spring of 2001. The Minnesota Educational Media Organization (MEMO) Legislative Committee had supported legislation that mandated the Department of Children, Families & Learning (CFL) to collect data on all public K-12 school library media programs. The legislation focused on the status of collections, facilities, staffing, and technology in school library media programs. At the same time, Library Development and Services (LDS), the division of CFL that works with libraries, was interested in assessing the ability of school libraries to participate in MnLink, the statewide online library catalog. The publication and distribution of *Minnesota Standards for Effective School Library Media Programs 2000*<sup>1</sup> in March 2001 ignited interest in determining how well Minnesota's school library media programs meet the Standards but there was no up-to-date information available from CFL on media programs. Discussions involving who could conduct such a project and what data should be collected evolved into the *Minnesota School Library Media Program Census Project*.

In the final days of budget negotiation in 2001, the statewide data collection mandate was dropped from CFL legislation. However, the need for this information remained. Discussions at the Metronet Advisory Council meeting involving school librarians convinced Joyce Swonger, Director of LDS, to refocus the study planned by LDS on technology and school libraries. She committed Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) funds to a two-year project that would collect and analyze data on all school library media programs in Minnesota. Susan Baxter, Metronet Executive Director, wrote two project proposals. In September 2001 and May 2002, Metronet received LSTA grants of \$100,000 and \$145,000 to design and conduct a statewide census based on the *Minnesota Standards for Effective School Library Media Programs*.

The Project Advisory Committee (Appendix 2), described in *Chapter 2. Profile of Minnesota School Library Media Programs*, made a significant contribution to the success of this project. They assisted with the design of the data collection instrument and tested it for accuracy and ease of use. Most significantly, the Committee recommended that the project include the site visits to see media programs in context. This aspect of the project has enhanced the results. We appreciate the time and



The Library Services and Technology Act is administered by the federal Institute of Museum and Library Services to promote access to learning and information resources of all types of libraries for individuals of all ages.

The seven multicounty multitype library regions are used throughout the report for the geographic groupings of the Census results. Many school library media programs are members of their local multitype and benefit from services such as interlibrary loan, delivery, and continuing education.

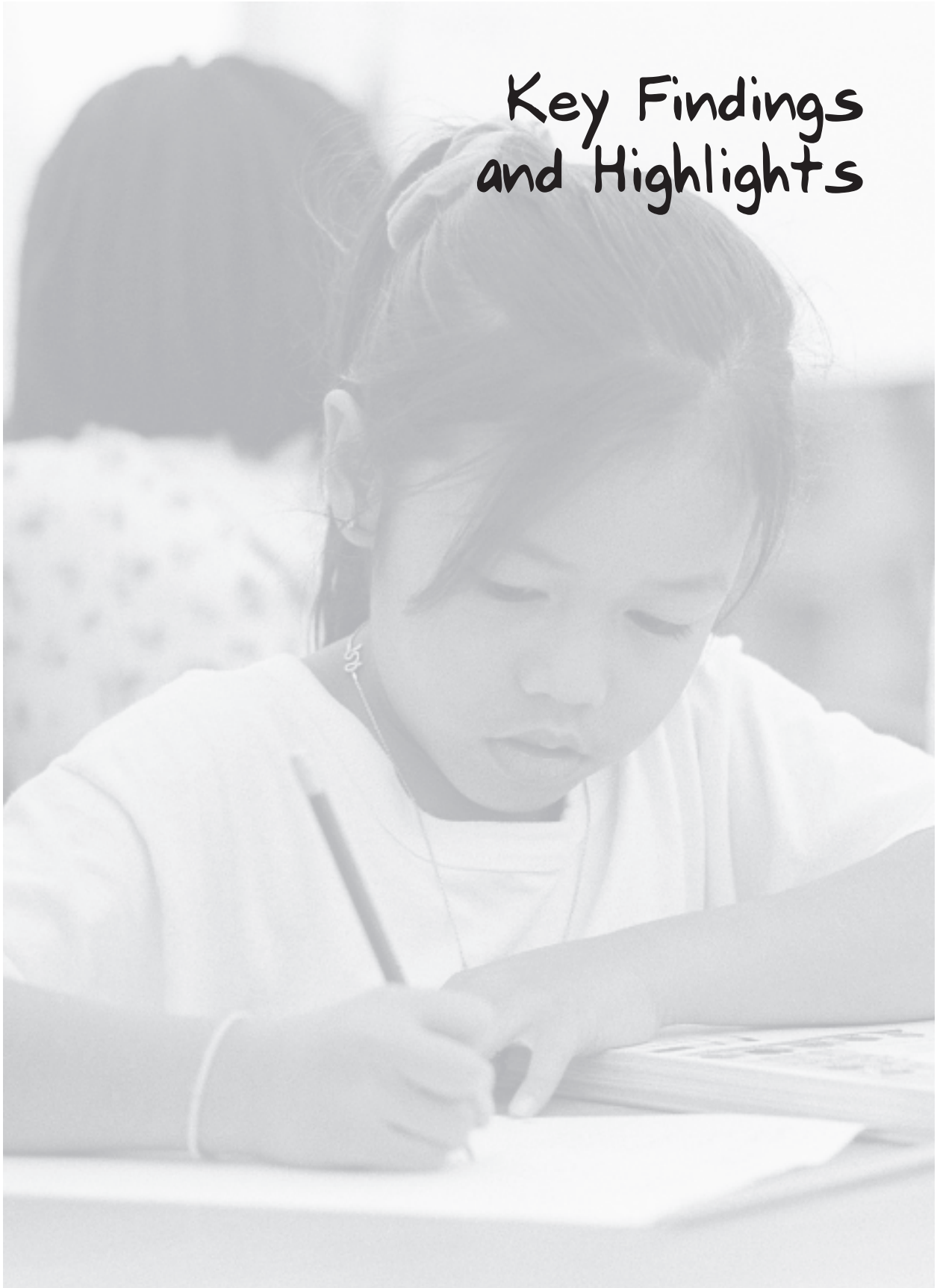
enthusiasm of the site visitors (Appendix 3). The visitors took many of the pictures that appear in this report.

This project received invaluable help and support from many people. Both the previous and current Metronet Governing Boards were supportive of the project. Rossanna Armson, Director of the University of Minnesota Center for Survey Research provided consultation on the questionnaire and suggested that it be termed a census not a survey. Mari Dragseth, Hopkins School District media specialist who was on the former Metronet Advisory Council, was instrumental in redirecting the focus of the project from technology to a broader data collection. Dr. Kenneth Dragseth, Superintendent of Edina Public Schools, allowed time for Dr. Yi Du, Director of Research for Edina Public Schools, to contract with Metronet to do the statistical analysis for the project. Eric Hinsdale of MELSA (Metropolitan Regional Library Service Area) and Dana Noonan, Metronet's Webmaster, assisted in data cleaning once the online census was complete. Eric also contributed to the census analysis section of the final report. The directors of the six other multitype library cooperatives were members of the Advisory Committee, recruited site visitors, and selected the schools in their regions for visits. Carol Gurstelle provided additional research on book prices, school library media program spending, and historical background. Deanna Sylte, Metronet administrative assistant, managed the logistics of the project. Marlene Moulton Janssen, Executive Director of MELSA spent time reading the final report. Thanks to all for their help and support.

Finally, we extend our heartfelt thanks to the 1,172 media specialists who took the time to respond to the census. The impressive results of this project would not be possible without their complete cooperation. We know this was a huge task, on top of the many tasks these dedicated professionals do every day. Many media specialists completed the census on their own time. It is a testament to the commitment of all who responded that the census received the unprecedented 82% response rate.

<sup>1</sup> *Minnesota Standards for Effective School Library Media Programs 2000*. Minnesota Educational Media Organization in cooperation with Library Development and Services, Department of Children, Families & Learning. October 2000. A summary of the Standards appears in Appendix 1.

# Key Findings and Highlights





# Key Findings

In Minnesota schools with above average student scores on the Grade 3, 5, and 8 reading tests, 66.8% were schools where the media specialist worked full-time. Twice as many schools with above average scores had full-time media specialists. Student reading achievement in elementary and secondary schools is related to increases in school library media program spending.

- Correlation analysis shows that elementary students' MCA (Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment) scores are significantly related to library budgets for books and materials, particularly at the fifth grade level. The larger the library budget is for books and electronic materials, the higher students' reading achievement is.
- The average copyright for all books in Minnesota schools is 1985. In high schools, the average age is 1983. Minnesota students are using books for research and study that are older than they are, and in some cases, older than their teachers.

## Highlights

### Census Findings

- Minnesota lags behind in spending for books for its school library media programs. Average annual spending for books in Minnesota school library media centers is \$5,107. In the North Central region of the U.S., which includes Minnesota, the average amount spent on books annually is \$6,700, over 30% higher than Minnesota's spending. Minnesota school library media centers spend an average of \$9.35 per pupil for books at the elementary level, \$10.44 at the middle school level, and \$11.29 at the high school level.
- Minnesota school library media centers own an average of 31 books per pupil. This exceeds the highest level in the *Minnesota Standards for Effective School Library Media Programs 2002* for collection size. The average copyright date of 1985, however, suggests that many of these collections are old due to lack of weeding.
- Media specialists are the most common workers in school library media programs. 84% of the responding schools report one licensed media specialist works in the media center; 5% report two media specialists work in the media center.
- Support staff works an average of 18.6 hours per week in a media center. The smaller the school, the less likely support staff is available.
- Hours worked for licensed and clerical staff increased with the school size in almost all cases. The smaller the school, the fewer hours a media specialist has to spend with students.
- Media specialists report their most frequent activity is "other library activities" such as shelving books, circulation of materials, materials processing, and related tasks. These tasks are considered to be support tasks and do not require a licensed media specialist to perform them.
- In descending order of reported frequency, media specialists spend time on: managing and



troubleshooting computer and technical problems, teaching information skills to students, collection development, and assisting students with Internet skills. 68% of library media specialists report their most frequent activity is “collaborating with teachers.”

- The average elementary library media specialist provides 58 prep coverage periods per month. Prep coverage is less common at the high school level, where the average number of prep coverage periods is five.
- School library media centers have an average of more than of 100 visits by students per day; more than 2,064 visits per month. 737 items are checked out per average week. This does not reflect the materials that are used within the library media center.
- School size affects the number of networked computers in the media center, the presence of an automated library catalog, and access to statewide electronic resources from home. The smaller the school, the less likely there will be an automated cataloged or remote access to media center and statewide electronic resources.
- 1,172 schools responded to the online School Library Media Program Project Census, an unprecedented 82% response rate. In 217 districts every school responded. 74 districts had at least some schools respond. In 45 districts, no school responded.

## **Site Visit Findings**

- 131 elementary and secondary schools were visited as part of the project to determine the impact of less quantifiable elements such as the role of the principal and of the atmosphere of the media center on program effectiveness.
- The site visits confirmed the census findings: large collections of old, worn books, many programs run by part-time library media specialists or non-licensed staff, increasing workloads for media specialists including technology support, classroom teaching, and other duties, and the widespread responsibility of elementary media specialists for prep time coverage for teachers.
- The more knowledgeable and supportive a principal is about school library media program, the greater the chance that an effective school library media program will be in place in the school.
- The more hours a licensed school library media specialist works in the media program, the more effective the program.
- Many school library media specialists have too few resources to maintain an effective school library media program. Site visitors found effective programs in all areas of the state.
- There is a digital divide in Minnesota schools, both across districts and within districts. Access to up-to-date technology varied widely.
- Schools with technology integration specialists and/or professional media specialists involved in planning with teachers on using technology to enhance curriculum make better use of their technology investment to improve student learning. In these schools, curriculum drives the technology investment.

- The presence of district level support for school library media programs makes a difference in the effectiveness of school library media programs. In districts with media coordinators or similar positions, students were more likely to have access to resources and materials and to be taught information literacy skills.
- Implementation of computerized reading programs such as Accelerated Reader and Reading Counts are having an impact on media center budgets and usage.



## Recommendations

- Principals, teachers, parents, school boards, and other administrators need to raise their expectations for media programs and the results they expect from these programs based on the research on the impact of school library media programs on student achievement and *Minnesota Standards for Effective School Library Media Programs 2000*.
- All school districts need to make a commitment to a full-time professional media specialist and adequate paraprofessional staffing in every school building to ensure all students learn information literacy and research skills—and develop a love of reading.
- Minnesota needs to make immediate state and local investments in school library media program print collections so they meet the Standard of current—books less than 10 years old. This will require a long-term commitment to resource building.
- The Legislature and Department of Children, Families & Learning (CFL) need to recognize the importance of school library media programs in improving student achievement by hiring staff at the state level to assist school districts develop effective library media programs based on *Minnesota Standards for Effective School Library Media Programs 2000*.

- The Legislature, CFL, and local districts must commit to maintaining and developing statewide resources and services to provide student access to what they need to succeed, including continued state support of telecommunications costs and maintenance and development of resources that expand access and availability statewide.
- All stakeholders must work to eliminate the digital divide in Minnesota public schools. All students need access to up-to-date technology in media centers, computer labs, and classrooms and training in how to use it.
- The Department of Children, Families & Learning should continue data collection on school library media programs to provide on-going measurement of program development.
- Library media specialists and their supporters must become vocal advocates for all school library media programs and document and disseminate information on the impact of media programs on student achievement.

A grayscale photograph of two young Black women in a school library. They are sitting at a desk with a computer. The woman on the left is looking at the screen, while the woman on the right is resting her chin on her hand and looking at the screen. The background shows bookshelves and other library equipment.

# Chapter One

## School Library Media Programs Make a Difference



# Chapter One

## School Library Media Programs

### Make a Difference

*Current, interesting, and attractive library book collections are essential for healthy reading programs.... Middle Grades Reading Network, Libraries & Reading*

This study began with the premise that a well-funded, well-staffed school library that has up-to-date print and non-print resources can have a positive impact on student achievement. School library media specialists (LMS) who work collaboratively with teachers as an integral part of the teaching team can help students achieve higher levels of reading comprehension, problem-solving, information literacy, and research skills. Fifty years of research has shown the power of school library media programs for student learning.<sup>1</sup>

Most recently, research by the Colorado Library Research Service<sup>2</sup> and others has shown:

- Students in elementary and secondary schools with library collections that are curriculum-based and in adequate numbers to meet students' needs and that have qualified library personnel performed better on standardized tests, especially in reading. This was true regardless of the economic and social factors in the school and community.<sup>3</sup>
- Academic achievement of K-12 students is higher where the school library media specialist is part of a planning / teaching team, teaches information literacy, and works one-on-one with students in a flexible-schedule program.<sup>4</sup>
- Access to quality collections of books and other materials that support the curriculum and are used by teachers and students, up-to-date technology that is integrated into the teaching and research process, and cooperation between school media centers and other libraries, especially public libraries, also improve achievement.<sup>5</sup>
- Other factors associated with higher academic achievement are: library media programs with adequate professional and support staff to allow time for collaboration and teaching; a supportive, informed principal; technology that extends the media program into the classrooms, and an adequate budget to support the media program.<sup>6</sup>
- Elementary and middle school students score higher on the MCAS (Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System) when there is a library instruction program. Higher scores occur when there is a full-time librarian in the school.<sup>7</sup>

The wide availability of information does not create more informed students. It creates a need to teach students how to evaluate and apply information from all sources.



- The more assets a school has (e.g., book collection, licensed media specialist, computers, Internet access, licensed databases) the more likely students will score higher on standardized tests. Students with technologically advanced libraries performed up to 19 per cent higher on statewide tests than their peers in schools with poorly equipped libraries.<sup>8</sup>

A comprehensive review of the research on the impact of school library media programs on student achievement can be found in *Making the Connection: Quality School Library Media Programs Impact Student Achievement in Iowa*.<sup>9</sup>

Rather than duplicate this widely-accepted research, the goal of the Minnesota school library media program census was to collect baseline data on Minnesota's school library media programs and apply the *Minnesota Standards for Effective School Library Media Programs 2000* to determine if the programs have the potential to impact achievement.<sup>10</sup> Without knowing the status of the programs—collection age and size, staffing levels, and other variables—it would not possible to determine how well Minnesota's library media programs are meeting their mission to educate students in information literacy and to teach the critical thinking skills students need now and in the future.

## What Makes a Good School Library Media Program?

*Information availability will undoubtedly continue to mushroom, which will make a strong school library media program even more essential to help students acquire the skills they will need to harness and use information for a productive and fulfilling life.*

American Library Association, *Information Power*

*Minnesota Standards for Effective School Library Media Programs 2000* defines the elements of a good school library media program. The Minnesota Educational Media Organization (MEMO)<sup>11</sup> developed the Standards based on current thinking that school library media programs that are integrated into their schools, not considered an “add-on” or extra program, are most successful in teaching information literacy and research and in improving student learning. Each element of the Standards is based on research and practice in Minnesota and other states.

In addition, the Standards reflect the thinking in *Information Power*, a set of national standards for information literacy and the role of the media program's role in information literacy.<sup>12</sup> *Information Power* identifies four roles for the school library media specialist: teacher, instructional partner, information specialist, and program administrator. Each

MEMO is the professional organization for Minnesota media specialists and staff.

of these roles is vital to the success of a media program.

There is a strong emphasis on the role the media specialist plays in teaching students information and technology literacy skills in the Standards and in this report on the census. Information literacy is the ability to know when there is a need for information, and to identify, locate, and effectively use in-



formation for the issue or problem at hand.<sup>13</sup> Every individual faces an overwhelming quantity of information available through print sources, news organizations, special interest groups, radio and TV, the Internet, and many other sources. More and more of this information comes with no context for the user, raising questions about its authenticity, validity, and reliability.

Information literacy is the ability to know when there is a need for information, and to identify, locate, and effectively use information for the issue or problem at hand.

The wide availability of information does not create more informed students. They need information literacy skills to know what information they need, where to find it, how to assess its reliability, and how to apply the information in their academic studies, in their personal lives, and in the workplace. It is the role of the media specialist to help students learn to evaluate and apply information from such varied information sources.

Information literate persons develop some technology literacy skills as they search for and apply information. Media specialists may teach technology skills in the context of database and/or Internet searching, information organization, and in presentation of information and research results. These skills are integrated into an information literacy curriculum.

Technology literacy is the ability to use hardware and software effectively in the context of the situation.

The Minnesota Standards define three parts of a media program: teaching and learning, information access and delivery, and program administration. Within these three categories, there are 26 separate elements. These specific elements provide both quantitative and qualitative measures in the three areas of an effective program. When evaluating a media program, observers can predict effectiveness when all the elements are in place, well funded, evaluated regularly, and evolving to meet the needs of students and teachers.

## Teaching and Learning

The teaching and learning area addresses how the media program delivers instruction and service in collaboration with teachers and the integration of the media program into the curricular structure of

Good media programs extend students' reach for information beyond the media center to public and academic libraries, fee-based database services, and the Internet.

the school. The following are the key criteria to determine how well a program performs in the teaching and learning area. The program:

- Is essential to the school and fully integrated into the curriculum.
- Includes information literacy skills in the curriculum.
- Is collaboratively developed and taught by the media specialist and teachers.
- Promotes reading, viewing and listening skills.
- Integrates technology into the curriculum to meet educational objectives.
- Meets diverse learning needs; fosters individual and collaborative inquiry.

### Information Access and Delivery

Information access and delivery are the “library” aspects of the media program. Effective media centers provide on-site resources in multiple formats that are organized for ease of location, assistance in reference and research, and staffed by professionals who are committed to the ethical use of information and intellectual freedom. These elements are the foundation of a media program:

- Media specialist assists students and staff access information on-site and beyond the media center.
- Media center physical space is conducive to learning and has adequate space to house collections and equipment.
- Media center is open, staffed, and available to students during and after school hours.
- The collection is selected to support the curriculum, includes current (average age not greater than 10 years) print and electronic resources, is organized and computerized for access, and is large enough to meet the needs of the students (20 items per student).
- Full, on-line Internet access is available.

### Program Administration

The continuing, day-to-day operation of the program is a key to effectiveness. The school must be committed to media program staffing at a level that allows professional and support staff adequate time and budget to develop and maintain the program. Without the following, an effective media program is not possible:

- Professional staff in each building with adequate support staff.
- Recognition and support from the superintendent and building principal for the role of the media program.
- Funding to achieve the objectives of the school.
- Active planning and on-going assessment for long-range development of the program.
- Accountability for management of all program resources.

These media program Standards parallel Minnesota's efforts to define graduation standards<sup>14</sup> that lead to competency in ten learning areas at every grade level. The Minnesota Graduation Standards are designed to ensure that all students master the basics and have the advanced skills necessary to succeed in the future. The High Standards define what students should know, understand, and be able to do in order to demonstrate advanced skills in ten learning areas.

Translating these elements into an effective media program requires that several other important pieces come together for the benefit of all students and teachers in a school.

## Media Team

The common element in every effective media program is an enthusiastic professional media specialist. Media specialists are certified teachers who have additional specialized training in integrating technology and research into the curriculum, in designing units of study in collaboration with teachers, and in management of a collection of materials that are appropriate and support a school's learning objectives. Every program needs a LMS not only with technical skills but also one with an enterprising spirit to embrace new ideas and methods of information delivery, and, in this day of low or no budgets, the ability to do a lot with a little. This professional is an indispensable part of any school that wants an effective media program.

A media specialist cannot do it alone. Successful media programs are the result of a team effort that includes support staff. Support staff is vital to the success of a media program because their work, focused on shelving, processing, circulation of materials, and other tasks, frees the media specialist to concentrate on the teaching, reference and research, and program management duties.

A key player in a successful media program is a knowledgeable principal with a commitment to literacy. Research shows the importance of a supportive principal and the site visits in the Minnesota project confirm this. In many districts, principals determine how building resources are spent, influence the attitude of teachers and staff towards the MC, control staff development, influence scheduling, respond to recommendations from site councils, and more. The research evidence is clear that teachers collaborate more with other teachers and with the LMS when the principal actively encourages it and makes sure that schedules are in place that facilitate collaboration. It is rarely possible to have an effective program if the principal does not understand how the media program improves all student learning.

Another important player on this media team is a district level media coordinator. The Minnesota site visits showed that those schools in a district with a media coordinator rated more positively than schools

A supportive and knowledgeable principal is vital to the success of a school library media program.

Support staff frees LMS to do their professional tasks of teaching, planning, and administration.

Regular reports keep all stakeholders informed about media program activities and research on the impact of school library media. They will increase their support for the school library media program when they understand the

Communication and advocacy go hand-in-hand. All media specialists must be vocal proponents of their programs.

without a coordinator. A coordinator performs several key roles: advocacy at the district level with administrators and school boards and with principals for the media programs and adequate budgets; technical support and consultation with media specialists; staff development specific to media for specialists and teachers; and dissemination of up-to-date information to support media development. Minnesota school districts with a media coordinator tend to have more cohesive and comprehensive programs of media instruction than those that do not. The presence of a media coordinator helps ensure equitable access to media programs for all students.

## Communication

Media specialists need to communicate how they improve student learning. Few principals receive regular reports from their LMS detailing the classes they've taught, the students they've served, the teachers they have collaborated with, or materials added to the library or any of the other things LMS do each month. Teachers are even less likely to understand what the LMS does beyond working with them and their classes. And parents are far enough removed that they may be unaware there is a media center, let alone its impact on their students. Other targets for communication are district administrators, school boards, and the community.

## Scheduling

Many media specialists do not have the time to fully collaborate with teachers or to assist individual students or small groups because they are providing coverage for teacher prep time or have classes scheduled for each class period. Flexible scheduling gives students and teachers the most opportunities for library use. When flexible scheduling is in place, students and teachers can use the MC whenever an educational opportunity arises, instead of only when their class is scheduled for library time. Flexible scheduling allows the LMS time to collaborate with other staff members, serve on curriculum committees, participate or plan staff development, and participate in other professional activities. None of this happens without the understanding and support of the principal.

## Advocacy

There must be a commitment to the media program as a full partner in literacy and learning. In many communities, the school library is a child's—and sometimes a parent's—first introduction to the world of books and organized information. The media center may be the only source some students have for books for study or pleasure reading. School-wide celebrations of books and reading centered on the media program that are endorsed and shared by the entire school show the commitment to the media program. An important role of the media specialist is to carry the banner of literacy and reading throughout the school community.



## Integration of Technology

The most dramatic recent change in education at all levels has been the introduction of computers and instructional technology into schools. More and more schools provide students and teachers with computer networks. In the most effective programs, technology is seen as a means to an end, not an end in itself. Thoughtful planning and purchasing with the curriculum in mind, training for teachers and students, support staff that maintains the machines and networks all contribute to the successful integration of technology into the life of the school.

Effective school library media programs have integrated technology so students and teachers can use library media resources from wherever they are in the building—classroom, lab, and office. In the best cases, students and teachers have access from home, too. Computer networks that provide remote access to library resources, particularly the Web and licensed databases, can increase test scores.

Once all of these pieces are in place in every school, Minnesota can lead the nation in developing students who can meet the challenges they will face as adults.

## Why School Library Media Programs Are Important

*In our information-rich society, secondary school graduates are expected to be able to apply sophisticated learning strategies. They are expected to be able to access and organize data, evaluate what they encounter, and make decisions. These expectations place renewed emphasis on secondary school reading instruction because print is a major source of information and ideas. David Moore, NASSP Bulletin, October 1998*

In the new century, information is what it's all about. Those who have information, know where to find what they need, how to evaluate information for accuracy and authenticity, and then use it will be leaders. The first step in information literacy is the ability to read. For students to develop into productive citizens, they must be able to read for comprehension, interpretation, and evaluation. No matter where they find their information—in a book, in a periodical, on the Internet—they need these skills now and for lifelong learning.

The world is rapidly changing—economically, socially, politically, culturally, physically. Students today are faced with an overwhelming amount of information wherever they turn. Students can no longer rely on only one source of information to make these decisions. They must be able to find and use information in many formats and from

Technology integration is embedding the use of computers, software, Internet, digital cameras and other equipment and electronic resources into the curriculum to improve student learning. The needs of the curriculum and students drive the use of technology, not the availability of the technology. The question is, "How will technology enhance this subject/lesson?" not, "How do I use this technology in my lesson?"

Technology integration involves commitment to planning and staffing so that all teachers and students have the support, training, and equipment they need.



No matter how information is retrieved—from printed books and journals or from on-line sources—students must be able to read and interpret the information.

Media specialists keep a “map” of the curriculum in their minds at all times—which class is studying the rain forest and which will need math sites on the Internet.

many sources. They must learn to distinguish fact from opinion, fiction from nonfiction. They need to recognize bias, point of view, and an author’s intent. They must analyze and evaluate what they read for credibility, for source, for logic of reasoning. They need the ability to apply technical information from printed and other sources in daily life. This is true for students writing a report or for independent adults buying a car, choosing a mayor, assembling a computer system. Information analysis and use are basic life skills all students must learn. Students must be able to participate in cooperative learning and demonstrate higher order thinking, creativity, and problem solving.

These are high expectations for a 17 or 18 year old, but it is possible for all students to develop these competencies when the continuum of inquiry and research instruction begins in kindergarten.

Students in schools with effective school library media programs have a head start on acquiring these skills. They have access to the resources they need and the professional guidance to use them effectively. Media centers are no longer considered a place where information is stored for students and teachers but instead are an entry to the vast world of information. It takes training to sift through such quantities of information. Most people benefit from someone to help manage such quantities of information—a guide. In schools, the guide to all this information is the media specialist.

Library media specialists and up-to-date media centers are vital if students are to achieve the skills they need. Media specialists can facilitate student learning and teacher preparation because media specialists are:

- Teachers and practitioners of information literacy.
- Trained to find and select materials that support school curricula and projects.
- Skilled at assisting students and teachers in finding and using appropriate resources both inside and outside the media center.
- Expert users of on-line databases and Internet resources.
- Teachers and models for the ethical use of information.

Minnesota’s graduation standards require that students become proficient in ten learning areas. Each of the areas requires in-depth research, analysis, and reporting. All of the graduation standards areas benefit when a well-trained library media specialist, with the resources of materials, databases, Internet access, and cooperation, participates in planning and teaching at elementary through high school level. Media specialists keep a “map” of the curriculum in their minds at all times—which class is studying the rain forest and which will need math sites on the Internet. This clearinghouse aspect of her job makes her a valuable school wide resource. She knows

how things fit together from grade to grade and can provide appropriate support to students and teachers.

Media specialists guide students and teachers to the resources needed for student success. Media centers should be the first stop for Minnesota students as they begin their progress towards mastering these life-long skills.

## What Library Media Specialists Do

*...libraries are vital for children's achievement and developing informational needs. Children need libraries in their classrooms, schools, and communities. But all children will not use the materials to their fullest extent without supportive adults and librarians who will continue to make [Andrew] Carnegie's dream of an informational society that provides access to all live on forever.*

Dr. Susan Neuman, Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education United States Department of Education

In spite of the research on how media programs impact student achievement, there is still confusion over the role a media specialist can play in a school. This confusion is widespread in Minnesota and throughout the country. Most school principals, school boards, and superintendents are not aware of the research that shows how media programs can improve student achievement. Parents are rarely aware that this type of research is done, let alone how media programs can help their students. Many media specialists are considered “caretakers”—of collections and of students during study halls or prep time for teachers. Many question how media specialists can have such an impact when “all they do is check out books.” Stereotypes of librarians as book checkers and little else linger.

The reality is much different. School library media specialists were at the forefront of managing the “information explosion” that began in the 70s and continues to mushroom. School libraries evolved into “media centers” with proactive staff reaching out to help teachers and students manage the information and technology they faced. As early adopters of technology, media specialists became leaders in managing technology and integrating it into the curriculum. Now the proliferation of machines and software requires a greater number of staff to keep the school equipment up and running and there is more access to information than ever before, but these leaders are being cut to reduce school budgets.

Technology-oriented non-licensed staff with no experience in teaching, technology integration, information management, or research

Media specialists contribute to student readiness for higher education. Exposure to literature, on-line resources, research activities, and other learning projects help students be ready to step into college classes. Without this experience, they may lag behind other students. Acquiring these skills is more difficult in higher education; many professors expect students to come prepared to learn.

Media specialists can reach every student every day throughout their K-12 school years.

Media specialists hold a teaching license and have additional specialized training for library media specialist licensure.

may replace media specialists. This would be a mistake. Without a licensed media professional, the emphasis shifts to the machines and networks, not on how they enhance learning. Technical support staff is vital, but they cannot replace media specialists in ensuring that students have the resources they need and know how to use them.

A media specialist can play many roles throughout a typical day. While these vary based on grades in the building and the LMS other responsibilities, she may in a day:

- Plan units of study with grade level teams and / or with individual teachers.
- Teach library skills in small groups or to individual students or teachers.
- Lead classes of students through the research process.
- Answer reference and research questions from students, faculty, and administrators.
- Guide students, working in small groups or working independently, on Web-based projects.
- Read stories if they directly relate to the curriculum.
- Repair, upgrade, and maintain a wide range of equipment.
- Build and maintain the school's Web site and / or a Web site that provides access to media center resources.
- Select and catalog books, audio-video, digital, and electronic materials
- Maintain the automated library catalog.
- Supervise staff in the media center.
- Provide in-service training to teachers.
- Serve on a curriculum, grade level, site council, or other building-wide team.

And, if there is little or no support staff in the media center, the LMS may check in and check out books, re-shelve books, process new materials, and do any number of other tasks that keep the media center running smoothly. Few other professionals in a school building have the daily responsibility for so many and such a wide variety of tasks.

There is long-running discussion in the media profession about how a media specialist's time should be scheduled—prep time vs. flexible scheduling. With a prep time schedule, media specialists provide coverage for classroom teachers to work on their lesson plans or do other planning for their classes while their students are in the media center. In Minnesota, the majority of elementary school media specialists provide “prep time” for other teachers in the building.

With flexible scheduling the media specialist plans with teachers how students will use resources and what elements the LMS will teach.

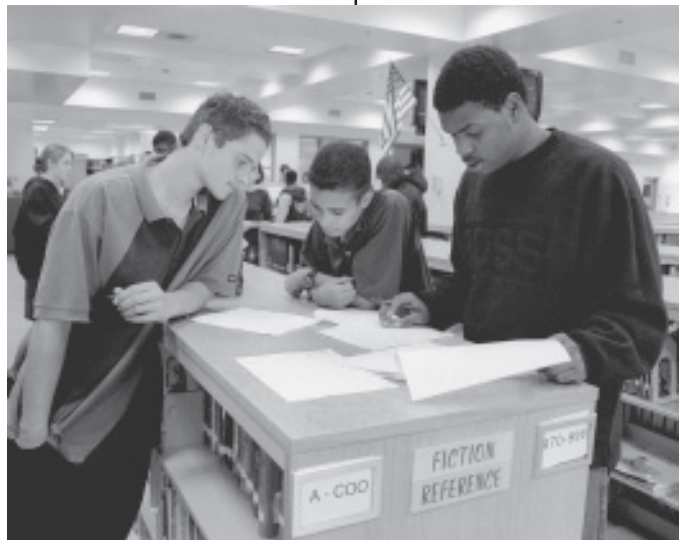
Classes of students use the library with their teacher and media specialists to assist them. In addition, flexible scheduling allows individual students to use the library whenever they may need to throughout the day. Students are encouraged to regard the media center as a place to go whenever they need information, recreational reading, or just need a quiet spot, not a place they visit only on a schedule. With prep scheduling, students not in the prep class may not have access to the media center and in most cases, due to limited staffing, will not have access to the LMS for help.

While some media specialists are able to structure prep coverage to teach information research skills, in many schools it is no more than book check-out time. Students select their books, check them out, and maybe, in lower grades, hear a story. Prep scheduling may not include any “prep time” for the media specialist to prepare his lessons and does not allow him to plan with other teachers during their prep times. A full load of prep coverage also reduces the time available for the many other information management and administrative tasks in a media program.

There are advantages and disadvantages to either type of scheduling or using a combination of both types. What is important is that media specialists have the time they need to teach information literacy, to plan with other teachers, and to perform all the other tasks necessary to managing a school library media program.

Many of the tasks that are important to a successful media program are invisible to those outside the media center. Teachers and principals seem to think that books appear in the media center, cataloged and processed, and hop on the shelves themselves—then jump back when someone is done using them.

How many media specialists does it take to provide an effective media program in a building? The Minnesota Standards recommend a 1:500 ratio as the level of staff needed to serve a student population. In Minnesota, the ratio of media specialist to student is 1:916. This means that some students are not receiving the type of assistance they need. In addition to the licensed staff, media programs need adequate support staff to maintain the collection, provide circulation assistance, and other tasks to keep the media center running.



Assembling resources—print, non-print, and electronic—for many teachers, reference and research assistance, planning, and teaching all require a professional media specialist with time to do it all.

Teachers and principals seem to think that books appear in the media center, cataloged and processed, and hop on the shelves themselves—then jump back when someone is done using them.

# An Investment in Student Learning

*School libraries constitute an indispensable introduction to literacy and learning about the world and the universe. They are pathways to self-discovery. They are instruments for progress and autonomy.* Dr. Vartan Gregorian, President, Carnegie Corporation at the 2002 White House Conference on School Libraries

In the knowledge-based economy of the 21st century, information is power. Those who know how to find it, can evaluate it, and use it will be leaders. Media specialists help create leaders by teaching information literacy and research skills.

There is no question that quality media programs come with costs attached. Media specialists are more expensive to hire because of their advanced training. Hiring support staff adds to the personnel costs. Book prices continue to rise: the current average cost of a juvenile book is about \$16 and hardcover non-fiction for younger grades averages \$21.43. Adult non-fiction prices are reaching an average of \$40. Technology costs for equipment, subscriptions, maintenance, and supplies are significant. However, few other programs in an individual building can have the impact on all students the way a quality media program can.

As media specialists begin to advocate for a greater role in improving student achievement, budgets for books and other materials, as well as for staff, are being cut. These resources are crucial to meeting the needs of students. And once a collection stops growing because of budget cuts, it rapidly becomes outdated and cannot support student learning. In Minnesota, many schools already suffer from a glut of old books, with few new titles added each year. This puts Minnesota students behind in reaching information literacy.

Investing in quality media programs will increase student achievement.

Investing in a quality school library media program will increase student achievement. This is a great return on the money invested—assessment scores rise and students with the ability to understand and use information graduate. Good media centers are the places where students make life-changing discoveries, launch their careers, and develop a love of reading and learning. Students need the latest in books and technology to make such things happen. Minnesota students are being cheated of opportunities because of the current state of many of Minnesota's media centers. Minnesota students deserve a commitment from the legislature, CFL, teachers, principals, school districts, parents, and all others to improve and maintain their media programs now and in the future.

<sup>1</sup> L.H. Ireland, *The Impact of School Library Services on Student Academic Achievement: An Annotated Bibliography, Fifth Edition*, ERIC Document Number ED 450 807, 2001.

<sup>2</sup> The Colorado Library Research Service is a partnership of the Colorado State Library and the Colorado Department of Education with the Library and Information Science Program in the College of Education at the University of Denver.

<sup>3</sup> Keith Curry Lance, *The Impact of School Library Media Centers on Academic Achievement*, Office of Educational Research, US Department of Education, 1994.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Keith Curry Lance and D.V. Lorschter, *Powering Achievement: School Library Programs Make a Difference—the Evidence*, San Jose: Hi Willow Research and Publishing, 2001.

<sup>7</sup> James C. Baughman, “School Libraries and MCAS Scores,” (paper presented at a symposium sponsored by Simmons College School of Library and Information Science, October 26, 2000).

<sup>8</sup> “Library Technology Raises Test Scores, Too,” *School Library Journal* 48, no. 12 (2002):24-26.

<sup>9</sup> Marcia J. Rodney, Keith Curry Lance, and Christine Hamilton-Pennell. *Making the Connection: Quality School Library Media Programs Impact Academic Achievement in Iowa*. A Research Project by Iowa Area Education Agencies, 2002. [http://www.aea9.k12.ia.us/aea\\_statewide\\_study.pdf](http://www.aea9.k12.ia.us/aea_statewide_study.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> A summary of the Standards appears as Appendix 1 of this document.

<sup>11</sup> MEMO is a professional organization that represents school library media specialists in the field, graduate library science and media educators, and their co-workers and colleagues.

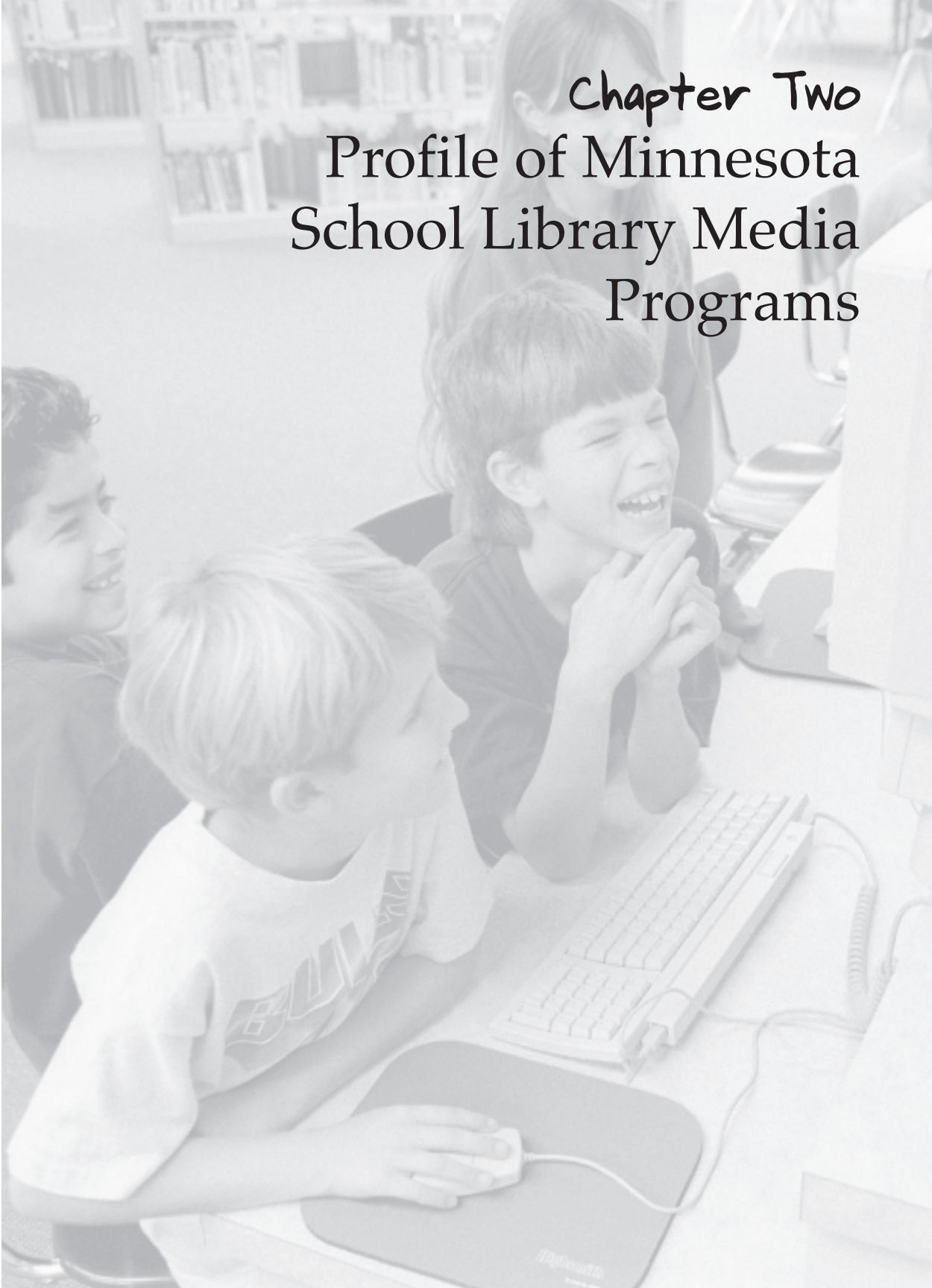
<sup>12</sup> *Information Power: Building Partnerships for Learning*, Chicago: American Library Association and Association for Educational Communications and Technology, 1998.

<sup>13</sup> The National Forum on Information Literacy <http://www.infolit.org/>.

<sup>14</sup> Minnesota Standards and Assessment. Department of Children, Families, & Learning. <http://cflapp.state.mn.us/CLASS/stds/index.jsp>.







## Chapter Two

# Profile of Minnesota School Library Media Programs



# Chapter Two

## Profile of Minnesota School Library Media Programs

### A Word About Process

Development of the School Library Media Center Program Census project (media center census or Census) proceeded in phases over nearly two years. The project was conceived by Library Development and Services (LDS) in May 2001 and developed by Metronet and the other multitypes as a Library Services and Technology (LSTA) grant proposal with a detailed work plan in June. The project began with an analysis of the best-known surveys—those developed by the Colorado Library Research Service (LRS) headed by Keith Curry Lance. LRS has surveyed Colorado school libraries for over 10 years and has published a wealth of data on their web site <http://www.lrs.org>. The Colorado surveys of school libraries provided a starting point and some structure for this project.

Metronet staff established an Advisory Committee for the Census project in September 2001. The Committee included school library media specialists and supervisors from all over the state, Library Development and Services (LDS) staff, and the multitype directors. Other stakeholders were invited—principals, superintendents, school board members, and parents—but did not attend. These stakeholders remained on the email list. The Committee met in September 2001 and January, May, and November 2002 to advise on Census content, site visits, and the final report.

The Committee and Metronet staff determined early on that because our goal was 100% participation, the survey we had planned should be called a census, that it should be on-line, and that it should be as thorough as possible, since this would become baseline data. The final product had about 170 different items. The length was partially concealed because the Census had 14 sections: general information, service hours, staffing, frequency of staff activities, usage, space and capacity, equipment, collection, computers and Internet access, budget, mission, evaluation, staff development, and comments. The comment section at the end of the Census generated responses from 868 respondents. Some of the comments appear in Chapters 2. and 3. A Word version of the Census is in Appendix 4.

Using the Colorado surveys and the *Minnesota Standards for Effective School Library Media Center Programs*<sup>1</sup> as starting points, the Committee determined what questions would provide the best information and how those questions should be worded. The Minnesota Census included questions from the Standards about evaluating the school

**Metronet** is one of seven **multitype library systems** established by the Minnesota State Legislature in 1978. Each regional system in the statewide network serves public libraries, school library media centers, college and university libraries, law, medical, government, museum and other special libraries, and information centers.

The **Library Research Service** is a partnership of the Colorado State Library and the Colorado Department of Education with the Library and Information Science Program in the College of Education at the University of Denver.

Alaska, Pennsylvania, Oregon, and Iowa have contracted with LRS to survey their media centers in recent years.

There is no up-to-date data on school library media programs available from CFL. This lack of statewide data prompted this extensive set of census questions.

As in any project of this size, hindsight provides insight. There are questions we should have asked about district structure and work schedules that would have provided useful information.

For some questions, we didn't think big enough. For example, for the number of students visiting the media center per month, we needed five digits, not four.

An 82% response rate was unexpected. Completion of the census was entirely voluntary.

Appendix 5. lists the districts by level of response.

media center, mission, types of equipment available, etc. to obtain more detail.

In October 2001, Metronet staff began searching for an organization that could build the on-line Census and provide the database at the end of the data collection. TIES<sup>2</sup> was our choice for survey developer because the organization has developed and supported computer applications for student record keeping, accounting, payroll and human resources for its 35 school district members and has a record of success in developing databases. Two TIES staff started on the project, a programmer, and a database developer. The latter moved to another job out of state before the Census went public. Greg Bartley and Derek Rusch were the principal TIES contacts.

During the development stage, TIES and Metronet staff made decisions about answer variables that structured the Census data. For example, for the question: how many *hours* is the media center open, we decided that 0 to 40 in increments of one should be the range of possible answers. Other questions required answer ranges, i.e. 1-5, 6-10, etc. These decisions structured the kinds of analysis we were able to conduct on the raw data.

Five Committee members volunteered to test a paper version of the Census in December 2001, and then again on-line in February 2002. Those tests reduced the potential for error and improved the Census.

The Census went public on February 19, 2002 and closed on May 25. The original closing date was April 5; however, many schools had not entered their data at that point. Ann Walker Smalley, formerly of LDS, took over the task of increasing the response rate in late March. She had a major impact on the final number of respondents.

The School Media Program Census had responses from 1,172 schools, 82% of all regular public elementary and secondary schools. **217 school districts had 100% response; every school in the district responded.** 74 districts had partial responses. 45 districts did not respond. Some large districts had only one or two schools that didn't respond. Both Minneapolis and St. Paul made valiant efforts to have high response rates and both exceeded 50%. The third largest district in the state, Anoka-Hennepin (ISD 11), had 100% response, as did many other large districts. We did not attempt to get responses from alternative learning centers or charter schools. Our goal was to encourage the highest response from "regular" public schools.

After data collection in the on-line census closed, Eric Hinsdale, Dana Noonan, and Susan Baxter worked on cleaning the data so it could be analyzed.

In July, Metronet contracted with statistician Dr. Yi Du, Research Director for the Edina Public Schools. The section of *Chapter 2. Census Results* contains the results of her analysis of the data.

The Advisory Committee strongly recommended that the Census be grounded in actual school media center visits. Plans for these visits were included as part of the original work plan. The multitype directors recruited the site visitors. Metronet then trained the visitors to ensure comparable results. The visitors were retired school media specialists or librarians with experience with school libraries. Multitype directors made some visits.

The Advisory Committee established a process that included a visit to one elementary and one secondary school in each of the 67 Minnesota State Senate districts (1992 boundaries). Beginning in April 2002 and continuing until the end of May, two site visitors called on each of the randomly chosen 131 Minnesota schools (out of a possible 134), interviewing principals and media specialists. They used a common set of questions for their visits. Each visitor wrote a separate report and submitted it to Metronet. The list of schools selected for visits is in Appendix 7. The information contained in the site visit reports is summarized in *Chapter 3. Site Visit Results*.

After the data was analyzed and the site visit information was summarized, Metronet staff distilled the information into a Power Point presentation for conferences held in the fall of 2002. These audiences were School Administrators, MEMO, Education Minnesota, and TIES. Participants at each session provided valuable input into this final document.

Site visitors received excellent cooperation from principals and library media specialists. The tight time schedule for the site visits presented few problems because they were so accommodating.

<sup>1</sup> *Minnesota Standards for Effective School Library Media Programs 2000* was developed by a Committee of the Minnesota Educational Media Organization (MEMO) in cooperation with the Minnesota State Library Agency, Library Development and Services, Department of Children, Families & Learning. It contains 26 standards at three levels: minimum, standard, and exemplary. The Commissioner of CFL distributed the Standards to all school districts in May 2001.

<sup>2</sup> TIES is a nonprofit consortium owned by 36 Minnesota school districts. Its goal is to bring together technology and education to create comprehensive solutions for school administrators, educators, and students. TIES is in St. Paul.



The Standards list 26 elements of a library program with minimum, standard, and exemplary levels to each element.

## Census Results

This section describes the most important findings from the data analysis.<sup>1</sup> The analysis was completed by Dr. Yi Du, Research Director for the Edina Public Schools, under contract with Metronet.<sup>2</sup> Wherever possible the analysis is compared to the appropriate minimum, standard, and exemplary standards described in the *Minnesota Standards for Effective School Library Media Programs 2000*.<sup>3</sup> All of the Census data is from the 2001-2002 school year. More detailed tables are included in Appendix 9. Additional information from an October/November email survey is included where appropriate.

### Principal Findings

Student reading achievement in elementary and secondary schools is related to school media center spending and to the number of hours media specialists work. This finding is based on an extensive analysis of the Minnesota School Library Census and results from the Minnesota statewide reading assessments in Grades 3, 5 and 8.<sup>4</sup>

First, schools with above average student reading scores have school media specialists who work more hours.

**Table 1**  
**Minnesota Schools with Above Average Reading Scores**  
**Compared to Library Media Specialist Work Hours**

Library Media Specialist (LMS) Work Hours Per Week	Number of schools with above average student scores on MCA and BST state reading tests 2000/01			Total Schools
	Grade 3 Schools	Grade 5 Schools	Grade 8 Schools	
LMS working less than 36 hours	93	75	42	210
LMS working 36 hours or more	166	162	95	<b>423</b>
Total Schools with above average student scores	259	237	137	633

66.8% of schools with above average student reading scores had media specialists who worked 36 hours or more per week.

For the 633 Minnesota schools with above average student scores on the Grade 3, 5, and 8 reading tests, 423 (66.8%) were schools where the library media specialist worked full-time rather than part-time: a ratio of 2:1.

Second, there is a statistically significant relationship between higher reading scores and larger school media center budgets at the elementary level.<sup>5</sup> The larger a library media center budget is for books and electronic materials, the higher a student's reading achievement is at the elementary level.<sup>5</sup> The larger a library media center budget is

for books and electronic materials, the higher a student's reading achievement is.

The census illustrates the perilous state of current school media center budgets and collections. While higher school media center budgets have a positive impact on student reading scores, Minnesota's school media center book budgets in the 2001-2002 school year were insufficient to meet the Standards test of "current." A current collection has an average age of not greater than 10 years.

The tables below show the average copyright date in Minnesota school media centers. For all schools, the average copyright is 1985, close to 20 years old. The budgets at each level are insufficient to bring the print collection up to a 1992 copyright date to meet the "current" definition.

**Table 2.**  
**Minnesota School Media Center Book Collections 2002**  
**By School Level**

	Number of Schools	Volumes per student	Average Copyright Year	Book Budget Per Pupil
Elementary	490	35.9	1986	\$9.35
Middle	291	28.8	1984	\$10.44
High	230	26.4	1983	\$11.29
<b>Total Schools</b>	1011			

**Table 3.**  
**Minnesota School Media Center Book Collections 2002**  
**By School Size**

Enrollment	Number of Schools	Volumes per student	Average Copyright Year	Book Budget Per Pupil
<300		52.9	1983	\$17.20
300-499	274	33.6	1985	\$10.40
500-699	253	25.6	1986	\$8.60
700-999	142	20.2	1985	\$7.90
1000-1999	102	13.3	1983	\$6.70
2000+	13	9	1982	\$4.20
<b>Total Schools</b>	1011			

These findings suggest that incremental improvements in staffing, budget, and collections of the school library media center may positively impact student reading achievement. See Appendix 9 for details.

## Data Summary

The following summary describes the results from the major sections of the Census: hours and staffing, collections, budget, media and information skills curricula, staff activities, prep coverage, media center usage, space, computers and other equipment, multitype regional comparisons. All of the Census data is from the 2001-2002 school

The italicized comments in the sidebar are typical of the comments in the on-line Census.

*"Putting a lot of money into technology in the media centers isn't a bad thing because we want our students to be computer-literate, but to confuse that with being book-literate would be a mistake."*

All census data is from the 2001-2002 school year.

*"With the reduction in funding to media centers in the district, we will have plenty of brand new computers sitting with no one to teach lessons or help students learn to access information"*

These statistics on work hours obscure the fact that many school media centers share staff, and the media center may be closed during some school hours

Metronet conducted a survey of Census respondents in October 2002 to determine what had changed from the original spring 2002 Census findings. The information from that survey is included where appropriate.

## Meeting the Standards

The school library media programs that responded to the Census met these *Minnesota Standards for School Library Media Center Programs* for resources and staffing.

**Standard 14:** The book collection exceeds the exemplary level of 20 items.

**Standard 18 (minimum level):** About 89% of school districts employ at least one full-time media professional .

**Standard 18:** 80% of school districts employ one fully licensed full-time media professional at least one half day in each school in the district.

**Standard 18:** About 63% of the state's school media centers are kept open for 30-40 hours weekly during school hours.

**Standard 19 (minimum level):** About 63% employ part-time clerical and technical support.

## Hours and Staffing

*Standard 13: The media program is flexibly scheduled so the professional services of the media specialist are available when needed by students and staff.*

- Minnesota school library media centers are open an average of 28.4 hours per week during class hours, about 5 1/2 hours each day. Open hours range from 1 to 43 hours per week. The media centers are open about 5 hours during non-class hours or about one-half hour before and after school; the range was 0-20 hours. About 79% of centers are closed at least one hour while classes are in session.
- Only 10 schools were open more than 15 hours per week before and after classes; more than 200 schools were not open outside of class hours.
- At all grade levels, school size **does not** have an impact on the service hours media centers share staff, and the media center may be closed during some school hours

*Standard 19: The building has sufficient clerical and technical staff to allow the professional media staff to work with teachers and students.*

- Licensed media specialists are the most common workers in the typical library media center. The average media specialist works 34 hours per week in the media center. A majority of schools (84%) report one licensed school media specialist in the media center. About 5% report two licensed specialists in the media center. 11% report no licensed staff work in their media centers. In schools with over 300 students at least 90%

have a licensed media specialist working in the media center.

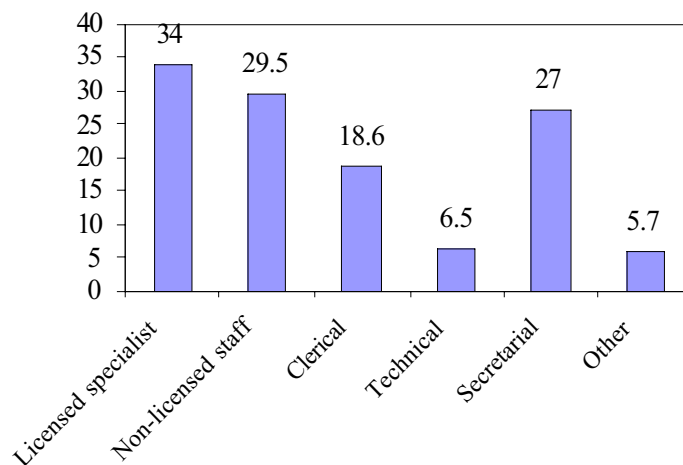
- Part-time clerical staff work 18.6 hours per week, while non-licensed staff serving in a licensed position (acting as the school library media specialist) work 29.5 hours weekly. These statistical averages obscure the fact that the media center may be closed during some school hours. Larger schools tend to have more licensed staff and more clerical staff, and the staff works more hours in the media center.
- 44% of respondents report that volunteers work in the school media center with the majority working in elementary schools. More volunteers are reported in larger schools. No information is available on the number of hours volunteers work per week or the tasks they perform.
- During the 2001-02 school year, 85% of those in charge of the school media center in the responding schools were trained to manage a school library. The majority (76%) of staff in charge of the school library media center are licensed media specialists. This includes library media specialists (35%), media generalists (40%), and media supervisors (1%). 9% of staff in charge hold a librarian's license, 7% hold a teacher's license, and 8% have not been licensed.

*"Library budget will be cut once again but the school is committed to having a full-time librarian."*

*"The licensed media person's hours may increase to a half-time position. This would be split among three schools... two elementary and one high school"*

*"Our school has had a library secretary take the place of a Media Specialist for the last two years."*

**Figure 1. Work Hours of Paid Staff Per Week**



*Standard 18: There is at least one full licensed full-time media professional serving at least one half day in each school in the district.*

*Standard 18 exemplary level: There is one full-time media specialist for each 500 students in each building.*

- About 80% of school media centers report that at least one licensed full-line media specialist spends at least one-half day in each school in the district. If a full time media specialist

*"The only reasons there are no more staff cuts is that existing staff are needed to maintain the technology. When licensed staff (retire or resign) they will be replaced by non-licensed staff."*

*"The district is cutting the media position next fall. The plan is to staff a brand new K-12 school with a paraprofessional and put a teacher in there for 1 hour a day."*

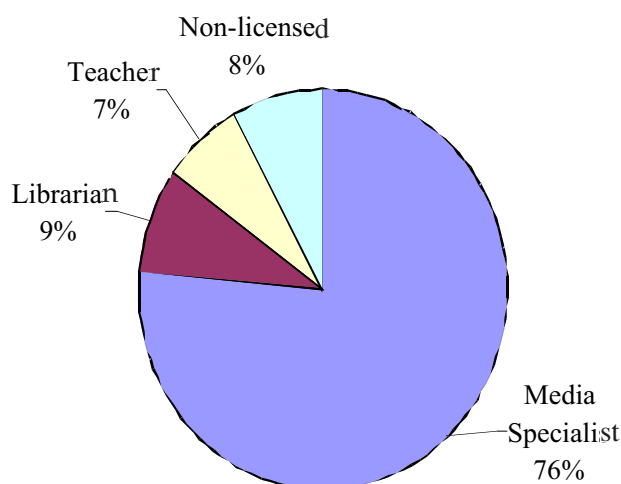
*"I currently have two elementary schools 11 miles apart...I am in this building 12 hours a week."*

School size makes a difference in professional staffing. The smaller the school, the fewer hours a media specialist works.

works 35 hours per week, 405 of the responding schools met the Standard 18 mark of 1:500 students. If full-line equals 40 hours per week, 208 schools meet the 1:500 student standard.

- Of the 569 responses to the October 2002 email survey, 271 reported that staff levels had stayed the same. 20 reported an increase, 65 reported a decrease (hours unspecified); 16 reported that professional staff had been eliminated. 87 schools reported that support staff had decreased, and 31 reported that support had been eliminated.
- Hours for licensed and clerical staff increased with the increase in school size in almost all cases. The following tables show the work hours of **paid staff** in elementary, middle, and high schools divided by size of school. At all levels only schools with more than 525/550 students have at least one half time clerical assistance.

**Figure 2**  
**License of the Person in Charge of the School Library Media Center on a Daily Basis**



**Table 4. Work Hours Per Week of Paid Staff By School Size**  
**Elementary School Media Centers**

	Licensed media specialist	Non-licensed staff	Clerical staff
Number of Students (School Size)	Hours	Hours	Hours
1-193	13.4	17.9	5.4
194 - 300	22.5	26.5	6.4
301 – 401	30.9	26.4	11.2
402-525	33.7	29.2	16.2
526 -1500	39.7	27.9	21.0

- In smaller schools at all levels, the licensed media specialist works 5 hours per day or less (slightly more at the high school level).
- In larger schools at all levels, licensed and clerical staff work more hours but the school library media center is not open more hours.
- In October 2002, respondents reported that 128 professional staff and 54 clerical staff were working the same hours but had taken on additional duties.

Support staff hours are less than half-time on average in nearly all elementary schools.

## Media Center Collections

*Standard 14: There is a current print collection of at least 15-20 print items per student and resources are specifically chosen to support curricular needs.*

**Table 5. Work Hours Per Week of Paid Staff By School Size  
Secondary School Media Centers**

	Licensed Media Specialist		Non-licensed Staff		Clerical Staff	
	M.S.	H.S.	M.S.	H.S.	M.S.	H.S.
Number of Students	Hours	Hours	Hours	Hours	Hours	Hours
1-140	16.0	18.4	30.2	33.0	0.0	0.0
141 - 193	18.9	23.9	28.7	26.7	12.0	12.0
194 - 305	25.3	26.1	29.3	28.0	12.4	12.7
306 - 549	31.2	30.6	26.3	26.1	13.1	14.8
550 - 1099	37.7	34.7	31.3	32.6	24.1	25.5
1100 - 2520	43.0	46.8	34.4	42.2	29.5	30.9
More than 2520		54.5		37.7		40.0

M.S.—Middle School H.S.—High School

- School library print collections exceed the highest level of the Minnesota standards. Minnesota school library media centers have an average of 31 print items per student.

*Standard 14: Current is defined as the collection having an **average age of not greater than 10 years**, acknowledging that some areas will need more current materials and some areas will have older materials.*  
[emphasis added]

- The average copyright date for all books in all media centers is 1985, with a range of average copyright dates from 1960 to 1999; the median is also 1985. Some large districts have average copyright dates prior to 1980. One large metropolitan suburban district has an average copyright date of 1974.
- The average copyright date for all books in Minnesota high school media centers is **1983**. The Census asked specifically about books in science and geography since those subjects are time sensitive. The copyright dates for those subjects range from 1984-1986.
- At the elementary level, school size has some impact on the

Only the very largest high schools (more than 2,520 students) have an average of one full-time clerical person.

Average copyright date in all schools is 1985; in high schools it is 1983.

What has happened since 1985? A few highlights:

1986  
The Space Shuttle Challenger explodes  
Halley's Comet returns

1987  
NASA confirms a 4% decrease in the ozone layer since 1974

1988  
USSR withdraws from Afghanistan  
George H. W. Bush elected President

1989  
Berlin Wall falls  
Exxon Valdez oil spill  
Rioting in Tiananmen Square



1990  
East & West Germany reunited  
Hubble Telescope launched

1991  
Gulf War starts  
World Wide Web debuts

1992  
Rodney King verdict sparks LA riots  
Bill Clinton elected President

1993  
First World Trade Center bombing

1994  
Channel tunnel opens between Britain & France  
Russia invades Chechnya

1995  
Bombing of federal building in Oklahoma City

1996  
Clinton re-elected  
M. Albright appointed first woman Secretary of State  
"Mad Cow" disease in Great Britain

1997  
Dolly the sheep is cloned  
Mother Teresa dies

1998  
Euro currency adopted by EU

1999  
Columbine H.S. shooting  
First hand transplant

2000  
George W. Bush elected President  
Human genome mapped

2001  
9/11 World Trade Center disaster  
Artificial heart implanted

number of books in the collection as well as the copyright year. Larger schools have somewhat newer collections. At the high school level, school size makes little difference in size or age of the print collection.

**Table 6. Average Copyright Dates for Books and Books Per Student in School Media Centers**

	Overall	Elementary	Middle	High
	©Year	©Year	©Year	©Year
Books (all types)	1985	1986	1984	1983
Geography	1985	1986	1985	1983
Science	1985	1986	1984	1983
Books per Student	31	35	29	26

**Table 7. Elementary School Library Media Center Collection and Book Budget by School Size**

Number of Students (School Size)	# Books	Copyright year for all books	Book Budget
1-193	11629	1981	\$2,300
194 - 300	10131	1985	\$3,179
301 – 401	12639	1984	\$3,136
402-525	15444	1987	\$4,511
526 -1500	15844	1987	\$4,903

- School media centers circulation statistics include: 737 items circulate on average each week: 981 items in elementary schools; 425 in middle schools and 293 in high schools.

## Media Center Budget

*Standard 23: The media specialist yearly submits a budget itemizing suggested levels of spending for collection maintenance and growth, subscription fees, supplies and other resources.*

- Media center budgets are developed by the media specialist 33% of the time, by the principal 34%, by the superintendent 19% of the time, by the technology director 4%, and 9% of the time by other. Hardware budgets are developed at the building level 24% of the time, at the district level 71%.
- The size of the library budget is closely correlated with the presence of a licensed media specialist.
- The average total annual budget for the library media program at all levels is \$12,524. This total **does not** include the salary and benefits for media center personnel. 225 respondents

reported nothing or 0 for budget numbers. 46 reported a budget of \$300 or less. Elementary school libraries report an average budget of \$29 per student; secondary schools report \$33.

**Table 8. Annual Media Center Budget in 2001-2002**

	<b>All</b>	<b>Elem</b>	<b>Middle</b>	<b>High</b>
Annual budget	\$12,524	\$9,933	\$14,906	\$18,309
Books & other print materials	5107	4137	5793	6655
Materials in electronic formats	1348	667	1590	2713
Non-print materials	851	661	1006	1197
Hardware & Software	4327	2933	6214	5673
Media Center Budget Per Pupil	29	25	33	33

- Of the total budget, \$5,107 is available for books—about 41% of the total. About \$3,830 of the total is budgeted for computer hardware on average; the remainder is allocated to subscriptions, to materials in electronic, video and audio formats, and to software updates. The range for book budgets was \$0 to \$30,000. The largest book budgets were in middle and high schools around the state.
- 42% reported that the budget for the media center decreased since 1998-99; 34% reported it stayed the same; 10% reported it fluctuated; 14% reported it increased. The data vary widely among schools and districts on the question of media center budgets.
- Most Census respondents stated in the comment section at the end that their budgets have decreased since the 1998-99 school year.
- In the fall 2002 survey 335 out of 569 respondents reported that their media center budgets had remained the same; 73 reported an increase; 158 reported a decrease. Some increases were attributed to one-time grants or special funds.

**Table 9. Media Center Budget Comparison by School Size  
Elementary Schools**

<b>Number of Students (School Size)</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Books</b>	<b>Total Budget Per pupil</b>
1-193	\$8,336	\$2,300	\$72
194 - 300	\$7,049	\$3,179	\$28
301 – 401	\$8,084	\$3,136	\$24
402-525	\$11,896	\$4,511	\$26
526 -1500	\$10,776	\$4,903	\$16

- Table 9. and Table 10. show book budgets and the per pupil budget for all media center expenditures including books, computer hardware and other equipment, periodicals, videos and

2002

East Timor becomes  
new nation  
UN arms inspectors return  
to Iraq

2003

Dolly the cloned  
sheep dies

*"There will be NO  
technology money, yet an  
increase in class size may  
leave us without enough  
computers for each child in  
the class."*

Book prices keep rising.  
Buying all the books that  
won the 1985 Newbery  
and Caldecott Medals and  
the medal honor books  
would now cost \$131.97, a  
33% increase over the  
1985 cost. Libraries that  
do not purchase books in  
the year they are  
published often pay a  
premium when they  
purchase the books in  
later years.

*"I will have the smallest budget in 22 years but the library has many more needs. Today my budget must cover far more than the books and periodicals that used to be the basis of our collections."*

Minnesota schools have not kept pace with spending. Media Center budgets have not increased, but the budgets are expected to cover more; books, periodicals, software, on-line databases, video equipment, computers, supplies, and more.

**Table 10. Media Center Budget Comparison by School Size  
Elementary Schools**

Number of Students (School Size)	Total Budget		Book Budget		Total Budget Per pupil	
	M.S.	H.S.	M.S.	H.S.	M.S.	H.S.
1-140	\$10,494	\$12,264	\$3,022	\$3,236	\$91	\$107
141 – 193	\$9,591	\$7,482	\$3,029	\$2,828	\$57	\$45
194 – 305	\$11,165	\$10,939	\$4,796	\$4,419	\$47	\$46
306 – 549	\$16,304	\$14,517	\$4,544	\$4,649	\$38	\$35
550 – 1099	\$16,327	\$24,527	\$6,738	\$7,598	\$22	\$33
1100 – 2520	\$15,072	\$22,366	\$9,628	\$9,637	\$12	\$14
More than 2520		\$26,625		\$12,800		\$6

audio materials, and other categories. Table 9. is for Elementary Schools; Table 10. shows data for Secondary Schools.

- Smaller schools appear to spend more per pupil on both books and hardware (computers and other equipment). Full table is in Appendix 9. More information is needed before any conclusions can be drawn.
- According to *School Library Journal*, the average price of a school library book in 2001 was \$18.78. The per pupil book budget in Minnesota shown in Table 3. is about \$10.50, only 55% of the average price. On average, Minnesota school media center budgets have about enough funds to buy about one-half of a book for each student.
- The median amount spent regionally on books in school media centers is shown in Table 11. In the North Central region, which includes Minnesota, the median expenditure for books is \$6,700, 31% more than the Minnesota average of \$5,107.

**Table 11. School Media Center Average Book Expenditures  
By U.S. Region\*  
1999-2000**

Median book expenditures Northeast	\$9,750
Median book expenditures South	\$8,174
Median book expenditures North Central	\$6,700
Median book expenditures West	\$7,112

\* from biennial survey of school media centers by *School Library Journal*

## Media and Information Skills Curriculum

*Standard 1: 50%-100% of classes use the media program's materials and services the equivalent of at least once each semester. All media skills are taught through content-based projects.*

*Standard 2: Students complete all resource-based projects required by the Graduation Rule's High Standards. There are a clear set of media and technology benchmarks for each grade level.*

*Standard 15: Intellectual freedom and the right to information is taught as a part of the information literacy curriculum.*

- 73% of the responding districts have implemented a library media curriculum that covers grades K-12. 88% of the curricula include research and media skills and 84% include ethical and legal behaviors and copyright. The research skills are integrated into nearly all regular school subjects, i.e. science, industrial technology, English language arts, social studies, and other subjects. No information is available on the currency of the curriculum or the frequency it is taught.

## Media Specialist Activities

When asked about the frequency their activities, respondents listed these as their top five **most frequent activities**:

- All other library activities—processing, retrieval, checking materials in or out, re-shelving books (90%)
- Managing or operating the library automation system and troubleshooting computer and technical problems (87%)
- Teaching students information skills (85%)
- Collection development (85%)
- Assisting students with Internet skills (82%)

The two most frequent activities are non-teaching and are considered support staff tasks.

Table 12. illustrates the differences in the monthly activities done by media specialists by grade level. The full table is in Appendix 9.

**Table 12. Most Frequent Paid Staff Activities per Typical Mont by Grade Levels**

	All	Elementary	Middle	High
Number	1014	550	240	224
All other library activities	90%	91%	92%	90%
Managing or operating the library automation system and troubleshooting computer and technical problems	87%	85%	91%	90%
Teaching students information skills.	85%	88%	80%	81%
Collection development	83%	82%	86%	84%
Assist students with Internet activities	82%	74%	94%	97%
Instructional planning with teachers	68%	61%	77%	77%
Teaching students cooperatively with teachers	63%	55%	70%	74%
Providing reading incentive activities for students	61%	76%	44%	29%
Extra duties unrelated to school library services.	31%	34%	30%	20%

*"Technology has hindered the students ability to problem solve, read and comprehend. What they access on the Internet rarely gets evaluated. Plagiarism has increased dramatically."*

Instructional planning with teachers is considered a key role of media specialists in the Standards. Only 63% of Minnesota media specialists indicate that it is their most frequent activity.

*"I am seeing a generation of students who believe everything they access on the Internet."*

*"Since 1987, I have added 3 additional libraries to my workload, plus duties for AV, computers (order, repair, train), and four computer labs."*

*"Because we teach classes all day, we cannot accommodate the many requests we get from teachers to find books and or do on-line research."*

*"Prep time is provided by a Library Clerk every day to every class for 30 minutes. This takes most of her time, so she doesn't do other support tasks."*

*"With 40 students in a class, teachers are unwilling to assign any media center projects."*

- Staff in secondary school media centers spend more time on instructional planning with teachers and teaching cooperatively, while elementary staff spend more time providing reading incentive activities for students.
- In most instances, the frequency of media specialist activities was similar across grade levels, e.g. media specialists in all schools taught information skills and developed their collections at about the same frequency.
- Middle school and high school media specialists report a higher frequency of assisting students with Internet activities.
- School media specialists report that they spend time on extra duties unrelated to school library services; hours and types of activities were not specified.
- Correlation analysis shows that staff who spend more time on instructional planning with teachers are more likely to teach students information skills, teach cooperatively with teachers, and provide in-service training to teachers and other staff.

## Prep Period Coverage

*Standard 13: Teacher prep time and study halls are NOT provided in the media center.*

- School media specialists cover two prep periods for teachers each day on average, more commonly in elementary and middle schools than in high schools. 707 students visit the school media center each month for prep periods during which the teacher is not in the media center.
- Table 12. shows that elementary media specialists cover 58 prep periods per month while high school media specialists cover only 5—the difference between 100 and 1100 students.

## Media Center Usage

- Media centers average more than 100 visits by students each day or more than 2064 visits per month.
- 805 students on average visit the media center per month with a class accompanied by a teacher. During these periods the media specialist can provide information skills instruction to an average of 36 students.

## Media Center Space and Student Capacity

*Standard 1: 50%-100% of classes use the media program's materials and services the equivalent of at least once each semester.*

*Standard 11: The media center has a variety of workspaces and tools for at least 3 classes to work researching and producing projects. The media*

center has spaces that support students working individually, in small groups and in classes.

**Table 13. Library Media Center Usage per Typical Month**

	All	Elem.	M.S.	H.S.
Number of students visiting library for prep classes	707	1100	227	100
Number of students visiting library for whole classes	805	483	986	1310
Number of Individual or small groups visit	552	302	722	987
Number of prep periods provided by media specialists	37	58	14	5

- On average, about 68 students can work in the entire library media center at one time. Usually two classes can fit into the media center for instructional purposes; the computer lab can hold 32 students.
- At the elementary level the average functional capacity of the media center is between 39 and 70 students depending on the size of the school, or from 1.6 to 2.2 classes. Computer labs at the elementary level can accommodate between 19 and 34 students on average.
- Elementary school library media centers range between 1700 and 3500 square feet with the largest centers in schools with enrollments over 525 students.
- At the middle school and high school levels the media centers can hold 1.4 to 2.7 classes at one time for information skills instruction.

**Table 14. Media Center & Computer Labs Space and Capacity  
Middle and High Schools**

Number of Students (School Size)	Functional student capacity		Square Feet of center		Maximum # students in computer lab	
	M.S.	H.S.	M.S.	H.S.	M.S.	H.S.
1-140	34	36	1153	1400	25	29
141 - 193	44	53	2899	3174	26	22
194 – 305	72	74	2257	2389	26	24
306 – 549	56	55	4677	4400	31	28
550 - 1099	74	78	4582	5731	42	38
1100 - 2520	91	105	4574	6320	42	44
More than 2521		130		7600		94

M.S.—Middle School H.S.—High School

- At the middle and high school level, even the smallest school's media center can hold at least one class of students. In the largest middle and high schools, two classes or more can easily be accommodated in the media center.

Space for more than one class insures that students can visit the media center by themselves or in small groups even when a class is in session.

*"With 130 more students than last year, no students will have media center visits during reading and will miss information media skills, circulation, book talks, etc. because we don't have the space."*

*"We continue to have an increase in student population; overflow classes meet in media center four days a week for about three hours of school day."*



Today's electronic equipment needs its own supply budget—batteries, paper, toner, etc.

The costs of technology—purchase and maintenance of computers and peripherals, supplies, staff support for training and repair, line costs, and more—were not addressed in the Census. CFL's Technology Plan for K-12 will address this. The costs are a significant part of all school budgets.

Students and teachers need to learn to use all the equipment in a media center. Media specialists usually do the training and sometimes the repair.

- The computer labs connected to the media centers in the larger middle and high schools can hold one class. In smaller schools, the computer lab can hold a small class on average.

## Computers, Technical Support, and Equipment

*Standard 8: On-line information sources are available and used. Students use desktop publishing, multimedia construction programs, drawing, graphing programs, digital photography and video editing, to create and complete projects.*

- Technical support for media center computers and other equipment is provided by district tech staff (48%), school tech staff (29%), by the media specialist (18%), and by other (5%). In the schools where the media specialist provides tech support, he may not have time for other activities.
- An average school media center in Minnesota is responsible for about 44 computers, with about 24 networked computers within the media center.
- The vast majority of respondents reported that their school media center had both film and digital cameras, at least one digital video camcorder, laser and inkjet printers, a projection system, portable computers, overhead projectors, and fax machines.

*Standard 8: The media center has a telephone and fax machine for professional and supervised student use."*

- Only 76% of respondents reported having voice mail which means that a sizeable number of media specialists are unable to receive phone messages from other teachers, parents, or students.
- The age of the media center equipment tended to be less than five years—a significant contrast to the average copyright date of the book collection. The average age of the media center computers is 3 years. Comments in the on-line Census and from the site visits indicate that in some parts of the state computers in the school media center are more than 15 years old.

*Standard 8: Research is done with the aid of an automated library catalog.*

- 65% of media centers reported that they have networked computers able to access an automated catalog and electronic databases.

*Standard 14: Electronic research materials are available from all networked computers in the building...Students have access to; a computerized union catalog of district holdings as well as access to the catalogs of public, academic and special libraries such as MnLINK from interlibrary loans can be made.*

- In nearly half of the schools (more than half of the middle and high schools), the library media center databases are accessible from home or outside of school.

**Table 15. Networked Computers in Library/Media Center**

	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Elem.</b>	<b>M.S.</b>	<b>H.S.</b>
Number of Networked Computers	24	20	25	29
All Networked Computers access to an automated catalog	65%	65%	59%	60%
Access to school library database from home/outside school	46%	39%	51%	58%

M.S.—Middle School H.S.—High School

- At all levels, school size significantly affects the number of networked computers and their access to an automated catalog and to the Electronic Library of Minnesota (ELM)<sup>7</sup> and other databases.
- Table 15. and Table 16. show that in small schools at all levels a sizeable percentage of students do not have access to an automated catalog. In high schools with fewer than 305 students, less than half have access to such a catalog. In middle schools, only 53% of students in schools with an enrollment 549 or less have access to an automated catalog. An automated catalog is an electronic record of media center holdings of book and other materials. It is searchable by various fields such as author, title, subject, or keyword. In some areas, school collections are included in the regional public library system automated catalogs, which expands student access.

## Multitype Regional Comparisons

Multitype library regions in Minnesota have some significant differences in their school library media centers. An analysis of these differences includes staffing and work hours, students visiting the media center with a class, computer and Internet accessibility and budgets. See Appendix 8 for a map showing the multitype regions.

**Table 16. Access to Computer Networks and Catalogs  
by School Size  
Elementary Schools**

<b>Number of Students (School Size)</b>	<b># Networked Computers</b>	<b>Access to an automated catalog</b>
1-193	10	37%
194 - 300	12	54%
301 – 401	20	63%
402-525	23	71%
526 -1500	23	71%

*"We could not survive without the Electronic Library of Minnesota databases from the State of Minnesota. They are more important to the quality of our research than the Internet."*

Without an automated catalog students must rely on a traditional card catalog to access media center materials.

A number of respondents reported that their computer equipment was aging and needed constant maintenance.

*"Online databases will be limited to what is available from MINITEX. There are no other funds in the budget."*

A computer network connects a group of computers together; usually they can share software applications, peripherals like printers, and files. Individual schools have local area networks; districts may have wide area networks depending upon the distances between schools.

**Table 17. Access to Computer Networks and Catalogs  
by School Size  
Middle and High Schools**

Number of Students (School Size)	Middle School		High School	
	Number of Networked Computers	Access To Automated Catalog	Number of Networked Computers	Access To Automated Catalog
1-140	19	22%	21	29%
141 - 193	10	44%	15	33%
194 – 305	23	51%	23	48%
306 – 549	21	53%	20	52%
550 - 1099	30	65%	29	63%
1100 - 2520	32	87%	47	80%
More than 2520			41	100%

## Staffing

**Table 18. Analysis of Media Center Staffing  
By Multitype Region**

Region	Number of Media Centers	Average Number of Media Specialists	Average Total Hours Per Week	Average Number Clerical Staff	Total Hours Per Week
CMLE	139	0.89	32.8	0.8	20.4
METRONET	435	1.03	40.8	0.9	23.5
NCLC	85	0.96	29.6	0.5	5.4
NLLN	123	0.82	28.7	0.6	11.0
SAMMIE	83	0.76	22.0	0.6	8.4
SELS	150	0.91	29.2	0.7	15.0
SMILE	34	0.88	24.8	0.8	17.4
Total	1049	0.94	34.0	0.8	18.6

- The number of media specialists in each school varies significantly from .76 (3/4 time) to more than one. The hours these media specialists work ranges from 22 hours to more than 40. To have an average of a half-time media specialist in the south-west part of the state, many media centers have media specialists who work very few hours.
- The average number of clerical staff also varies significantly as does their hours worked. SAMMIE has the lowest number of clerical staff and the smallest number of hours worked. Clerical staff on average in that region work about one school day per week. The result of such a low number of hours may be that the school library media center is closed for periods of time.

- In the Twin Cities metropolitan area the number of media specialists, the number of hours worked, clerical staff and hours are all higher than other regions. At least part of this difference can be attributed to school size. The Metronet region has a number of schools with over 2,000 students; with that size school the Standards recommend a ratio of 1:500 or four professional staff plus clerical and technical staff for support.

## Media Center Budget

Budgets differ significantly across multitype regions.

**Table 19. Annual Media Center Budget by Multitype Region**

	Total Media Center Average Budget	Books and Other Print Materials	Materials in Electronic Formats	Hardware
<b>CMLE</b>	\$18,425	\$5,554	\$2,111	\$7,281
<b>METRONET</b>	10901	5366	1249	4018
<b>NCLC</b>	10009	5906	1108	1099
<b>NLLN</b>	13558	5177	1395	2945
<b>SAMMIE</b>	11267	3598	910	3408
<b>SELS</b>	12318	4495	1271	2493
<b>SMILE</b>	14284	4240	1135	3506
<b>Total</b>	12534	5107	1349	3835

- CMLE, headquartered in St. Cloud, has a significantly large budget than the other multitypes. Some of this difference is in hardware, some in electronically- formatted materials. Hardware includes computers, DVD players, digital cameras, digital camcorders, etc. The most significant difference is in the budget for materials in electronic formats, which ranges from \$910 per year to \$2,111, which is 232% larger. These electronic resources provide resources for students which they may not see otherwise. Book budgets are also vastly different with the SAMMIE region having the lowest average budget for books.

## Media Center Usage

**Table 20. Number of Classes Visiting the Media Center by Multitype Region**

Region	# Whole Classes Scheduled For Media Center Visits
<b>CMLE</b>	1048
<b>METRONET</b>	843
<b>NCLC</b>	690
<b>NLLN</b>	739
<b>SAMMIE</b>	417
<b>SELS</b>	780
<b>SMILE</b>	889
<b>Total</b>	805

- The average number of classes scheduled for instruction in the media center ranges from 417 to 1048. This collaboration between the media specialist and teachers is the preferred method of teaching students information literacy and research skills. If the school has only a part-time media specialist, there are fewer opportunities for students to learn information skills

## Computers and Network Accessibility

The number of computers available and student access to computer networks varies across Minnesota. The networks may provide access to an automated catalog and to the Internet for both students and teachers.

**Table 21. Average Number of Computer and Computer Networks by Multitype Region**

	# Computers Available	# Networked Computers In Library/Media Center
<b>CMLE</b>	60.8	22.7
<b>METRONET</b>	65.3	27.5
<b>NCLC</b>	32.2	18.1
<b>NLLN</b>	26.1	18.1
<b>SAMMIE</b>	28.7	18.2
<b>SELS</b>	38.6	23.2
<b>SMILE</b>	45.8	22.7
<b>Total</b>	50.3	23.4

These regional differences are confirmed by the site visit reports which noted part-time media programs, older computer equipment, and fewer resources were more common in some regions.

The average number of computers connected to networks ranges from 18.1 to 27.5. In regions with a smaller number of computers, students may have little access because the number in their particular school may be much smaller or 0.

<sup>1</sup> A Microsoft Word version of the original on-line version of the School Library Media Program Census is in Appendix 4. The full Census results are available by individual school and averages by school district, all elementary schools, and the State of Minnesota on the Metronet web site <http://metronet.lib.mn.us/survey/index.cfm>.

Interested persons may also find the raw data intriguing. Metronet will burn the raw data, minus comments, on a CD for those persons until July 31, 2003. After that time, we hope to find a permanent home for the information. The data will be used for comparison purposes when a new census is completed, hopefully in the spring of 2004.

<sup>2</sup>Dr. Yi Du, Research Director for the Edina School District, analyzed the Census results under contract with Metronet in July 2002. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS software (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). For each question, analysis was done at district, county, multitype region, and state levels. Also, data was broken down by different grade level (elementary, middle school, and high school) and by school size. Grade level and school size were obtained by merging the Census file with state CLASS Basic Skills Test (BST) and Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA) files. Because some schools that participated in the Census didn't use the BST or MCA tests and some other schools that participated in BST or MCA tests didn't respond to the Census, some schools were not included in the analysis by school size or grade level because of missing data.

Pearson chi-square statistics and F statistics were used to examine if there is significant difference among different schools, districts, counties and regions. Correlation analysis was also conducted to see if there are relationships among variables and indicators.

<sup>3</sup>The *Minnesota Standards for Effective School Library Media Programs 2000* was developed by a Committee of the Minnesota Educational Media Organization (MEMO) in cooperation with The Minnesota State Library Agency, Library Development and Services, Department of Children, Families & Learning. It contains 26 standards at three levels: minimum, standard, and exemplary.

<sup>4</sup>The MCA is a high standard test; a school with a score of 1545.2 or more means students scoring average or above are above the "grade level" based on the state definition. The MCA scale scores range from 200 to 3000 for individuals. For schools, the maximum possible average would be 1800.

<sup>5</sup>The higher the correlation number is, the closer it is tied to the statement. In Minnesota elementary schools, the Grade 3 and Grade 5 reading scores were higher when the library media centers are open more hours and the LMS works more hours; when the LMS spends more hours planning with teachers, providing incentive reading activities, and collection development, and more students receiving information skills instruction.

<sup>6</sup>Based on information from 1083 school library media centers. 89 of the 1172 media centers responded to the Census with basic data but not enough additional information to be included in the statistical analysis. Some of the statistics herein have a smaller number of responses because some questions were not answered.

<sup>7</sup>The Electronic Library of Minnesota is a collection of full-text databases and indexes to magazines, newspapers and other publications. The State Legislature funded K-12 and public library access to these services. Costs for all citizens are reduced and access is expanded through this state-wide contract, administered by MINITEX. In many schools these databases are the only access for students to current periodicals.





## Chapter Three

### Site Visit Results





## Chapter 3.

### Site Visit Results

The on-line census of Minnesota school library media programs gives a numeric picture of school libraries in the state. The project Advisory Committee believed that it would benefit the project to conduct site visits to selected schools. None of the research on school library media programs that we examined included so many school visits, but the Committee believed the visits could provide additional information as well as confirming Census data. The Committee recognized that it is one thing to read about lots of networked computers in a media center and another to see those computers come to life in gleaming rows with busy students researching and learning. They wanted the details of the programs that can't be captured by numbers.

The Committee acknowledged the impact that less quantifiable aspects of a program—the attitude of the principal, the relationship of the media specialist and the principal, the atmosphere of the media center, for example—have on the overall effectiveness of the program. Even the best-funded program with the most up-to-date resources will suffer if the media specialist does not have the support of the teachers or does not have the time for collaboration and planning.

By deploying teams of experienced and knowledgeable site visitors, the project was able to confirm the Census results and enhance the project with firsthand observations on the condition of Minnesota's school library media programs.

#### Procedure

The Advisory Committee recommended visits to one elementary and one secondary school in each state Senate district. With 67 Senate districts, the goal was to visit 134 schools. The Committee proposed a team of two visitors to each school to give a broader view of the media program and to balance any possible bias on the part of a visitor.

The directors of the seven multicounty multitype library systems managed the logistics of the selection of the schools and the recruitment of site visitors. To achieve a broad picture of the media programs, the directors randomly selected the schools based on the Senate districts (1992 boundaries).

The relationships that the multitype directors had developed over the years with the school libraries and librarians in their regions paid off in this project. Each region was able to hire recently retired media specialists or librarians with knowledge of school library media programs. By having such in-depth knowledge about media programs,

The site visits looked at the elements of a library media program that cannot be defined by statistics.

Schools across the state were randomly selected for site visits. 131 schools received visits.

Site visitors gave each media center a copy of a book as a token of appreciation for the time spent on the visit. Secondary schools received a copy of *Life on the Mississippi* or *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Elementary schools received *Bud, Not Buddy* or *Joey Piggyza*.

With few exceptions, both media specialists and principals welcomed the site visitors. Media specialists wanted the chance to talk about their programs and principals were interested in more information about media programs in general.

these visitors were able to quickly learn about the project and prepare for their visits. Their perspective on changes that have occurred in the few years since they retired was an unexpected and valuable benefit to the project. A list of the site visitors is in Appendix 3.

The site visitors attended a half-day training session to lay the foundation for the interviews and report writing. Project staff developed an interview instrument (Appendix 6) so that each visitor would ask the same questions and have an established structure for the report. Each visitor was required to write an individual report on every school she visited.

The site visit had three parts: a brief interview with the principal, a tour of the media center, and an interview with the media specialist. The Advisory Committee thought it important to include the principal in the process both as a courtesy as a visitor to the school and to learn about administrative support for the media program.

Media specialists were asked to schedule the interview on a typical day; visitors hoped to see students and teachers using the media center. This was possible in most cases, but scheduling difficulties and other issues prevented some visits from occurring on a typical day. In addition, many media specialists commented that late April and May are not their busiest time; students had handed in most big projects that require media center use. Nevertheless, site visitors felt they were able to gather enough information on most programs to make fair assessments of the condition of Minnesota school library media programs.

By the end of the site visit phase, 34 visitors had visited 131 media programs. One principal refused to allow a visit; a different school was substituted. In two cases, visits were scheduled and cancelled several times, but never completed. Of the 131 schools visited, 126 included principal interviews. Three principals scheduled interviews but were unavailable at the arranged time, and in two other cases it was not possible to arrange a mutually agreeable time. Given that the visits had to be scheduled in a tight, busy six-week period in the spring, missing only three schools and five principals is an excellent result. A list of schools scheduled for a visit is in Appendix 7.

The site visitors each did an excellent job of recording the responses of the principals and media specialists and recording their observations and assessments of each site. It is difficult to draw quantifiable conclusions from the site visits; site visitors submitted 262 written reports on the visits. To allow the site visitors to be candid in their observations and reports, the reports have been kept confidential. Only the author of the report and project staff have read the reports. They were not sent to the schools visited. These reports form the foundation of this section.

The quotes in this chapter sections are typical of those received and reflect the findings from the site visits. They include the site visitors' opinions and comments made by principals and media specialists during the interviews. These are supplemented by comments from the on-line census. The Census had a section that invited respondents to note the state of their programs and anticipated changes. There are also comments from the Fall 2002 email follow-up questions sent to media specialists who had responded to the Census. The comments are identified only by multitype region, in the case of the site visit reports, or by source of the comment, i.e., Census or Fall Follow-up.<sup>1</sup> Because Metronet had half of the total schools to visit, there are many comments from these reports.

The site visits confirmed what the Census showed, supported findings we expected based on the other studies we examined and the discussions of the Advisory Committee, and provided some unexpected insights to Minnesota's school library media programs.

### **Multitype Regions Headquarters**

Central Minnesota Library  
Exchange (CMLE)—  
St. Cloud

Metronet—St. Paul

North Country Library  
Cooperative (NCLC)—  
Mountain Iron

Northern Lights Library  
Network (NLLN)—Perham

Southcentral Minnesota  
Inter-Library Exchange—  
(SMILE)—Mankato

Southeast Library  
System—(SELS)—  
Rochester

Southwest Area  
Multicounty Multitype  
Interlibrary Exchange  
(SAMMIE)—Marshall





Unlike some states, Minnesota has no state-level requirements for media centers or media specialists in districts or schools. Some districts determine the level of media staffing, whether or not media specialists cover prep time, and provide central services or budgets for all building media programs. Other districts leave it up to the building principal to determine media program staffing and budget from their building allocations. This is one reason that access to quality media programs varies so widely across the state.

Evidence from the Census shows that funding for school library media programs had been dropping long before the current funding crisis

## Confirmation of Census Results

*If we believe in lifetime learning, the library is where it's at. Those who think that libraries are obsolete because of computers and the Internet don't realize how much more a library/media center can provide for them through greater access to databases and connections. Today we must facilitate the location and use of information more than when libraries were just print.* SAMMIE High School Principal

The site visitors found many strong, effective media programs in all parts of the state. A few are truly outstanding; many are excellent. However, an even greater number do not meet the minimum *Minnesota Standards for Effective School Library Media Programs* in key areas of teaching and learning, information access and delivery, and program management. The site visitors found that there is no consistent access for students to media programs in many districts. Many Minnesota students are being shortchanged by lack of instruction in information literacy and lack of access to a full-range of resources to support their education.

Geography and size of the district do not have an impact on the quality of the program. The skill and training of the media specialist, staffing level of professional and support staff, the support of the principal, and the size of the school all do have an impact on the effectiveness of the program. As reported in the Census, the larger the school the more likely it is to have a full-time licensed media specialist, which makes a significant difference in the extent and effectiveness of the media program.

The Census results did paint a sad picture of school library media programs, particularly in the key areas of staffing, collection, and budgets. The site visits confirmed these findings, too. Site visitors found many out-of-date collections in poor condition. They visited many programs hampered by having a part-time media specialist or no licensed staff. Both principals and media specialists reported serious budget problems which have resulted in reductions in all areas of staff and programming.

The current budget crisis in Minnesota and the changes in education funding may contribute to the current problems faced by media programs, but the evidence from the Census and site visits—collections dating from the 1980s and earlier, shabby books, low staffing levels, out-of-date technology—describes a state of long-term neglect of media programs. With some exceptions, Minnesota school districts have not made the investment in their library media programs necessary to keep pace with information and technology. As the site visit reports and Census comments show, some media programs are limping along with budgets that haven't increased since the 1970s.

## Staffing

*Books and resources can be here but to get people to use them we must have qualified people to show how to use them.* Metronet Elementary School Principal

The importance of a licensed media specialist in improving student achievement is well documented in the Colorado research.<sup>2</sup> In the Minnesota Census, data showed that schools with above average reading scores had library media specialists (LMS) who worked 36 hours a week or more. Site visitors saw both well-staffed programs and those that do not have a full-time LMS or are operating with non-licensed staff.

Site visitors reported that in programs with part-time licensed media specialists, students do not have equitable access to the resources or instruction they need. In part-time programs, the LMS must perform all the program administration duties and teaching duties and do all the library support tasks, too. This often leaves no time for planning and collaboration with teachers, and any teaching by the LMS is done independent of classroom learning. Full-time media specialists are able to provide a wide range of teaching and learning activities and can maintain the media program. If there is adequate support staff, they are able to do even more. The least effective programs are those with part-time non-licensed staff and no support staff. These programs are little more than collections of books.

Minnesota school Census data results show that 80% of schools report a licensed media specialist spends at least one half day in each school in the district. This is the minimum Standard. The smaller the elementary school the less time a media specialist is available to the students. Larger elementary schools (402-1500 students) were more likely to have a full-time media specialist. Middle schools and high schools fare better in staffing levels; schools with 300 or more students had at least one full-time media specialist.

Site visitor reports on middle school and high school programs tended to be more positive than those on elementary schools in the areas of programming, technology integration, teaching, and research. All of these areas depend on the presence of licensed personnel. In the opinions of the site visitors, confirmed by research and other reports, the media specialist has an impact on all areas of the program from collection management to teaching to budget.

Site visitors were impressed by the programs they saw in place in many schools. The most effective had the combination of staff, collections, and technology to provide a full range of teaching and learning activities by the LMS and the resources to support all areas of the curriculum. In elementary schools, those LMS who did not have a full prep schedule but had time in the day for planning and library management duties had more developed programs than those that had full prep schedules.

A licensed media specialist is vital to an effective media program.

Many schools share media program staff. The most extreme example reported in the Census is a part-time media specialist responsible for seven schools, with limited support staff in each school.

Site visitors found extremes in media programs. Programs ranged from outstanding with the Standards exemplary level of staffing to nothing more than shelves of books.

The most effective programs had professional and support staff that worked well together to meet all students' needs.

- For 615 students, they have a full-time LMS, full-time aide, a full-time time tech in the computer lab. Plus there is a full-time integration specialist to work with staff on using technology in the curriculum and provide staff development. The LMS has a flexible schedule and can work with classes or individuals as needed. This could be the ideal elementary media program. *Metronet Site Visitor*
- Even with a full prep schedule, (LMS) is able to teach information skills and computer skills. She was a classroom teacher before becoming a media specialist and so understands how the media program can support the curriculum. *Metronet Site Visitor*
- (HS) has a 21st century media program. Pivotal to the program is the dynamic, energetic, positive, and very professional full-time media specialist who makes it a point to advocate for media at monthly meetings with her principal and superintendent and to serve on every curriculum committee. *Metronet Site Visitor*
- A strength of the program is the paraprofessional staffing. Four parents work as part-time paraprofessionals. They work independently and are welcoming, competent, and invaluable at getting individual students to focus. They are the first to be aware of assignments as teachers contact them to schedule their classes. *Metronet Site Visitor*
- The media generalist in this facility is mostly focused on technology, but has a capable assistant who works with the print materials. *NCLC Site Visitor*

Time management is a skill many LMS demonstrate. Developing and implementing programs in multiple buildings for a range of grade levels requires organization.

LMS statewide are doing a lot of programming with few resources. Site visitors reported on many LMS who are expected to do a full-time job with part-time hours, no support staff, and very little money. The Census results show that media centers average only 18 hours per week in support staff. While the most effective programs had full-time media specialists with adequate support help, the site visitors reported that many media specialists are doing the best program possible with their limited resources.

- The biggest concern is professional staffing. The district has committed itself to only a half-time professional in each building. As a result, the media program cannot offer collaboration with teachers nor can it offer a full range of information services. It does not provide flexible and equitable access to the MC when students need it. The LMS cannot teach research skills or offer staff development on embedding technology in the curriculum. With a full-time LMS, the media program could more effectively support and help deliver the school's curriculum. *Metronet Site Visitor*
- Principal and LMS seem to want same thing--a good media center that is the hub of the school—but are speaking different languages. The principal is willing to spend on

(remodeling) so it is a pleasant space, but doesn't see the need or is unwilling to fund the nuts and bolts of the program. In a school of 3000 students there is just one person in the MC with no aide or other help. *Metronet Site Visitor*

- The teaching duties of the librarian do not leave adequate time to maintain the library and keep current. His day is filled with 45-minute library preps for grades 1-6 and 30 minutes for kindergarten. This leaves him about 1 hour in the mornings to plan his preps and perform his library duties. This year he has a full-time library aide; she performs most of the library duties like shelving, check-out, book repair, etc. He is losing this aide for next year which will affect his library duties. *Metronet Site Visitor*
- During the 2001-2002 school year, art, music, and PE specialists were reduced. This led to an increase in the media center schedule of 6 more classes a week for prep coverage. When I started, I was given the same schedule as the other specialists, but also expected to do more with the time not scheduled with classes (maintain the collection, help staff and students with resource needs during and after classes, and support all technology). This year I fully realized how much the staff and students lose when I am not able to help with their resource needs due to most of my time being used for prep. *Census*
- Because I cover more than one building, I cannot do everything that needs to be done in either building. Both are shortchanged. There are some students I never see or who never get to the MC because of scheduling. Next year it will be worse, because we are losing a media aide. *SELS Elementary Media Specialist*
- The knowledge that LMS have on accessing and applying information resources is not being widely used to support all areas of learning in the school. I check out books, reshelve, and do other support tasks; I rarely use what I learned in my media degree about teaching information literacy. *Census*
- Officially I am half-time LMS and half-time teacher. The reality is that I am in the media center 2.5 hours a day. Lunch and prep time are included in this 2.5 hours. *Fall Follow-up*
- I created a tech notebook to help staff troubleshoot with the hope they could try that first, before calling me. We have had a decrease in staff time; if I am absent, the media center is closed. *Fall Follow-up*
- We have had a tremendous decrease in junior high programming because of the increase in elementary prep time coverage. *Fall Follow-up*

In most districts, few other positions have the range of responsibilities of the building media specialist.

When schools do not have a LMS or only a part-time LMS, students do not benefit from a professional that can create a collection of books, on-line databases, and other resources that supports the classroom nor do they have the advantage of a professional who can teach students and teachers information literacy skills across the curriculum.



The stereotype of library media specialists as “keepers of the books” and little else is one of the biggest obstacles to media specialists’ teaching and collaboration. Many principals and teachers do not see media specialists as teacher-partners. This in spite of the fact that all media specialists have training beyond their teacher training; many have Masters degrees in information, technology, or related areas.

Technology has added to the LMS workload in all schools. Many media programs have had tech support responsibilities added to their departments but have not been given additional staff. Time spent on equipment maintenance and repair reduces the time the LMS has for teaching students.

While funding is the obvious reason for understaffing, site visitors reported a widespread lack of understanding of what a media program and media specialist can contribute to overall student achievement. As long as principals, teachers, parents, and others continue to regard media specialists as clerks who check out and reshelve books, the position of media specialist will be regarded as dispensable or one that can be filled by non-licensed staff. Students who do not have access to a professionally staffed media program will not learn how to use a library or how librarians and media specialists can help them. They may go on to college or work unable to find and use information.

Only one principal commented that the school site council and parents would never stand for an unlicensed English or math teacher, but seem to find a non-licensed media specialist acceptable. Site visitors were surprised that several principals also expressed the idea that access to the Internet can substitute for up-to-date, well-managed collections and eliminate the need for instruction on information. This misperception has led to less support for media programs.

- The principal explained that the media specialist had been reassigned to the classroom as a full-time teacher because there is no need to pay someone that much money just to be in the library. *NLLN Site Visitor*
- The principal hired an aide at the beginning of the year. After this year of training, next year she will be in charge of the library. She knows she doesn’t have the skills she needs; plus she is uncomfortable with middle school and high school students. There will be no licensed person in the MC at all next year. *Metronet K-12 Magnet School Media Specialist*
- What does my media specialist do best? She covers prep time. *SMILE Elementary School Principal*
- This media specialist told us that next year there will be no licensed media specialists in the district and only some schools will have an aide in the library. She couldn’t answer questions on how materials will be checked out, how there will be continued collection development, or any other questions on how media programs will continue. I came away from this visit very discouraged about the future of media programs. *Metronet Site Visitor*
- The media program is weak because the LMS is only in the building half-time. Her background is not media, it is classroom teaching, so her expertise in media programming and collection development is not strong. *SMILE Site Visitor*
- The media specialist was moved to the high school and replaced at the elementary school with a non-licensed “community expert.” Support staff decreased from 3.5 FTE to 1 when LMS moved to the high school. *Fall Follow-up*

Even when a media specialist is considered full-time he may not be performing media program duties. Site visitors reported that many

media specialists are experiencing “piling on” of duties. Some of this is due to staff cutbacks; in order to stay full-time, media specialists are being assigned classroom teaching duties or coordination of programs such as Title 1 or Gifted and Talented. The proliferation of technology has led to a need for increased technical support for computer systems and software and for staff training in using these. This adds to the building staff workload. There are more tasks that need to be done, but no new staff is hired to handle the work. Because much of the work LMS do to manage and maintain the media program is “invisible” to teachers and principals, many media specialists have had these tech support and other tasks added to their duties. With the dependence of teachers and administrators on the technology, these maintenance and repair duties are often given a higher priority than the media specialist’s other responsibilities. These added duties reduce the time available for LMS to perform their media program responsibilities, including helping students and teachers find and apply the information they need.

- I wear too many hats—I teach senior English, oversee video production and Web site development, supervise the Library Club. With no aide and all these other responsibilities, it is not possible to have much of a media program. The library is closed part of every day. Plus, we are not automated and there is no way for automation to happen with just me in the MC. *NLLN High School Media Specialist*
- I spend more and more of my time fixing computers and explaining software; some days it’s as much as 50% of what I do. I don’t have the time to work with students in the library like I used to. *Census*
- This is a media program in decline. Not only have resources not been funded so books and other materials are out-of-date but media and computer specialists are kept busy repairing computers, supervising students hanging out in the media center, and have little access to or time to work with students. *Metronet Site Visitor*
- A tech teacher was not hired this year so my job has become increasingly harder. I now need to assist teachers with more tech instruction. This is hard because I am only .6 time. *Fall Follow-up*
- I see more and more to do with little or no tech support for instruction or repairs. I do more with technology and “fix-it” stuff than with books or information skills. *Fall Follow-up*
- I seem to be the catch-it guy for any assignment in the school. Right now I am in charge of K-12 technology, media/library, senior social studies classes, and I’m the technology teacher. *Fall Follow-up*

Media Centers that are run by non-licensed staff do not have fully developed media programs. In most of the schools visited, these pro



Media Centers that are run by non-licensed staff do not have fully developed media programs.

Schools that would never consider hiring unlicensed classroom teachers or subject specialists have hired non-licensed staff to run the media programs.

grams were not much more than, as one site visitor said, “facility with staff.” Non-licensed staff can offer book check out or prep coverage, but few are able to teach information and research skills. Without licensed media staff, students must rely on classroom teachers who may or may not incorporate information literacy or research skills into the curriculum. Even where licensed teachers were managing media programs, these programs did not offer information or research instruction, either because there was no time in the day or because they did not see it as part of their role. Media specialists are trained in teaching these areas and understand the importance of integrating these skills into the curriculum.

- I was an English teacher last year; this year I’m in the library 3 hours a day plus my teaching load. The media center is open only the three hours I’m here. I suppose they put me here because of my literature background, but I don’t really know much about libraries. Plus, 3 hours a day? What am I supposed to do? *CMLE High School Media Specialist*
- Basically there is no media program other than what the teachers provide. There is a library space with books around the edges. An aide spends an average of an hour a day, mostly shelving books. When there is money to buy books, a committee of teachers selects them. The HS media specialist, who has no training but (many years experience) comes to help out when she is called there. Both the principal and HS media specialist expressed deep longing for a professional media person. *CMLE Site Visitor*
- I am the superintendent, principal, technology coordinator, computer technician, Title 1 coordinator, etc. etc. I am the media specialist, too, even though I have no license. I wouldn’t say we have a media program. I wish we had a media specialist, but there is no way we could afford one. *SAMMIE Elementary Principal*
- The paraprofessional who supervises the media program is very dedicated and hardworking, but she doesn’t have the training or experience to implement some of the standard practices found in effective media programs. *Census*
- An (aide) untrained in media replaced the licensed media specialist. The aide cannot be in charge of a class without a cooperating teacher, so no more media program. No computer lab program, either. *Fall Follow-up*
- Ninth grade students will be trained to do some support work for technology and the library. They will do circulation, shelving, errands, telephone, and routine computer work. *Fall Follow-up*

Collection development—selection and weeding of materials to maintain an appropriate collection to support the school mission—also suffers when there is no professional staff. As part of their training,

media specialists learn about collection management—everything from which journals provide reliable reviews and recommendations, bibliographies and lists of books and periodicals for student-centered learning, to how to handle a challenge to materials. They also know how to find and use the wide range of electronic and non-print resources that improve collections and broaden student access. They also know when to “weed” or remove an outdated item from the collection. Teachers may be familiar with their subject area resources, but LMS know the full range of subject areas. Non-licensed staff may not know where to turn for information or how to evaluate materials for selection. The result can be a collection that does not support the school curriculum or provide the resources students need for academic success.

- With no LMS, a committee of teachers selects books, but there is no selection policy. There are no magazines or newspapers in the MC. *Metronet Site Visitor*
- The person in charge is not a media specialist. This is her second year in the MC and she has no media training or classes. She had no idea if the collection is on the computers and knows nothing about databases or technology. She is the only person in the MC in a school of 960 students. While she is trying to fill the role, she really doesn’t know what she doesn’t know. *Metronet Site Visitor*
- I don’t feel comfortable pushing for budget, materials, or going to teachers with ideas on how to use the media center because of my lack of licensure. I certainly can’t teach. I took over after the (licensed) LMS retired and I learned a lot from her, but I know what I don’t know, too. We need a licensed person, at least at the high school. *NLLN High School Media Specialist*
- We don’t have a book budget; books are added to the collection as bonuses earned through the school’s two book fairs. A classroom teacher does book selection. Magazines are whatever parents donate. *SAMMIE Elementary Principal*

## Budget

*We know what we need to do; we just don’t have the resources to do it.*  
Metronet Elementary School Principal

Every principal and media specialist cited lack of money and resources as the biggest obstacle to an effective media program. This was true whether the program was well-funded or poorly-funded. Principals and media specialists in well-funded programs recognize they need additional resources to maintain and improve the program. Other programs used the lack of money as a rationale for lack of staff, book budgets, technology, and other deficiencies. While a few media programs reported a small increase in staff or book budgets, most principals expect to have to make cuts in the program in the near future.

A recent email on the MEMO listsrv said, “We don’t have a MS now. Where can we learn what books to buy for the media center?” This shows the “anybody can run a library” mentality the site visitors encountered. A few workshops are not a substitute for collection development by a professional media specialist.

The size of media center collections reported in the census (average of 31 books per student) coupled with the average copyright of 1985 indicates a lack of weeding. “Weeding” means to remove outdated or worn out materials from the library collection and catalog. Weeding is vital to maintain an up-to-date, viable collection in any type of library. Many LMS said they did little weeding because their collections would be so small if they did.

The need for additional funding for staff, materials, and other resources was mentioned by every principal and media specialist.

Budgets don't stretch as far as they used to. The 1986 winner of the Newbery Award for Best Young Adult Book, *Sarah, Plain and Tall* cost \$8.95 that year; its most recent price is \$14.95, an increase of 67%.

The majority of media programs visited rely on at least some outside fundraising or parent contributions for books and equipment.

Parent fundraising and donations help media programs, but they are not a substitute for a budget from the building or district for library materials.

The current budget crisis is definitely having an impact, as is the shift to state funding for education. However, media centers have been facing budget erosion for many years.

- Our book budget hasn't increased in the 19 years I've been in this building. *Census*
- We used to have a budget of \$10,000 a year for books, but it has slowly been cut. Now, if we're lucky, we have \$2,000 a year. And that has to cover supplies as well as all print resources. *Census*
- This is a half-time position. Every year I try not to worry about my position being cut. *Census*
- Our budgets were all frozen in February (2002) and turned into "zero based budgeting." A book order was returned because it was "not essential" to the running of the school, so essentially this year's budget was decreased by \$3,000. Next year we will also have zero-based budgeting thus will have no budget and will have to justify every purchase we make. *Census*
- Our budget has been the same since 1972. *Census*
- Enrollment will increase from 400 to 900 students next year, while Media Specialist position is being reduced from 1 full-time position to a .5-position. *Census*
- Our budget will stay the same, but the number of students we serve will increase by 20%. *Fall Follow-up*

Scholastic Book Fairs that used to provide supplemental funding for materials are now the main source of new books in some schools. Revenue and books that come from the book fair depends on how many books and other items are purchased during the book fair so in schools that have families that can afford to buy books, the amount can be significant. In other schools, the work of the book fair is not worth the return in materials for the media center.

Parents and media specialists have stepped in with fundraising events to add books and materials to library collections. Parents sponsor fundraising efforts including carnivals and donation days for their media centers. In one metro school, parents have overwhelmed the media center with donations but there is no staff time to catalog and process the books so they sit unused in the back room.

- Students did a fundraiser to replace the Apple GS lab in the media center this year with an iMac. *Census*
- I will have no budget because of the huge cuts made at our school. I will have to rely on grant writing and profit from book fairs. *Census*
- I am thinking of having 2 book fairs next year rather than 1 to offset the loss of book budget. Our books literally wear out from the constant use, particularly our paperbacks. *Census*
- We have no money for technology. Our technology committee has decided to do some fundraising to try to keep up on our technology. We are going to have a few

Sunday morning breakfasts for community members and the money will be used for technology needs in our schools. *Census*

- My budget for new book will not exist for next year. The school will be asking the PTO for funds for this budget item. They do a lot of fund raising and the school feels that they will more readily fund the school library as it benefits the entire school population, not just one grade level. So we will see how that works out next year. The School will be asking the PTO to start putting some of their fund raising towards our computer lab as the present one is on its 7th year of use. It consists of all 580 Macs. *Census*

A few districts and buildings reported small increases or at least no cuts in media program budget, but these are in the minority. If actual dollars for books and materials remained untouched, staff, both professional and support staff, was cut. With additional cuts expected in many districts, neither principals nor media specialists were very optimistic about future budgets.

- I was able to show the need for money and received a major slice of the pie to buy books and materials, but one year of funding is not going to remove years of neglect. *Fall Follow-up*
- Three years ago the media program was reduced; this year part of the budget was reinstated. The media specialist has taken on teaching the grade 6 computer class. *Fall Follow-up*

## Collections

*We have put so much of our resources into technology these last ten years that we have slighted the more traditional ways of learning. We can now see that students need both technology and books. Students are hungry for an abundance of books. They deserve at least that much.*

Census Comment

Minnesota students are using books that are older—much older—than they are. The areas that change most rapidly, geography, science, and history have an average copyright date of 1983 in Minnesota high schools and 1985 in elementary schools. Site visitors reported great quantities of old books on the shelves of the majority of media centers visited.

- I cringe each time one of our students or staff ask if we have any books about any certain topic, because the answer is usually, "no." Overall, we are trying to operate a media center in the new millennium with equipment and books purchased in the 60s and 70s. *Census*
- Failure to keep up with current technology and print resources will have a major impact on the students' ability to complete graduation standards and other assignments. If resources are not provided in our K-12 schools, students

Parent fundraising and donations help media programs, but they are not a substitute for a budget from the building or district for library materials.

Building a collection of book, non-print, and electronic resources that support the curriculum is one of the most important responsibilities of the professional media specialist.

The average age of the books in Minnesota media centers is 18 years—the same age of many of this year's senior class.



Enrollment has increased but media program spending is stagnant in many districts.

A quick search of the MnLink statewide on-line catalog found these books in Minnesota school libraries:

*First Ladies* by Kathleen Prindiville, Macmillan, 1932

*Vons Nostrand's Scientific Encyclopedia*, 4th ed., 1968  
*Every Woman's Health*, Doubleday, 1968

*Green Medicine: In Search of Plants That Heal*, Rand McNally, 1964

*Animal Health Yearbook*, US Department of Agriculture, 1984

*Let's Travel in the Holy Land* by Darlene Geis, Children's Press, 1965

*The World's History: A History of the World in Story, Song, & Art*, Houghton, 1914

will not be prepared adequately for post-secondary study or the world of work. *Census*

- Our reference materials are outdated. We have nothing on the Presidents since Nixon. *Census*
- Our book budget is less now with 1600 students than when I started 18 years ago with 1100 students. The school district seems more willing to spend money on anything connected with technology than on books. As a result our collection has aged, especially our reference collection. *Census*
- Most of our non-fiction collection came from (high school) that closed in the 70s. We've pretty much given up buying anything for our 9-12 students. We just don't have the money. We can only buy books that have (computerized) tests. *Metronet K-12 Magnet School Media Specialist*

There are strong collections in some schools. All media centers in Bloomington public schools have brand new collections and media centers because of community-wide support of a referendum. A few other schools had catastrophes—floods or fire—that meant book collections had to be replaced. There are some newer schools that have collections that date to their openings. For the most part, however, students are using book collections in Minnesota media centers that are old and contain inaccurate and out-of-date information.

Many media specialists reported reductions in magazine and newspaper subscriptions. According to the Census, Minnesota elementary schools have an average of 21 periodical subscriptions, middle schools average 41 subscriptions, and high school media programs have an average of 54 periodical subscriptions. The range of subscriptions is from 0 to 200. With such old book collections, students rely on periodicals for more recent information on history, science, social studies, and other topics for their research.

One bright note is the widespread use by K-12 students of the Electronic Library of Minnesota (ELM).<sup>3</sup> Through MINITEX, <sup>4</sup> ELM offers on-line access to subscription databases and ebooks. ELM includes more than 6,000 indexed magazines with full-text articles for over 3,000 of those magazines on topics such as medical, health, and wellness information, history, biography, social studies, and comprehensive business research. ELM contains more than 8,000 electronic books on a variety of subjects, and a worldwide catalog of library holdings and information of over 49 million records, and tables of contents and citations from more than 13,000 magazines. ELM resources are available in libraries and remotely from homes, businesses, classrooms, and computer labs statewide.

- We could not survive without the ELM databases provided by the state. We use them every single school day. They are more important to the quality of our research than the Internet. *Census*

- I am most concerned about state funding for ELM. I wouldn't want to give up the additional databases I have been able to provide with the money (I don't have to spend) for the Gale Group. I hope the state will continue to fund this resource. *Census*
- We continue to value the ELM on-line databases, and I believe that the state support of the Infotrac database is the most equitable thing ever done for schools and students. It is important that it be continued and increased. *Census*

The state contract for these services saves money for all libraries while increasing equitable access to information for students through all K-12 media centers and all other Minnesotans through public libraries. The cost of the contract for the universal access is much less than the expenditures individual school and public libraries would make if they had to subscribe individually. Several LMS commented that it would be helpful if other such statewide programs could be developed to use economy of scale to reduce costs while expanding resources.

This access to on-line resources helps keep students current but it is not a substitute for collections with a depth and breadth in subject, reading level, and viewpoints. Students who do not have access to adequate print resources are not receiving a well-rounded comprehensive education.

## Anticipated Results

The Advisory Committee predicted some results of the site visits based on their knowledge and experience with Minnesota's media programs. Review of the literature and other studies lead the site visitors to expect to encounter evidence of the:

- Predominance of prep coverage by media specialists
- Importance of the principal in the success of the media program
- Impact on the program of media specialist attitude
- Widespread use of technology in media programs

## Prep or Flexible Scheduling

There is ongoing discussion in the media profession about how students are scheduled to use the media center. The debate centers on the merits of flexible scheduling or using the media program to provide prep time for teachers.<sup>5</sup>

With flexible scheduling, the media specialist plans with teachers how students will use resources and what elements the LMS will teach. This collaboration helps teachers and media specialists integrate information literacy into all areas of the curriculum. The integration of these skills into the subject areas, rather than having information literacy skills taught independent of the curriculum is considered a

To access ELM, Media Centers need adequate technology. Comments on the Census and during the site visits indicate not all MC have the necessary technology, which means some Minnesota students do not benefit from the ELM program.

The statewide contract for the Electronic Library of Minnesota is a wise investment. It saves money while expanding access to quality information to all Minnesotans. It is estimated that if all school, public, and academic individually subscribed to the ELM databases, the cost would be \$39 million.

With a prep schedule, students visit the media center on a schedule that coincides with their classroom teacher's "prep period." Flexible scheduling allows students and classes to use the media center whenever they need to throughout the day.



more effective and successful approach. Classes use the library with their teacher and the media specialist to help them. In addition, flexible scheduling allows individual students to use the library whenever they may need to throughout the day. Students are encouraged to regard the media center as a place to go whenever they need information, recreational reading, or just need a quiet spot, not as a place they can visit only when scheduled.

With a prep time schedule, media specialists provide coverage for classroom teachers to work on their lesson plans or do other planning for their classes while their students are in the media center. In Minnesota, the majority of elementary school media specialists provide “prep time” for other teachers in the building.

There are advantages and disadvantages to either type of scheduling or to using a combination of both types. What is important is that media specialists have the time they need to teach information literacy, to plan with other teachers, and to perform all the other tasks necessary to managing a school library media program. The site visitors found effective programs had flexible scheduling or a combination of flexible scheduling and prep scheduling. A full load of prep coverage limits the time available for collaboration and planning to integrate information literacy into all areas of the curriculum.

- Part of the LMS time is spent providing prep time for teachers this year. Her duties seem to have changed from year to year as to whether she is prep or flex scheduling. There has been little consistency in the four years she has been here. This makes it hard for her and the teachers to plan and work together because they get something in place and then it changes. *Metronet Site Visitor*
- Budgets have decreased but efforts have been made to keep the library class schedule as flexible as possible to allow integration of research skills within the curriculum, but staff cuts will likely require more scheduled classes to provide teacher prep time next year. *SAMMIE Media Specialist*
- (Media center) functions solely as prep time. There is no time when the MC is open for teachers to bring classes in for curricular-related projects or to students for reading. Because of lack of time for collaboration, media lessons are taught independent of what is being taught in the classroom. *Metronet Elementary Media Specialist*
- The media specialists are fighting to keep the library open with a flexible schedule by not taking on any more preps. They presented at a staff meeting and teachers support an open library. They feel it is vital to middle school students. *Metronet K-8 School Site Visitor*
- (LMS) is full-time prep provider dividing her time between the media center and computer lab. When we were there, the media center was closed because she had a class in the

A full load of prep coverage limits the time available for LMS and teacher collaboration and planning to integrate information literacy into all areas of the curriculum.

lab. *Metronet Site Visitor*

- The media specialist travels between two buildings. She is all prep time. Students don't have much access to a media specialist. There is no collaboration because the LMS time is so fractured. *Metronet Site Visitor*
- (Principal) said his media person is not prep time. This was obviously not true, which made me wonder if he really understood what a media program should be. After the interview with the (non-licensed) media person, I am sure he did not, nor did she. *SAMMIE Site Visitor*
- The media specialist would like to see a change from prep time, although she realizes prep coverage provides job security. *Metronet Site Visitor*
- The concept of prep time is probably the single most destructive practice to media centers. Media staff has no time to plan or collaborate, order materials, or do their other responsibilities. *SMILE Media Specialist*
- LMS is half-time at the school; she does 40 thirty-minute prep times, about 1,000 students, each week. She also is gifted and talented coordinator and coaches the Destination Imagination team. She really does a lot with a little! *Metronet Site Visitor*
- Lack of media center staffing means I am scheduled only for prep times. We have an outstanding media center with wonderful resources; it's a shame I can't be available to extend our services. *Fall Follow-up*

There is still work to do to convince teachers of the value of collaboration with the LMS. Many teachers do not take advantage of the expertise of the LMS.

The site visitors found effective programs had flexible scheduling or a combination of flexible scheduling and prep scheduling.

## Principal's Role

*Principals should support school libraries because it is in both their students' and their own best interests to do so. Quality library media programs can enhance student achievement, and informed, committed librarians can help principals enhance their own administrative practice.*

Gary Hartzell, Professor of Educational Administration and Supervision, University of Nebraska at Omaha<sup>6</sup>

A consistent theme in the site visit reports is the important role the principal plays in the success of the media program. The more informed and supportive the principal is of the media program, the higher the chances that an effective program will be in place in a school. The relationship between the principal and the media specialist was reported as a key to this success. Media specialists who kept the principal informed on the media program, their role in teaching and collaboration, research in the field and more were highly valued and supported by their principals.

In large districts where principals exercise extensive autonomy over budgets, staff allocation, scheduling, staff development, and all other aspects of a building, the support of the principal for the media program is the deciding factor in how the program is run. In both the

Many principals made the “right” comment that the media center is the “center of learning in the school” but site visitors often found no evidence to support this claim.

Minneapolis and St. Paul districts, two of the state’s largest districts, the site visitors could clearly recognize the principal’s influence. Media programs in these districts ranged from exemplary to well below standard, with principals that ranged from knowledgeable, in touch, and supportive to a few that are so out of touch with media and technology that it is disturbing. The regard or lack of regard for the media program and specialist was clear from the principals’ interviews and was confirmed by the media specialists’ interviews.

- This principal really understands the impact a media program can have on literacy. She directs every spare dollar, including comp ed money, an annual donation from a neighborhood man, and her own money, to buy books for the library. She runs a reading circle for some at risk boys. They meet weekly to discuss the book they read. In between, she encourages them to use the media center and works with her media specialist to get books to all kids. The school has about 25% special education students, a high level of ELL students, and has a large percentage of minority and poverty level students. Great principal and a great media program. *Metronet Site Visitor*
- While this principal claims her media center is the hub of the school and a “hive of learning,” she doesn’t understand media programs. The MC is the “hub”; it’s in the middle of the school with no walls. There is a part-time media specialist two days a week and every other Friday and no clerical help. There is no possibility of an aide; the principal didn’t see the need for either a full-time media specialist or an aid. She thinks volunteers could fill in, although we didn’t see evidence of volunteers and the LMS reported only a few hours a week of volunteer time. The district Web site touts this as the biggest collection in any elementary school. It has a supportive parent population and an alumna parent who donates hundreds of new books annually. The back room looks like Barnes & Noble. Unfortunately, many books are uncataloged and therefore, unavailable. The media specialist can’t even keep up with reshelving books after students use them, let alone provide a media program for students. It was busy while we were there, several classes descended on the MC clamoring for help. The principal was critical of the LMS because, “the LMS wants to spend all her time with students, not shelving books.” With no walls and many hours of unsupervised time, books walk away. The principal has cut the budget of the media program to zero. Not exactly a “hive of learning.” *Metronet Site Visitor*
- “As the library goes, so goes the school,” said this principal. And it showed in the media program. Two schools in one building share this media program and it seems to work. Both principals support the program, although one took

some convincing. The program has flexible scheduling, a materials budget of more than \$6,500, state-of-the-art technology, supportive teachers, good book collection, and nice space. When faced with cuts, the principal conducted an exercise with the teachers to rank the school's programs. At the end of the process, the media program was one of three that teachers wanted to keep unchanged. No cuts were made to the program. *Metronet Site Visitor*

- There is a licensed media specialist in the school; she is trying to develop a program but gets little support. She is a prep provider. Her principal told her she "has the easiest job in the district." *Metronet Site Visitor*
- The principal asked if libraries still need to teach the Dewey Decimal System? *CMLE Site Visitor*
- The media center does not have a media specialist. The principal chose to have a technology teacher instead. Library assistants run the media program. *SMILE Site Visitor*

The comments of these principals are balanced by the many media supporters among the principals across the state at both elementary and high school levels.

- The principal seems sincere in trying to hire a full-time media specialist that fits the goals of their program. He feels that the media center is the hub of the school. The tone was very positive in upgrading use of the media center to benefit the whole school. *CMLE Site Visitor*
- We are trying for the elementary International Baccalaureate program. Receiving the IB certification would give us ammunition for building our media program; IB requires a media program. We have visited some IB elementary schools and are excited about what the IB designation could do for our media center. *Metronet Elementary School Principal*
- A new principal this year has had a positive impact for the media program. He will be reversing the trend of a decreasing budget and has planned to increase the budget for next year. *Census*
- Our principal is tremendously supportive of the media program and this makes a major impact on staffing, tech support, library budget, tech budgets and general support for making the media center a strong and integral part of the school educational program. *Census*
- This is a good media program despite the lack of resources and space. This is because the principal and the media specialist support and respect each other. Each goes out to the way to serve students in a variety of ways. *Metronet Site Visitor*
- I am a big promoter of literacy and proud of our revamped media program and our new computer lab. We have had a technology integration specialist this year to work with

There are principals who do not understand media programs or libraries or the integration of technology and media into the curriculum.

The support of the principal is even more important in schools with limited resources.

Some districts require a media specialist in each building; other districts leave it up to the principal on how to “spend” staffing allocations.

teachers; she made a big difference. I want the students to understand how all sources of information fit together; you don’t just use one source or type of information when you need to know something. *Metronet Elementary School Principal*

- Before I became a principal, I was the curriculum director. I know how important it is to have a media program to support the curriculum. *CMLE Elementary School Principal*
- The principals in the district have decided as a group to support having a media specialist in every building. This is a real boost to the media program. *Metronet Elementary School Media Specialist*

One-way media specialists have ensured principals’ support is by keeping them informed of their activities.

- Media specialist in this small rural school submits a report of media center activity, successes, and problems to her administrators monthly. She was one of the only LMS we talked to do such a regular report. *SMILE Site Visitor*
- This principal regards the LMS as an educational leader in the school and takes pride in their program. She keeps him informed of the successes and problems with the program and technology and they work together to solve any problems. The LMS has the full support of the principal who has high expectations for the program. *Metronet Site Visitor*

## Media Specialist Attitude

*With increased number of students, additional prep coverage, and no support help, I am stressed out. Fall Follow-up*

Hand-in-hand with the principal’s attitude is that of the media specialist. Site visitors anticipated the importance of the media specialist’s attitude towards her program and school as having a significant impact on the success of the program. The site visitors saw many wonderful media programs that had enthusiastic, innovative media professionals. Many programs existed solely on the media specialist’s commitment and few resources. Proactive media specialists are an asset to the school’s students and teachers.

- (Coworkers) sought us out to tell us what a difference (LMS) has made in the media center and how hard she works to make it better. *Metronet Site Visitor*
- The media specialist’s attitude is very positive. She seemed determined to concentrate on the quality of instruction and not be sidetracked by physical plant limitations. *Metronet Site Visitor*

However, site visitors also met stereotypical, unenthusiastic media people with programs that are poor—and not just financially. Many of these media specialists didn’t seem to understand what makes good media program and would have a hard time justifying their current programs, let alone convincing the powers in the district that



they need more. Many of these MS were resistant to technology and had done little to advance their skills. A successful media program doesn't rely solely on money, although that helps. It takes leadership and vision to move forward.

- I transferred our media specialist out of the media center because I didn't think she had the right attitude. I want a welcoming place and someone who wants students to use the library and is a good teacher and role model. Our media center just has a secretary running it now, but next year we will have a great media specialist and a model program. *SELS High School Principal*
- The media specialist comment that students seem to lack library skills left me speechless; she had just told us how little teaching she does of such skills and said that she has no plans to start. Students are left on their own to acquire what skills they can. *NCLC Site Visitor*
- LMS feels technology is too much work to learn. There is no up-to-date technology in this high school; they have some donated reference materials but no equipment to use them. *NCLC Site Visitor*
- The media program is old-fashioned and book-oriented. Students—most are college-bound and highly motivated—are not equipped with information skills. The LMS is so bogged down with the details of cataloging and audio-visual maintenance that he never seems to get around to large-group instruction. *Metronet Site Visitor*

In defense of these discouraged media specialists, many site visitors noted the erosion of these programs over the years, lack of support from principals, parents, and others, budget cuts, increased demands, and other conditions that lead to burn out, less effective programs and tired media specialists.

## Technology

*It seems that some people think that technology by itself will transform student achievement. The technology must be used to support the school or district's learning goals. I want to help the teachers in my school use technology better.* Census Comment

Since none of site visitors is an active media specialist, they had a perspective on the changes that have occurred since they were working in a school. Many were impressed with the range of hardware in most schools and concerned at the apparent lack of integration of technology into the curriculum. With the state and federal requirements for technology planning, the visitors were surprised how few principals could discuss how technology is used in the curriculum—most were quite proud of their hardware labs, but couldn't articulate how it was being used to enhance student learning.

Considering how beleaguered by more work and lack of resources many media programs are, it is surprising the site visitors encountered so few burned out media specialists.



Technology alone will not increase student achievement. It takes teachers and LMS to integrate the technology meaningfully into the curriculum.



School districts need to continually evaluate how teachers are using technology to enhance student learning. The significant investment in computer hardware and software needs to be matched by an investment in training for teachers on how to integrate the technology into the curriculum.

- There are amazing computer labs in some of the elementary schools we visited. I know technology is important for students, but how much computing power do kindergarteners—or 6th graders—need? I have to wonder just how well all this technology is being used in the elementary curriculum. Several schools seemed to use the labs for prep coverage with a supervised lab but no teaching. Is that enough? *Metronet Site Visitor*

LMS were better able to talk integration and many had designed lessons that incorporated technology. Those schools with district level technology integration support and/or technology integration specialists who worked with the media specialist were most successful in using technology to its fullest capacity to improve student learning. This is an area that needs attention to ensure that the significant financial investment in computer hardware and software is bringing improved learning to all students.

Smaller districts especially seem suffer from technology overload. The demands of parents and school boards for “technology” have resulted in lots of computers but limited support for maintaining them, few replacement plans, and very little staff development or help for teachers to use the technology to enhance the curriculum. Few smaller districts have a technology coordinator that has curriculum training and can help teachers integrate technology into the curriculum. Staffing for technology in these districts tends to be for network or computer support. While this staff is important, it is just as important to hire technology integration staff to work with the media specialist to make sure this investment is being used to enhance student learning and is not being pursued as an end in itself.

The impression of the site visitors is that there is still a digital divide in Minnesota schools; more information is needed on how wide the disparity is. Distribution of technology across districts and even within districts is uneven. Several media specialists reported that students cannot access the ELM databases because media center computers are too old. The Legislature appropriated money for database access to ensure that all K-12 students would be able to get information they need but this isn’t happening in areas where resources are already scarce.

The Census and the site visits did not collect detailed information on technology access or infrastructure because CFL had a plan to collect this data. More information is needed about the distribution of technology across districts if anything is to be done about this divide. The technology plan underway by CFL needs to be completed and studied to ensure that all Minnesota students, regardless of geographic location or their school district’s priorities, have access to the technology equipment and instruction that they need to be able to competitive now and in the future.

- In one district we saw extremes of technology access. One elementary magnet school had an iMac lab of 40 computers plus scanners and printers, wireless access, 2 laptop carts for classroom checkout, every teacher has a laptop, and more. All of this came from a federal grant. Really a top-notch set-up. The school had a good media program, too. In contrast, a neighborhood school had three old computers in the library, one out of order the day we were there, and a computer lab of iMacs that were about 5 years old. Most of those were purchased by parents or through school fundraising, according to the principal. The computer lab teacher was paid for by parent contributions. There is a part-time media specialist and no aide. There is no media program; it is all she can do to check out books and re-shelve. *Metronet Site Visitor*
- The support for technology is district-wide, but also varies with the building and the principal's commitment to provide money for it or the parents' ability to raise extra dollars. Since our district varies from wealthy to lower middle class, the parental support dollars from fundraisers also varies and thus schools in different neighborhoods have different opportunities. *Census*
- In my library I have a Mac LC575 and LC 580. [LC 575 was introduced in 1994; LC580 in 1995.] I have 2 iMacs and 2 Gateway computers. The iMacs and the Gateways are here because of grant money. Hopefully next year I can work with the students doing searches on the Internet and word processing. *Census*
- Our budget was designed for a library not a media center and has never been changed. To make matters worse, the budget has decreased over the last several years. *Census*
- We use Apple IIs. [Apple IIe was introduced in 1983.] *Census*

Technology has had an impact on media program budgets, too. Technology to support the program including automated card catalogs, Internet access, database subscriptions, educational software, and the need for supplies including toner and paper, all put a strain on the budget. An ever-greater impact, though, is how building-wide needs for technology have had a detrimental affect on media program budgets. Technology purchase and replacement are given a high priority.

- The library revealed a very old collection, donated books and magazines, old furniture, and a serious lack of attention. Obviously funds are going to technology and books are not being purchased. *SAMMIE Site Visitor*
- While the budget for technology has significantly increased, our per pupil amount for print materials has remained the same since 1985! As the cost of books increase each year, we can't keep up the collection using budget money. *Census*

Site visitors saw fully equipped, up-to-date computer labs as well as schools with outdated equipment and/or too few machines for student access.

Some of the schools with old media center computers may have more up-to-date machines in a computer lab or classrooms. In some districts and schools, classroom and other uses have priority for new machines; the media center inherits the old ones. Having old machines that can't access ELM or the Internet in the library limits the teaching capability of the LMS.

Technology has enhanced media programs in many ways, but it has had other impacts, too. Media specialists reported that book and materials budgets have been diverted for technology and the workload for tech support has increased with no additional staff.

- In the five years I have been at (school), this year's budget was the highest, at approximately \$6,400. It has averaged about \$1,200. However, about \$2,700 was taken away because of the budget deficit. I had hoped to purchase the new Sagebrush circulation software. This will not be possible, and next year does not look promising, as there are more cuts expected. I have gone to the Site Council and to the PTA and neither care to purchase Sagebrush for our media center. *Metronet Elementary School Media Specialist*

Media specialists can help schools ensure that the significant investments in technology achieve learning objectives. Many media specialists were “early adopters” of technology both professionally in their media programs and in their personal lives for communication and information. This makes them excellent colleagues to work with more reluctant teachers, plus gives them credibility with students, who often believe they know more about technology use than they actually do.

- The LMS has “Tech Tuesday” which is a half-hour time slot each month to introduce teachers to new technology or trained on what they have. Meaningful follow-up is offered in subsequent weeks. Teachers appreciate the support on topics like email, search engines, and search techniques. *Metronet Site Visitor* (Several other reports mentioned similar programs.)
- Our LMS is great. We have many older teachers who are reluctant to use technology. He has a great attitude and way with them and is gradually prodding them to adopt more technology. *Metronet Elementary School Principal*

## Unexpected Findings

In spite of the depth of experience of the site visitors, several findings emerged from the reports that had not been anticipated. One positive finding is the beneficial influence a district-level media coordinator has on the equability, depth, and implementation of media programs in all schools in a district. Site visitors report that students in such districts were more likely to have a scope and sequence of instruction in information literacy and research skills, more support from principals, better budgets, and more resources.

The biggest surprise to the site visitors is how widespread computerized reading programs have become in Minnesota schools. Accelerated Reader and Reading Counts are two programs that are in place in large and small schools throughout the state. The effect these programs have on media centers is unmistakable in their reports.

Finally, while the site visitors knew they would see some programs that had been models but are now suffering due to budget cuts or other changes, they were dismayed at how the mighty are fallen—and how many programs seem to be following this downward spiral.

## District Media Coordinator

*I hope a district media coordinator will be hired. We need LEADERSHIP!*  
Fall Follow-up

When reviewing the site visit reports, one thing gradually became clear. The schools that received the most enthusiastic reports overall tended to be part of districts that had a team approach to the media program. These “teams” include a district media coordinator, supportive principal, strong LMS, adequate support staff, technology integration and support staff, and cooperative teachers. In smaller districts without a media coordinator, good programs had the strong support of the principal, support staff for media and technology, and teachers who looked on the LMS as a collaborator. The media specialist was regarded as part of the school team for planning and teaching, not as an isolated program operating apart from the curriculum and teaching.

A district media coordinator provides leadership in determining the attitude of the district towards its media program and how media specialists participate in teaching. A coordinator performs several key roles: advocacy at the district level and with principals for the media programs and adequate budgets; technical support and consultation with media specialists; staff development specific to media for specialists and teachers; development and implementation of scope and sequence for teaching media and information skills, and dissemination of up-to-date information to support media development.

District level staff are instrumental in providing other support to media programs such as centralized book ordering and processing, database subscriptions, periodical ordering, and other services that can free building LMS for their teaching and management functions. Minnesota school districts with a media coordinator tend to have more cohesive and comprehensive programs of media instruction than those that do not. Students in these districts are more likely to benefit from equitable access to a wide range of resources and information technology instruction. Site visitors reported that several district media coordinators have used the standards and the information in this Census to support their cases for program improvements.

The impact of a district media coordinator is an important finding in a time when district level support is waning. Several Minnesota districts have eliminated their media coordinator positions. In those districts, media specialists who had been accustomed to receiving advice and support for their individual programs and district level support for media budgets are left without a voice at the district level. LMS in these districts are not optimistic about their future.

- I only had one visit from (district media coordinator) before she was laid off. That one visit helped me more than anything else because I’m new to the district. I really don’t have anyone to turn to now; other media specialists are just as busy as I am. *Metronet Elementary School Media Specialist*

Successful media programs are the result of team effort. The media specialist needs the support of the principal and teachers in the building. Larger districts that have a district media coordinator have more consistent media programs.

Several site visitors reported that LMS and principals wanted their advice on program improvements because they had no one else to turn to for help.

Both media specialists and principals want guidance from CFL on implementing quality media programs.

- Every media specialist we visited in this district mourned the reassignment of (coordinator) The sum of the comments amounted to “now we have no one who understands us at the district; we will be in worse shape than ever. (Superintendent) doesn’t understand that media programs can really make a difference and now media is even farther off her radar.” *Metronet Site Visitor*
- After visiting 5 schools in (district), I found a system that has media in perspective. (District) is on top of things technologically but has not left literacy in the dust. LMS do not provide prep time; according to the Media Coordinator that would not fit with their mission. The district media coordinator made a special trip across the district to meet with (site visitors) so we would understand his support of the (district) media philosophy. It is clear that this guidance at the district level has made a positive difference in all (district) schools. *SMILE Site Visitor*

Related to the issue of district level media personnel is the presence of a person with responsibility for school media programs at the state level. Many media specialists commented on the lack of a specialist in school library media programs at the Department of Children, Families and Learning. CFL eliminated the position in the early 1990s. Media specialists and media coordinators had relied on the specialist to provide information to assist them in doing their jobs better at both the building and district levels.

Under the current configuration, there is no one at CFL to provide consultant and evaluation services, data collection and dissemination, coordination of statewide initiatives, or to be an advocate for school library media programs. There is consensus among the LMS visited that there is an ongoing need for the information and support a state level specialists can provide to Minnesota school library media programs.

Many media specialists cited the Library Development and Services (LDS) Library and reference staff as an important service they used often, especially in the absence of a school library media program specialist. The LDS library maintained a collection of books, periodicals, and other materials on library topics for use by librarians all types of libraries. LMS were heavy users of the collection. The collection consisted of published and unpublished materials on topics such as collection and policy development, freedom of information, teaching information literacy, advocacy, staff training, administration, and more. The reference staff facilitated the use of the information. The reference staff at LDS was repeatedly praised for providing information to media specialists to address a variety of issues, both in-person and by mail and phone.<sup>7</sup>



## Computerized Reading Programs

*Our budget is driven by Accelerated Reader. We only purchase books that have the tests to go with them. This limits our ability to build a curriculum-driven collection for all subjects. Fall Follow-up*

The site visitors who are retired media specialists all noted how many schools have adopted Accelerated Reader (AR), Reading Counts, and other reading programs that provide computerized tests of student comprehension. These leveled reading programs have become a very popular approach to improving reading skills. Most of the programs have been implemented at the elementary level; junior and senior high schools have adopted the programs, too.

Site visitors were not in the position to determine the suitability or success of these programs, but they did report several concerns from their observation of the programs and from interviews with the media specialists.

Their biggest concern is the impact these programs have had on media center collections and budgets. Many LMS reported that they only purchase books that have the computerized tests instead of developing a broad-based collection to support all areas of the curriculum. Most of the computerized tests are for fiction titles. As a result, non-fiction collections, which are already old according to the Census, will continue to suffer. AR and similar programs may have other effects on the media program, too. The books require a different level of book processing and organization that can be a strain on already busy media specialists. Often the computerized tests are taken in the media center, which may tie up computers. Administering the rewards also takes time.

- The MC budget will be cut to implement AR. *NLLN High School Media Specialist*
- We lost an aide and had a 15% cut in our funds this year. The superintendent tells me that we should expect the same level of funding this year. In 2000-01, we added the Accelerated Reader program for Grades 1-6. We spent approximately \$20,000 on software and books. In 2002-03, we will add Accelerated Reader to the 7th grade and will spend about \$3,000 for quizzes and new books to supplement the materials we own. *Census*
- Accelerated Reader requires funding to purchase books and quizzes leaving little money to purchase award winners or starred (recommended) books. *Census*
- We are expecting increased funding for Accelerated Reader quizzes (approximately \$7,000) for one year only. *Census*
- This is a perfect example of what happens to a media program with no media specialist in charge. (Purchase of materials) is limited to books from the AR lists, selected by the Title 1 teacher. Instead of arranging the books on the

The biggest concern about the computerized reading programs is how they have affected collection development. If books are selected based only on the availability of tests, newer books and others that support curriculum may be overlooked.

Many media specialists noted that how AR and other programs are implemented is important. The programs are not substitutes for media center collections, reading curriculum, or other elements of a school's learning objectives. These programs should supplement, not replace reading curricula and media programs.



shelves by Dewey (Decimal System), they were on the shelves by AR reading levels. *NLLN Site Visitor*

Media specialists see the positive results of these programs, but their workload has expanded to accommodate increased circulation and administrative tasks.

- Our library circulation increased a lot this year with the addition of the Accelerated Reader program, but as the only library person, I was swamped. *Census*
- Because of the tremendous effect of the Accelerated Reader program on our reading curriculum and on the library's circulation, we anticipate an increase in staff time to accommodate the increase in circulation. *Census*

The site visitors' other concerns are more fundamental to reading instruction; the practice of reading for points and incentives; the impression that students can only read books at their level; the level of comprehension and higher order thinking skills being taught; whether or not such programs diminish the joy students take in reading for pleasure. Another side affect may be students that develop a reliance on the color-coding / leveled reading approach to book selection may have difficulty in the future choosing what to read or using a public library.

These issues are all worth noting but can't be addressed here. Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning may wish to do a survey on how widespread these programs are and to determine their effectiveness.

With the ongoing emphasis on reading improvement, site visitors observed that few principals acknowledged the role of a media program in improving reading. With the generally accepted theory that practice is a key to learning to read and in spite of the research showing how media programs can help improve reading, few principals mentioned this as an impact of their media program. Only one principal credited his media program with getting books into the hands of students who have no other access to books at home or through the public library. Using the media specialist as part of a team approach to improving reading was rarely mentioned. Principals and media specialists need to work with other teachers to determine ways the media program can work with all students to improve reading.

- Our district requires students that read 25 books a year. Some don't have books at home and can't get to the public library. These students need a media center. *Metronet Junior High Principal*

## Model Programs

*It is a hopeful sign that there are some districts that have made significant commitments to media. Metronet Site Visitor*

The site visitors hoped to identify model media programs in Minnesota. Every visitor to a Bloomington Public School media center was impressed with every aspect of the programs: licensed staff teaching interesting lessons, new print collections, technology in media centers and labs with support and integration in both, support staff and professional staff including TV production and technology integrationists to work with the media specialists, supportive principals, remodeled facilities with new furniture for students and equipment, and more. All of this is because of a community wide commitment, demonstrated through a referendum, to state-of-the art media programs. Those who wish to see model programs would do well to visit Bloomington's schools.

The site visitors were most disappointed by their visits to media programs that had been models of effective media programs but, now, due to drastic budget cuts, lack of support from principals and school boards, or poor planning that did not reflect reality have been reduced to below even a minimum standard of programming.

One high school in central Minnesota district particularly surprised visitors. The visitors had looked forward to the visit, only to find:

- Budget cuts that eliminated all licensed staff
- English teacher in media center for 3 hours a day
- Technology integration specialist reduced to half-time.
- Both positions cut for next school year (2001-02).
- Principal unavailable for interview, in spite of accommodating his schedule and confirming times.
- Media center closed that day for testing purposes.

There were more disappointments, but the visitors summed it up:

- This High School and all the schools in the district have always had a good reputation and were known for their state-of-the-art media programs. The district was known for the many visionary innovations they were implementing, especially in technology. The former media specialist was a leader in the state. It was a great disappointment that we encountered such problems and the lack of a media program. *CMLE Site Visitor*

Another program designed as a model has also faced some problems:

- This High School building opened in September 1995, and was generally regarded as a model and show place for other schools in the region to follow. Planning was extensive. The prevailing philosophy at the time was to emphasize and incorporate high levels of technology in student learning. Even prior to the building, there had been little emphasis on traditional materials. Only in the current year has the need to incorporate traditional sources been brought back into the media services. Over the years, the media program has had a succession of incompletely

Media programs that demonstrate best practices in all areas of the Standards are described at the end of this chapter. These individual schools provide their students with a well-planned, well-implemented media program. There were many other programs that had exemplary programs in some areas of the Standards.

Site visitors found several schools that had relied on technology over more traditional learning materials. The schools are now trying to reestablish broader collections of materials.

licensed staff. The current media specialist will finish the licensing sequence this spring. Her chief interests are instructional design and teaching research and technology. Still, it is not at all clear that an actual media program exists to any deliberate extent. The media center has newness, excellent location within the building, the proximity of teacher work cubes, and one of the wealthier school districts in the state going for it. I do not see that any of this potential is realized in any good practice. *SELS Site Visitor*

Other visitors made similar comments on schools and districts that indicate that media programs are suffering from lack of funding and attention.

- I remember when (district) was a leader in technology and media. After visiting several schools in this district, I am disappointed that the trend seems to separate media and technology and not work on integrating the two into the curriculum. *Metronet Site Visitor*

## Other Findings

Other findings in the site visits should be noted. The use of volunteers was not as widespread as expected, media center space is often used for other functions, and principals need help in using the Standards to interpret their media programs. Principals would like guidance and support from the state on establishing and enforcing minimum levels of service for media programs.

## Volunteers

The Advisory Committee and media specialists thought that the site visitors would find many programs that rely heavily on volunteers to perform the functions of the media center. This did not turn out to be as widespread as thought. While there are volunteers assisting in many ways, the visitors did not visit any program operated solely by volunteer staff.

## Use of the Standards

The site visitors asked the principal's about their familiarity with the *Minnesota Standards for Effective School Library Media Programs 2000*. This document was mailed to all school principals and superintendents in spring 2001 by Commissioner Jax of the Department of Children, Families & Learning (CFL). The Standards were accompanied by a letter from the Commissioner endorsing the Standards and encouraging schools and communities to use them to assess the state of their media programs.

The site visitors found few principals who claimed familiarity with these Standards. Often principals confused them with Minnesota's graduation standards. The Standards document itself, with its non-descript black and white format, probably contributed to this lack of

The Standards received wide distribution when they were published in 2001.

recognition. In addition, several principals commented on the blizzard of mail they receive from CFL and elsewhere as a reason the document was overlooked.

Those principals who recognized the document had not used it to look at the media program or discussed it with the media specialist. The common reply was, "I passed it on to the media center." In only one case had the principal and the media specialist used the document together to assess the current state of the program and to plan how to improve areas in which it was weak, according to the Standards.

Principals were asked how they felt their schools were doing in relation to the Standards. For the most part, principals thought their programs were doing "fine" or "pretty well" overall, although this was rarely based on an understanding of the Standards.

Many principals indicated a need for more information on what a media program should be doing and how their program compared to others. Most indicated they relied on the media specialist to keep them informed of her activities, but did not require reports or use the information as an evaluative tool.

Several principals commented that since the use of the Standards is voluntary, with no pressure from their districts or CFL to implement them and with no consequences for not having a media program that meets even a minimum level of staffing or programming, they don't see immediate use for the Standards.

- It's good for the media specialist to use them in her program, but not relevant to me (principal) in planning or evaluation. Until the Standards have some "teeth" behind them through legislative action or enforcement by CFL, they will remain a reference document, not a working document in the school. *SELS High School Principal*

Many principals felt there would be value in state-mandated minimum requirements for media center staffing and programs or enforcement of the Standards by CFL because this would help schools and districts maintain and improve media programs. Pressure from parents and site councils has forced principals to focus on class size as their priority in deciding staffing levels in their buildings. This pressure, according to the principals, has led to the elimination or reduction of media specialists and programs. Most felt this would remain the case until a media program is made a requirement.

As part of the discussion of the Standards, principals were asked if they had read about, heard about, or used any of the research done by the Colorado Research Service or others on the impact that media



Several principals asked for more information on measurement and evaluation of media programs but had not considered the Standards as a source of this information.

Principals expressed interest in learning more about media programs, the Standards, and the research on how media programs impact student achievement. Individual LMS can work with their principals, but CFL, MEMO, and other organizations should consider providing this training.

The media center may be unavailable because it is used as a classroom, testing area, or study hall.

programs can have on student achievement. For the most part, principals were not familiar with the research. A few principals with proactive media specialists had received copies of articles about the research or the reports.

Licensed media specialists and district media coordinators, on the other hand, have been using the Standards and their work on the Census to look at their programs and work for improvements.

- There appears to be little or no administrative support for this program or the media specialist. She said the Census questions made her realize just how lacking her program is in material, furnishings, space, and functionality. Students we spoke with realize the shortcomings of their facility, but know the LMS is doing the best she can with what she has. *NCLC Site Visitor*
- Elementary media specialists have organized to meet twice a month to discuss best practices. We rated our programs on the standards. We sent our results to the principals as support for reducing our prep load and increasing book budgets. *Metronet Elementary School Media Specialist*
- As a result of the Census, I am creating a database of all our hardware so it can be accessed more easily. *Metronet Elementary School Media Specialist*
- Our district media director asked all the media specialists to send him copies of our Census results. He is compiling these and will add to the information with a survey of his own. He is talking to the superintendent about what he finding out from the Census. *CMLE Elementary School Media Specialist*

## Use of the Media Center

The Census points out the high level of student traffic in media centers around the state. The site visits confirmed this, but also discovered a high level of use of these spaces for non-media activity. The uses ranged from study hall to in-school suspension, as classrooms, as storage areas, as teachers' offices, as repair centers—just about every school use except for gym class or cafeteria expansion.

Several reports noted that the media center is often closed during the year for days at time to accommodate testing. While the site visitors understand the cramped nature of many school buildings, such use of the media center interferes with the teaching and learning activities of the media program.

- This school/community library is expected to serve everyone from birth to death in the school and community, but it gets little support or funding from either. *NCLC Site Visitor*
- The principal said that next year the media center will be used as classroom while the school is being remodeled. He hopes this will be temporary, but can't be sure. *Census*
- When the school needed an extra classroom, they took the back part of the library. This was before I started, but



parents came and moved all the shelves and books; now the books are not on the shelves in logical order. I've asked for the space back, but it doesn't look good. *Metronet Elementary School Media Specialist*

- Right now, all our media center does is serve as a holding area for study hall students. Next year I hope it will be better, when there are no study halls. *Metronet High School Media Specialist*
- The continued growth in our school population has meant that overflow classes meet in the media center about three hours of the school day. This makes it difficult to work with students and teachers and limits access to the shelves, so book checkout is limited. *Fall Follow-up*

## Conclusions

*If we don't do something about the condition of our media programs—update our books and technology, improve staffing, and convince parents, principals, and others of the important role we can play in educating all students—the programs will go away. That will leave our students without instruction in library and technology use or how to find and use the information they need. That doesn't bode well for the future if Minnesota wants to graduate students who can get good jobs and contribute to society.* Metronet High School Media Specialist

The site visits met the expectations of the Advisory Committee to provide additional information and insights on school library media programs. The reports confirmed what the Census data and comments showed about collections and staffing, the level of part-time programming, and lack of media support staff.

The site visitors expressed their concern about the consequences that the lack of commitment to teaching information literacy and disparity of resources across the state will have on the education of students. Some students are receiving excellent instruction in all areas of their curriculum with support and input from the media professionals in information literacy, technology literacy, research skills, and other library skills. Other students will be handicapped in the future by their lack of consistent instruction in these skills. When Thomas Jefferson talked about an “informed populace as the cornerstone of democracy,” he was talking about information literacy—the ability for the people of America to know how to make choices based on information.

There are literally thousands of comments in the online census and the follow-up that confirm what the site visitors saw across the state. Media programs are being cut back or eliminated because of budget reductions in education. Decision makers may point to the current budget crisis as the cause for this, but that doesn't explain why so many Minnesota school districts never made the commitment to me

Minnesota's media centers are showing signs of neglect that will have a long-term impact on student's ability to find and use information.

The comments from the online census and the site visits reflect the condition of media programs. Many are underfunded and understaffed and stocked with old books.



Well-funded, professionally staffed school library media programs will help Minnesota students compete in the knowledge-based 21st century economy.

dia programs and have the old collections and lack of staff to prove it.

Information literacy is the key to success. The ability to read, whether in a book, newspaper, or magazine or online, will continue to be vital. Evaluating information from TV or radio, from political speeches, and having the confidence that you understand what you read and can apply it are what will make Minnesota students successful now and in whatever they choose to do in the future.

We all depend on today's students to be the leaders, teachers, taxpayers, and voters of tomorrow. School library media specialists can help ensure that today's students are tomorrow's leaders. If we want no child left behind, we all need to make a commitment to Minnesota's school library media programs. There are literally thousands of comments in the online census and the follow-up that confirm what the site visitors saw across the state. Media programs are being cut back or eliminated because of budget reductions in education. Decision makers may point to the current budget crisis as the cause for this, but that doesn't explain why so many Minnesota school districts never made the commitment to media programs and have the old collections and lack of staff to prove it.

Information literacy is the key to success. The ability to read, whether in a book, newspaper, or magazine or online, will continue to be vital. Evaluating information from TV or radio, from political speeches, and having the confidence that you understand what you read and hear and can apply it are what will make Minnesota students successful now and in whatever they choose to do in the future.

We all depend on today's students to be the leaders, teachers, taxpayers, and voters of tomorrow. School library media specialists can help ensure that today's students are tomorrow's leaders. If we want no child left behind, we all need to make a commitment to Minnesota's school library media programs.

<sup>1</sup>A map of the multitype regions is in Appendix 9.

<sup>2</sup>Keith Curry Lance and D.V. Lorschter, *Powering Achievement: School Library Programs Make a Difference—the Evidence*, San Jose:Hi Willow Research and Publishing, 2001.

<sup>3</sup>ELM was created and supported by the state to provide the access to information resources across the educational spectrum (including K-12 education, higher education, state government, and public libraries) on a statewide basis. Policymakers recognized the need for and value to the state of expanding access to the growing volume of online knowledge and information. ELM expands access to quality resources through the economical purchase of access to electronic databases. The 1999 Minnesota Legislature invested \$500,000 for the fiscal year 2000-2001 biennium for K-12 schools and public libraries and up to \$1.8 million to the Higher Education Services investment for Fiscal Years 2002 and 2003, but the 2002 Legislature scaled back the increase as part of statewide budget reductions.

<sup>4</sup>The MINITEX Library Information Network is a publicly supported network of libraries in Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota working cooperatively to improve library service. MINITEX's mission is to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of participating libraries by expanding their access to local, state, regional, national, and international information resources through conventional and innovative means.

<sup>5</sup>More about flexible scheduling and prep coverage can be found in Chapter 1.

<sup>6</sup>Gary Hartzell, *Why Should Principals Support School Libraries?* ERIC Digest, November 2002, <http://ericit.org/digests/EDO-IR-2002-06.shtml>.

<sup>7</sup>This service is no longer available. CFL closed the LDS library in June 2002 and the reference staff was laid off or reassigned. The collection is currently in storage. Some of the books will be moved to St. Cloud State University Library. Arrowhead Library System will take the training videotapes and other training materials. Other materials will be discarded. When the material will be available for use is uncertain. The “institutional memory” of the reference staff is lost.





# Best Practices

Site visitors found many strong school library media programs in all parts of the state. The programs described in this section demonstrate best practices in many areas of the *Minnesota Standards for Effective School Library Media Programs 2000*. There were many other programs that had showed best practices in one or two areas. All the information in these descriptions comes from the site visit reports.

## Central Minnesota Library Exchange

Milaca Secondary School, ISD 912, Milaca  
Herbert Nyquist Elementary School, ISD 473, Isle

## Metronet

Valley View Elementary School, ISD 271, Bloomington  
St. Louis Park Junior High School, ISD 283, St. Louis Park

## North Country Library Cooperative

Ely Junior/Senior High School, ISD 696, Ely  
Piedmont Elementary School, ISD 709, Duluth

## Northern Lights Library Network

Lincoln High School, ISD 564, Thief River Falls  
Bemidji Middle School, ISD 31, Bemidji

## Southcentral Minnesota Inter-Library Exchange

West High School, ISD 7, Mankato  
St. James Senior High School, ISD 840, St. James

## Southeast Library System

Kenyon-Wanamingo Elementary School  
ISD 2172, Wanamingo  
Austin High School, ISD 492, Austin

## Southwest Area Multicounty Multitype Inter-Library Exchange

Pipestone Junior/Senior High  
ISD 2689, Pipestone  
Willmar Junior High School, ISD 347, Willmar

## Central Minnesota Library Exchange

### Milaca Secondary School, Grades 7-12

#### ISD 912, Milaca

*"This visit proved to me that an ideal secondary media center program can exist. The media specialist is a great example of how providing information gets support!"*

- Library media specialist is a respected and strong advocate for her program.
- LMS works with teachers to plan and provide learning experiences for students that involve research skills, problem solving, and communication.
- Keeps the administration informed of the achievements and the needs of the media program and its impact on student learning in the school.
- LMS work with administration resulted in \$40,000 for the collection. Unfortunately, it was reduced because of budget cuts, but the work of the media specialist did make a difference.
- There is up-to-date technology and emphasis on updating print collection.
- Best Practices include:
  - Integration of information skills with the curriculum.
  - Team teaching between the media specialist and classroom teachers.
  - Emphasis on analysis and discriminate use if information.
  - Students communicate research findings through a variety of multimedia formats.

### Herbert Nyquist Elementary School, ISD 473, Isle

*"The media program is a strong one, thanks to a hard working K-12 media specialist, a strongly committed paraprofessional, and a supportive principal"*

- LMS is in two schools, the elementary and the high school. The schools are in the same building, the programs are separate with two media centers and two principals but only one licensed media specialist.
- LMS is assigned to one hour in the elementary school and one hour in the high school every day; other than that, time is flexible and she works where needed. LMS also takes care of the technology and network for the whole building (both schools).
- Books in the media center are all arranged in Dewey Decimal System order with AR books inter-filed and cataloged. They are color coded with the AR reading level.
- LMS works with teachers to plan integrated units of study using information media and technology skills.
- The principal is proud of the program and strongly supports it, wishing that it was possible to have a full-time professional at the elementary level and a full-time professional at the secondary level.
- "The major difficulty for me is that some days there is not enough of me to go around. For the students and the teachers, a full time media specialist would be the answer." LMS
- Two years ago named a "Needs Improvement School" and received a 3-year federal grant (Comprehensive School Reform) of \$300,000 over three years. Purchased 1600 new books and will quadruple that in the next 2 years.
- Resources are totally integrated. Computers in the lab and in every classroom are Internet capable, hard-wired and wireless. Students have free access to the high school collection if more information is needed.
- LMS works with the local and regional public libraries to integrate their resources. The librarian at Great River Regional Library is invited to all of their staff development meetings.

## Valley View Elementary School

### ISD 271, Bloomington

*“This energetic media program emphasizes books and literature.”*

- Program has one full-time media person, one educational aide, and one tech support person.
- Bloomington district media standards are based on the Minnesota Standards. Referendum enabled district to upgrade all media centers.
- Principal is very supportive of the program; believes that media people should have autonomy to run their program.
- Up-to-date book collection and technology; both integrated into classroom activities.
- Media specialist works collaboratively with classroom teachers.
- Media Center atmosphere is inviting and appeals to learning.
- This school library media program supports the mission and goals of the school.

## St. Louis Park Junior High School

### ISD 283, St. Louis Park

*“The St. Louis Park Jr. High School has a well-developed media program which appears to meet the needs of both staff and students quite well. The Media Specialist is very knowledgeable, very organized, and very enthusiastic. It is the pulse of the school.”*

- Library Media Specialist is an educational leader in the school and takes pride in her program.
- LMS is involved with several policy-making and program-defining committees in the school.
- Media program is service oriented and a great support for teachers.
- LMS has the full support of the principal who has high expectations for the program. He appreciates and values the contribution of the media program to the instructional process.
- Good-sized collection in fiction, non-fiction, and reference; large display area for periodicals.
- LMS has cut back on subscriptions to periodicals for research because of electronic (ELM) availability but she has increased the number magazines of browsing interest to Jr. high-age students.
- Media center has a beautiful comfortable area with upholstered furniture for casual reading. It is a quiet area with student artwork on the walls and large windows overlooking the courtyard.
- Two media classrooms, two conference rooms, and a very well-equipped TV studio and control/editing room are all part of the media center.
- Excellent system for managing the Media Center use by classes and individual students.



## North Country Library Network

### Ely Junior/Senior High School, ISD 696, Ely

*"This library media program is a splendid example of what can be accomplished when the staff and administration have a vision, work cooperatively to make a plan, and implement the plan."*

- Well-planned, bright and cheerful facility designed to be easily monitored by the staff.
- Program integrated into the school curriculum beginning in the elementary grades and continuing through high school.
- Demands of the high school library limits time LMS has for elementary library.
- Cooperation between the local public library and the school library on the Accelerated Reader Program. On-line catalog set up to search the school resources first, then the local public library resources.
- Principal and media specialist developed a six-year plan to improve and update the media centers; now in year six of the plan. LMS has a binder of before, during, and after to demonstrate what has been accomplished.
- Principal commented, "We have the program and facility where we want it; now we need to maintain and support what we have."
- Bustling hive of activity during the entire time we were there
- LMS trains the teaching staff to use the resources of the media center. This is considered a big part of her job.
- They are aware of the limitations of the collection and are working on filling the gaps in the collection and updating materials. Media center still showed evidence of more new materials than others visited.
- LMS built school Web page on how to evaluate resources with links to good resources provided statewide and by the school.

### Piedmont Elementary School, ISD 709, Duluth

*"This site has an excellent program that has the full support of the principal; an exemplary example of support by the principal of the media specialist."*

- Although this media center has only a part-time position, the program offered here is an excellent one. Of all the programs I observed, it is the only one in which the teachers and the media specialist work cooperatively as a teaching team.
- Technology skills are integrated into use of print materials so that students are exposed both facets.
- Step-by-step written lesson plans are used to teach students the library and technology skills they need for lifelong learning.
- LMS has trained parents as volunteers to assist her with clerical chores and free her to teach.
- Average copyright is 1973, so collection is quite old. Needs more books. Needs to strengthen the non-fiction collection.
- LMS is midway through reorganizing the media center to be more usable and logically organized. Principal would like a uniform media program throughout the district so it can be implemented and used by the teachers.
- LMS lacks seniority and may not be rehired next year. Will lose continuity of what she has accomplished.

# Northern Lights Library Network

## Lincoln High School, ISD 564, Thief River Falls

*"This was a busy, busy media center, attractive and inviting, with self-help directions available, but a professional never too busy to help when asked."*

- School library media program is an essential and integral part of the standards and curriculum of Lincoln High School.
- Team effort, involving the media specialist, paraprofessional, independent study students, and student library assistants.
- Well-organized, student-oriented media center.
- Relationship with the teaching staff is pleasant and productive, integrating research skills into the curriculum.
- Students use the center independently as well under the direction of the teacher.
- Media specialist works well with both staff and students.
- Students and teachers have access to a full range of information resources.
- Students know how to use on-line information sources.
- LMS has developed a large number of subject brochures with bibliographic information, print, and non-print for staff and students.
- LMS would like to see more emphasis on pleasure reading.
- Principal and LMS think they are exemplary in all Standards areas except for the book budget but that takes additional funds.

## Bemidji Middle School, ISD 31, Bemidji

*"This media specialist isn't afraid to show middle school students how much she cares about them and is willing to help them succeed. This is an exemplary middle school library media program."*

- Beautiful media center—open spacious area in the middle of the building with both formal and informal area, and a variety of work spaces for research.
- Large numbers of students are able to work in the media center at one time on different activities.
- Staffed by a media specialist, who really likes to work with middle school students.
- An aide handles clerical duties which leaves the media specialist free to do the professional tasks.
- Media club with 40 - 50 students is an integral part of the program. They work the media center, but more importantly they sell the program to other students. It is "cool" to be a media club member!
- Both students and faculty receive orientation to the media center.
- Faculty is given an "Owner's Manual" that outlines just what the media center can do for them, with policies and procedures, all rules, etc.
- LMS produces a newsletter for the faculty.
- LMS feels she does an exemplary job of teaching the concepts of plagiarism, copyright, validating Internet sources, and other information literacy skills.

## Southcentral Minnesota Inter-Library Exchange

### West High School, ISD 7, Mankato

*"One of our best visits. The principal, media specialist, and media secretary all showed pride in their jobs and media center accomplishments."*

- Full-time media secretary plus a full-time district media technician and district media coordinator.
- Library media specialist is extremely responsive to teachers. Kids like him too.
- Book budget has been substantial and continues.
- LMS has great support from and rapport with teaching staff and administration.
- Both principal and media specialist felt the media program is exemplary in some Standards and minimum in very few.
- Working with teachers and students are the highest priorities.
- Principal and LMS agree that more money allocated to the media center would always be good to update and maintain the high standards they have achieved.

### St. James Senior High School, Grades 8-12

#### ISD 840, St. James

*"This is an excellent small rural school media center, run by a full-time professional media specialist with no additional help."*

- Media specialist writes a report of monthly activities: numbers of students using the library, activities done in the library; any other pertinent information. Reports go to all administrators in the district.
- Supportive principal who understands the need for books and technology. Encourages teachers to assign reading and research from many sources, not just the Internet.
- Catalog can be accessed from all 27 Macs in the media center. Students were making good use of all computers during our visit.
- Grade 8 is instructed on on-line catalog while in Jr. High.
- Neat and well-organized, and labeled. Good mix of new books in with the traditional books.
- Good atmosphere with plenty of posters, displays, and shelf signs.
- Display area changed often to encourage reading.
- There are several areas in which the media specialist feels they are meeting exemplary goals. Many more areas are being met at the standard and minimal levels.
- Media specialist part of the technology committee that studied programs in other districts to get ideas for the technology curriculum.
- Teachers are very supportive and use the media center a lot. Teachers bring students to the media center for many different resources.

# Southeast Library System

## Kenyon-Wanamingo Elementary School ISD 2172, Wanamingo

*"The obvious strength of this program is the staff who have the full support and hearty appreciation of the principal."*

- Media center is bright and colorful with class seating at tables and chairs and space for quiet reading on three soft chairs.
- Adequate selection of print materials and the largest non-print collection we saw.
- Doing well this year, but cutting staff for next school year. Principal and media specialist both concerned about loss of service.
- Principal greatly regrets the cuts and tried to maintain the status quo. He is supportive of media services in general and of the specialist in particular.
- Principal would like to see improvement in technology—adding equipment and updating what is currently available. Budget cuts will slow this improvement.
- Media center is open one evening and one morning a week for six weeks during the summer for a reading program using Accelerated Reading. The specialist is paid through Community Education.

## Austin High School, ISD 492, Austin

*"The high school principal is exceptional. He is an activist about a strong media program and is admirably progressive and direct in going after what he wants."*

- Program is in transition. It is awaiting a new media specialist for the next school year (2002-03) that the principal recruited for her knowledge and enthusiasm. She has the background plus experience at both elementary and middle schools in the district.
- Principal has a library background. He was a delegate to the White House Conference on Libraries in 1979
- Principal's emphasis is on adequate funding for the center and increasing the user-friendly approach to services as well as bringing the staff up to date in technology.
- Media center has an impressive and valuable reference collection including many junior college and college level works
- Student helpers were excellent and called on the Secretary when needed.
- Students and teachers showing obvious enjoyment of the media center.
- Need to improve use of available databases and need training to make that use happen.
- Need updated computer equipment in the media lab; addition of CD drives.
- Goal is to continue to seek funding for improvements, especially for technology.
- A senior lounge is located in the center where students may buy coffee; it's a user-friendly place that draws students for quiet relaxation, reading and study

## Southwest Area Multicounty Multitype Interlibrary Exchange

### Pipestone Junior/Senior High ISD 2689, Pipestone

*"Principal commented that if you don't have the staff, you don't have a program!"*

- Unique program that is a combined public/school library facility. Many years of cooperation make it work smoothly.
- Good relationship between media specialist and administration results in financial and program support.
- New building currently under construction was designed with school/public library in the center.
- Well-stocked, well-used facility.
- Excellent communication between LMS and principal and between LMS, students, and teachers.
- Positive atmosphere resulting in active use of the media center.
- Students make good use of both print and computer resources available to them.

### Willmar Junior High School, ISD 347, Willmar

*"This was the best example I saw of a fully integrated Media Center. All the aspects of a media program are in one facility with a media staff that worked together and complemented the entire staff and curriculum. This media center is the hub of learning and serves students and staff well."*

- Media program success due in large part to the media specialist who has been there nineteen years. He has not been afraid to embrace changes and has made himself very important to the school because he has always tried to be the first to learn about and use new technologies.
- Obvious collaboration; ethical decisions being made and cooperative relationships are there to the benefit of all.
- Supportive principal. Recognizes the need to balance print and technology, need for staff, and funding.
- The media program is well-integrated into the curriculum with well-trained staff who are capable of helping students both in the media center and the computer labs.
- The media program needs more staff. Right now the media specialist is half-time at the junior high plus he has district responsibilities for technology and audiovisual.
- No increase in book budget in the last 19 years. Need better budgets, especially for print materials, which are not as up-to-date as they should be.
- LMS works with teachers to create Web pages with links to research sites for specific student projects.
- Media center is colorful, inviting, and easy to use with adequate signage.

# Chapter Four

## Recommendations







# Recommendations

Information *is* power in a knowledge-based economy. Minnesotans need to make an investment in all school library media programs if students are to learn information literacy and research skills to improve their learning now and to become productive adults in the future.

Minnesota school library media programs are showing the signs of long-term neglect in many districts. This neglect began before the current state budget crisis and the crisis of confidence in current educational systems. Book collections dating from the 1980s and earlier, lack of full-time media staff, loss of professional staff, programs operated by non-licensed staff, low budgets, and other elements are evidence of this lack of investment. Misperceptions about the role of professional media specialists, administrators', teachers', and parents' lack of understanding of the research on how media programs impact student achievement, the emphasis on small class size over other school elements, the rush to technology as a panacea for improving student achievement, and the attitude that libraries are obsolete have contributed to the erosion of media programs over the last 20 years.

There is no doubt that tough times continue to lie ahead for education funding, but continued neglect of media programs will have a detrimental affect on students and, over the long run, on the state as a whole. Now more than ever, every person needs to understand information—how to find it, how to evaluate it, and how to use it. School library media specialists can lead the way in teaching these skills to our students.

Quality library media programs with resources, technology, and informed, committed library media specialists are not developed easily or without cost. For Minnesota's media programs to advance to their full capacity to impact student achievement, administrators, parents, legislators, and the public need to look upon the development of media programs as an investment in our future. The media program is the one program that can reach all students every year of their education from preschool through high school. The investment pays off in student academic success, students equipped for higher learning, and better jobs. We must make the investment in media programs to ensure that all Minnesota students will have the skills they need for academic success now and to become productive adults.

These are the first steps to creating strong, effective school library media programs that give all Minnesota students access to the information and resources they need and the training they need to use them.

**1. Principals, teachers, parents, and other administrators need to raise their expectations for media programs and the results they expect from these programs based on the research on the impact of school library media programs on student achievement and *Standards for Effective School Library Media Programs 2000*.**

- Develop education programs for various audiences to help increase their understanding of what school library media programs do, what the research says, and what districts and schools need to improve their own school library media programs.
- Provide evidence to school administrators, parents, and others on the importance of school library media programs and their impact on student achievement.

- Disseminate the results of the *Minnesota School Library Media Program Census* to all stakeholders to provide information for measurement and comparison of school library media programs.
  - Educate teachers, especially new teachers, on the importance of media programs and how to use them.
2. **All districts need to make a commitment to a full-time professional media specialist and adequate paraprofessional staffing in every school building to ensure all students learn information literacy and research skills—and develop a love of reading.**
    - Hire and support innovative enthusiastic committed media specialists.
    - Free media specialists from clerical and support tasks to allow full use of professional skills.
    - Encourage collaboration and planning between teachers and librarians.
  3. **Minnesota needs to make immediate state and local investments in school library media program print collections so they meet the Standard of current—books less than 10 years old. This will require a long-term commitment to resource building.**
  4. **The Legislature and Department of Children, Families, & Learning need to recognize the importance of school library media programs in improving student achievement by hiring staff at the state level to assist school districts develop effective library media programs. CFL and the Legislature can demonstrate this support by:**
    - Adopting the *Minnesota Standards for Effective School Library Media Programs 2000* as the benchmark by which media programs are measured.
    - Implementing minimum media programs standards to ensure equitable access for all students to resources and information literacy regardless of geographic location, size of school, or school district priorities.
    - Hiring school library media program specialists at CFL to lead the improvements in media programs and to provide technical assistance and support to media specialists and administrators.
  5. **The Legislature, CFL, and local districts must commit to maintaining and developing statewide resources and services to provide student access to what they need to succeed, including continued state support of telecommunications costs and maintenance and development of resources that expand access and availability statewide.**
    - Continue state funding for access to the Electronic Library of Minnesota (ELM) for K-12 schools and public libraries.
    - Maintain and expand as needed funding of telecommunications and other costs related to technology in K-12 schools.
    - Explore cooperative purchasing / processing of materials, delivery / interlibrary loan systems; and other options that increase service and improve efficiency through multitypes or other networks.



- Expand partnerships with public and academic libraries to extend, not replace, school library media program resources.
6. **All stakeholders must work to eliminate the digital divide in Minnesota public schools. All students need access to up-to-date technology and training in how to use it.**
- Evaluate current data collected and published by CFL in the Minnesota K-12 Technology Plan and across districts to determine what additional information is needed.
  - Develop plans to provide all students access to up-to-date technology in media programs and classrooms.
  - Foster use of technology to improve student learning.
  - Advocate for curriculum that drives technology, not technology-driven curriculum
7. **The Department of Children, Families, & Learning should continue data collection on school library media programs to provide on-going measurement of program development.**
- Perform additional analysis using the census data collected in 2002.
  - Develop a procedure at CFL for data collection, reporting, and analysis on all aspects of school library media programs.

**8. Library media specialists and their supporters must become advocates for all school library media programs and document and disseminate information on the impact of media programs on student achievement. Key areas of focus are:**

- Educate principals, school boards, administrators, and parents about the key elements of an effective school library media program.
- Document media program and media specialist contributions to academic achievement.
- Be politically active and politically savvy in schools, in districts, regionally, statewide and nationally—be on the leadership teams, site councils, tech teams—whatever is in your school and community to promote the importance of information literacy and libraries.
- Communicate with principals and teachers via regular meetings and reports so they know all the media program does. Be proactive in providing principals and teachers with information that helps them do their jobs better.
- Demonstrate that collaborating with librarians is a must in the age of information and technology.

