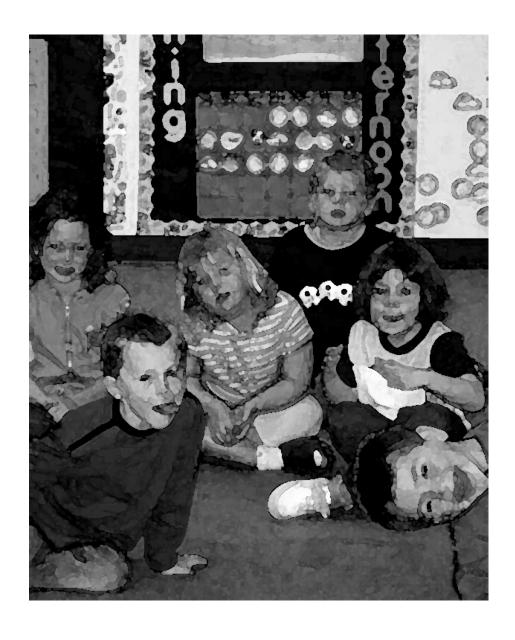Handouts for

Getting the Most from Your School Library Media Program

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Getting the Most from Your School Library Media Program

It sounds almost too good to be true. A single, building-level program that can:
- Improve reading scores
- Teach higher-level thinking skills
- Provide access to information resources in a variety of formats
- Improve every area of the curriculum
- Make students and staff more knowledgeable and comfortable with technology
- Develop motivated and self-directed life-long learners

Yes, it's the school library program that can do all these things and more. But unfortunately, not every school library program has this degree of impact in its school. If yours doesn't, what can you as a building administrator or site leadership team do about it? Find below a six step plan to make your school library program an effective one.

1. Find out what the research shows a good school library program CAN do.
Over 50 years of research has demonstrated that quality library media programs positively affect student achievement. Over the past 10 years, state-wide studies in Colorado, Pennsylvania, Alaska, Washington and Texas have all consistently tied good programs to student achievement. Scores on tests in all states studied showed a 10-15 point advantage in schools with strong library programs. A good link to current research in this area can be found at the American Library Association Resource Guides for School Library Media Program Development: Achievement webpage <http://www.ala.org/aasl/resources/achievement.html>.

A good school library media program not only can help improve standardized test scores, but can be at the heart of a school's efforts to develop a constructivist approach to teaching and learning. By providing both print and electronic resources, by team-teaching with classroom teachers, and by developing authentic assessment tools, the school library media specialist becomes an effective partner in resource-based curricular projects. Information literacy, the ability to find, evaluate and use information in order to solve problems, is fast becoming the new basic skill of the information age and it is the school library media program's mission to teach those skills.

Many school districts have melded the school library media and technology departments with good results. The networking equipment is stored, maintained and managed by library staff, the school library media specialist helps inservice staff members in the applied use of new technologies, and technology skills are taught to students as a part of research/resource-based units.

A library program *should* have an impact given its cost in resources, staffing and real estate. A typical library of 4,500 square feet can have a capital value of over a million dollars in facility, furnishings, materials and technology and an annual operating budget of over $100,000 including salaries, materials and supplies, and operating costs. Given such an outlay of school dollars, the building principal should take an active interest in the effectiveness of the library program.

2. Learn about the qualities of an effective program.
Unfortunately not all building administrators have had the opportunity to work in buildings with effective library media programs nor have they had the opportunity to learn about the qualities of a strong library program. One quick way to learn the basics about good school library programs is to download and read *Principal's Manual for Your School Library Media Program* from <http://www.ala.org/aasl/principalsmanual.html>. This two-page brochure neatly summarizes the current information about good school library media centers. For a more comprehensive, yet still brief look at the modern school library, read David Loertscher's *Reinventing Your School's Library in the Age of Technology: A Guide for Principals and Superintendents* published by Hi-Willow Press.

Better yet, talk to effective media specialists and visit vital school libraries. Your state's library association can provide you with a list of superb media specialists and exemplary programs you can visit.

3. Evaluate your building's program.
Have you ever wondered about the quality of your own school's library? Getting a snapshot of the quality of an individual library is neither difficult nor time-consuming. Tools like the one appended to this article can be used to quickly judge the status of your program. Some state school library associations have developed similar assessment tools like the one created by the Minnesota Educational Media Organization at <http://www.memoweb.org/links/checklist2.pdf>.

A more formal assessment of a building library program can be made using your own state's library standards or national standards such as AASL/AECT's *Planning Guide for Information Power* ALA. School library media programs are often evaluated as part of a school's accreditation process and your regional accreditation organization may have some tools that can help you do this. An independent set of library media program assessment tools can be found at <http://www.doug-johnson.com/wgm/wgm.html>.

4. Plan for program improvement and effectiveness.
Once an assessment of the program is made and areas for improvement decided upon, a long-term improvement plan tied directly to building and district goals and with measurable, annual short-term objectives needs to be established. Since a good school library media program is owned by the staff and students of a building, not just its media specialist, the plan should be created by a building library advisory committee. Good advisory committees have representatives from a number of stakeholder groups: teachers, students, parents, librarians and community members.

This committee should have as its charge making recommendations on goals and objectives, as well as creating the budget, staffing recommendations, and policies needed to meet those objectives. The school library media specialist should be responsible for organizing and chairing this committee, as well as having the major responsibility for working toward the goals and objectives it establishes and reporting to both the committee and building administration progress made toward those goals.

The committee needs to meet on a regular basis each school year, throughout the school year.

5. Evaluate the quality of your media program staff.
If your school does not have the services of a professional school library media specialist, you may as well stop reading and order a few more phonics workbooks. More than any other factor – budget, facilities, resources, support staff or technology – the quality of the school library media specialist determines the quality of the school library program. If the assessment of your library program shows that it is not having an impact on student learning, it may well be because your library media specialist needs upgrading.

As with all professional teaching staff, the school library media specialist should be formally evaluated. Using the same tools and procedures that are used to evaluate the classroom teacher is part of such a process. But a specialized evaluation tool can also be used such as the one developed for use in Kentucky that can be found at <http://www.kde.state.ky.us/oet/customer/online2/lms_eval.asp>.

And finally, the third evaluative method is to tie the school library media specialist's performance directly to the successful attainment of yearly program objectives tied to long-term goals described above. Annual conferences with the library media specialist need to be about the progress being made to make the library media program have a positive effect on student achievement.

6. Create, maintain and assess high expectations of the library media specialist.
As building principal or site team member, I would expect my media specialist:
- To be an excellent communicator with me, the staff, the students, the parents and the community. There should be a formal plan that informs each of these groups about the resources and activities of the program.
- To aggressively find ways to plan, team teach and assess with classroom teachers curriculum units that include both content and information literacy and technology skills.
- To serve on site leadership, curriculum and staff development committees.
- To take responsibility for staff development activities.
- To continue to upgrade his/her professional skills by attending workshops, conference and other training opportunities.
- To be able to articulate and demonstrate how the media program has a positive effect on student learning.
- To act as a major supporter and ally in any change effort undertaken in my building that will result in a more positive climate and greater student success.
- To keep me informed about and help me research the latest findings, trends and techniques related to effective schools and instructional practices.

Oh, and as a SLMS, I would expect from YOU as an administrator or site team good communications, support for jointly created library media program goals, and high expectations of me as a professional.

The school library media specialist can be the least or most effective staff member in your school. The building leadership has a dramatic impact on that effectiveness.

Conclusion
All of us are looking for proven programs that have a demonstrated track record of improving both student reading scores and offering greater learning opportunities. While good school library media programs can have just such a powerful impact on the effectiveness of your school, they are not a silver bullet that just happens – they are envisioned, planned, staffed and evaluated. A solid partnership between the school library media specialist and the school leadership is all it takes.

A 13 Point Library Media Program Checklist for School Principals

Rapid changes in technology, learning research, and the library profession in the past ten years are creating a wide disparity in the effectiveness of school library media programs. Is your school's library media program keeping current? The checklist below can be used to quickly evaluate your building's program.

1. Professional staff and duties
   - Does your library media center have the services of a fully licensed school library media specialist (SLMS)?
   - Is that person fully engaged in professional duties? Is there a written job description for all library media personnel: clerical, technical, and professional?
   - Does the SLMS understand and practice the roles of the SLMS as defined in Information Power II?
   - Does the SLMS offer staff development opportunities in information literacy, information technologies, and integration of these skills into the content area?
   - Is the SLMS an active member of a professional organization?
   - Is the SLMS considered a full member of the teaching faculty?

2. Professional support
   - Is sufficient clerical help available to the SLMS so that she/he can perform professional duties rather than clerical tasks?
   - Is sufficient technical help available to the SLMS so that she/he can perform professional duties rather than technical tasks?
   - Is there a district media supervisor, director, or department chair who is responsible for planning and leadership?
   - Does the building principal and staff development team encourage the library media personnel to attend workshops, professional meetings, and conferences which will update their skills and knowledge?

3. Collection size and development
   - Does the library media center's book and audio visual collection meet the needs of the curriculum? Has a baseline print collection size been established? Is the collection well weeded?
   - Are new materials chosen from professional selection sources and tied to the curriculum through collection mapping?
   - Is a variety of media available that will address different learning styles?
   - Have electronic and on-line resources been added to the collection when appropriate? Is there sufficient hardware for groups of students to take advantage of these resources?

4. Facilities
   - Is the library media center located so it is readily accessible from all classrooms? Does it have an outside entrance so it can be used for community functions evenings and weekends?
   - Does the library media center have an atmosphere conducive to learning with serviceable furnishings, instructional displays, and informational posters? Is the library media center carpeted with static-free carpet to reduce noise and protect electronic devices? Is the library media center climate-controlled so that materials and equipment will not be damaged by high heat and humidity, and so that it can be used for activities during the summer?
   - Does the library media center contain a computer lab, multi-media workstations, and TV production facilities as well as general instructional areas, a story area (in elementary schools), and spaces for individuals to work?
   - Is the library media center fully networked with voice, video and data lines in adequate quantities? Does the library media center serve as the "hub" of these information networks with routers, file servers, video head ends, etc. housed there?

5. Curriculum and integration
   - Is the SLMS an active member of grade level and/or team planning groups?
   - Is the SLMS an active member of content curriculum writing committees?
   - Are library media center resources examined as a part of the content areas' curriculum review cycle?
   - Are library media and information technology skills taught as part of content areas rather than in isolation? Are the information literacy skills of evaluating, processing and communicating information being taught as well as accessing skills?

6. Resource-based teaching
   - Does the SLMS with assistance from building and district administration promote teaching activities that go beyond the textbook?
   - Is the SLMS used by teachers as an instructional design and authentic assessment resource?
   - Does flexible scheduling in the building permit the SLMS to be a part of teaching teams with classroom teachers, rather than only covering teacher preparation time?

- Is a clear set of information literacy and technology benchmarks written for all grade levels available? Are these benchmarks assessed in a joint effort of the SLMS and classroom teacher? Are the results of these assessments shared with the student and parents?

7. Information technology
   - Does the library media center give its users access to recent information technologies such as:
     - computerized library catalogs and circulation systems
     - access to a computerized union catalog of district holdings as well as access to the catalogs of public, academic and special libraries from which interlibrary loans can be made
     - full on-line access to the Internet
     - a wide variety of computerized reference tools like full text periodical indexes, electronic encyclopedias, magazine indexes electronic atlases, concordances, dictionaries, thesauruses, reader's advisors and almanacs
     - a wide variety of computerized productivity programs appropriate to student ability level such as word processors, multi-media and presentation programs, spreadsheets, databases, desktop publishing program, graphic creation programs, still and motion digital image editing software
     - a wide range of educational computer programs including practices, simulations and tutorials
     - production hardware such as multi-media computers, still and video digital cameras, scanners, and LCD projection devices.
     - educational television programming and services
     - access to desktop conferencing equipment opportunities
   - Are the skills needed to use these resources being taught to and with teachers by the SLMS?

8. Telecommunications
   - Is the school linked by a telecommunications network for distance learning opportunities for students? Are there interactive classrooms in the building?
   - Does the library media program coordinate programming which can be aired on the local public access channel?

9. Networking & interlibrary loan
   - Is your school a member of a regional multi-type system or library consortium?
   - Does the SLMS use interlibrary loan to fill student and staff requests which cannot be met by building collections?
   - Does the SLMS participate in cooperative planning opportunities with other schools, both locally and distant?

10. Planning/yearly goals
    - Does the library media program have a district-wide set of long-range goals?
    - Does the SLMS set yearly goals based on the long term goals that are tied directly to building and curriculum goals?
    - Is a portion of the SLMS's evaluation based on the achievement of the yearly goals?
    - Is the library media program represented on the building technology planning committee? The district technology planning committee?

11. Budgeting
    - Is the library media program budget zero or objective based? Is the budget tied to program goals?
    - Does the SLMS write clear rationales for the materials, equipment, and supplies requested?
    - Does the budget reflect both a maintenance and growth component for the program?
    - Does the SLMS keep clear and accurate records of expenditures?

12. Policies/communications
    - Are board policies concerning selection and reconsideration polices current and enforced? Is the staff aware of the doctrines of intellectual freedom and library user privacy?
    - Does the district have a safe and acceptable use policy for Internet and technology use?
    - Does the SLMS serve as an interpreter and advocate of copyright laws?
    - Does the SLMS have a formal means of communicating the goals and services of the program to the students, staff, administration, and community?

13. Evaluation
    - Does the district regularly evaluate the library media program using external teams of evaluators as part of any accreditation process?
    - Does the SLMS determine and report ways which show the goals and objectives of the program are being met and are helping meet the building and district goals?
    - Do all new initiatives involving the library media and technology program have an evaluation component?
    - Do the SLMS and school participate in formal studies conducted by academic researchers when requested?

The Principal and the School Librarian: Meeting the Challenges of NCLB as a Team

Doug Johnson
2004 (Text of AASL brochure)

As building leader, meeting the demanding requirements of No Child Left Behind falls most heavily on you, the principal. Are you aware that you have a powerful ally in your school librarian?

Well-supported library programs can specifically and effectively support your building's NCLB goals, including:

Helping ensure all students are literate by 2013.
Short-term fixes like adopting a new basal reading series, teaching students test-taking skills, giving practice tests, and making sure everyone is well-fed and rested on test day are popular. But smart schools are discovering that simply increasing standard reading instruction and "test prep" do not work with many children nor do they have a long-term impact, and they are looking for other strategies. Your library program can be a critical partner in implementing strategies that not only improve test scores, but actually increase the reading abilities of all students.

It's unarguable that children who like to read, who read willing and joyfully also tend to read better. (1) Good library programs bolster the efforts of the classroom teacher and reading teacher whose responsibility it is to teach students *how* to read by helping students *want* to read. Again, students who like to read, read better by practicing reading skills.

Classroom reading instruction often requires students to read fiction and narrative non-fiction. But many tests ask students to interpret factual exposition. Your library has a wealth of good materials that have interesting expository writing: newspapers, magazines, and interesting non-fiction books. Your librarian, as an expert in children's and young adult materials, knows the resources that are of high interest to reluctant readers. And the librarian is an expert in getting those materials into the hands of students through book talks, reading promotions, and collaborative projects with classroom teachers. The school librarian can design motivational reading programs and provide materials especially for the subgroups that may be causing a school to be identified as not making AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress).

Work with your librarian to make sure your school library program:
- Provides accessible reading materials for a wide range of interests on a wide range of topics.
- Promotes reading across the curriculum by providing teachers with bibliographies and classroom collections of exciting content area specific reading materials.
- Promotes reading through specially designed activities and programs. One electronic reading promotion, *Accelerated Reader*, has been shown specifically to increase student performance on standardized test scores. (2)

Helping ensure all students pass state tests.
All students, especially those living in poverty, need assignments that are relevant, applicable to everyday life, and personal. (3) A library program's well-designed research and information literacy projects meet the needs of those students.

Constructivists and project-based learning activists have long observed that actually applying skills leads to deep understandings that result in well-remembered learning. (4) Professor Royal Van Horn articulates what most of us have seen for ourselves:

> "At first I was surprised to learn that the [Florida] Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills is precise enough to pick up marked differences in teaching styles, but I can always pick out the drill-and-practice teachers and those who use a more balanced approach that includes a lot of student writing and emphasizes children's literature. Guess what, the students who write a lot and read a lot do much better on the tests than those who do lots of dittos. (5)

Many state tests ask students to apply skills as well asking for simple recall of facts. Librarians, by designing teaching information literacy units tied to the classroom curriculum, help all students learn to not just memorize information, but to use it in meaningful and memorable ways. Which, of course, leads to higher test scores.

No one wants students to be content with reading for simple comprehension, knowing basic number facts, or being able to write a few complete sentences. We want to produce critical readers, real-world math users, and passionate, effective writers. State tests should only be a stopgap measure to help catch the very neediest of students – not a very low bar to which to hold all students. Project-based learning that is planned, co-taught and assessed by your school's librarian will always ask children to go beyond the minimum, and in doing so, have no difficulty in passing tests that measure just the minimum.

Work with your librarian to make sure your school library program:
- Has an articulated information literacy curriculum and grade-level benchmarks that include research and technology skills that are aligned to your state's standards.
- Teaches these skills in collaboration with the classroom teacher in projects tied to the content area curriculum

Helping ensure all students are technology literate.
The digital divide still exists. Students from less affluent families are much less likely to have home access to computers and the Internet. (6) Yet NCLB will soon require that all students be technology literate by the end of eighth grade. The library program can help your school meet this ambitious goal.

When technology skills are an integral part of the information literacy curriculum, librarians teach children how to use information technologies to answer questions and solve problems. (7) Teaching technology skills in isolation through "computer classes" leads to short recall of these skills. When computers are used only for drill and practice instruction on low level reading and math skills, students do not learn the powerful productivity and communications programs that they will use as "information age" workers.

The library also provides ready computer and Internet access to all students before, after and throughout the school day. The librarian offers computer-using students both training and supervision.

Work with your librarian to make sure your school library program:
- Provides ready access to computers and other information technologies for all students, especially those who may not have home access.
- Has integrated technology skills into its information literacy curriculum.
- Provides guidance to students using technology to complete school assignments and explore personal interests.

Helping ensure teachers have the resources and skills necessary to be deemed "highly qualified."
NCLB is creating a greater need for effective teacher staff development. Teachers may need additional formal instruction to receive the certification that makes them "highly qualified." Online courses often provide a convenient means for practicing teacher to obtain certification. The librarian can both provide information about such courses and help teachers master the technology skills needed to do the coursework.

When implementing new and more effective pedagogies, teachers seek out collaborative partners. The increased use of technology in schools for administrative purposes demands all teachers have computer skills as well as their students. Again, the librarian is a willing partner in new approaches to instruction. The librarian also serves as the staff reference expert, helping teachers and administrators find the lesson plans, advice and fellow educators needed to make instruction change effect, thereby raising the achievement level of all students.

Work with your librarian to make sure your school library program:
- Serves as a resource for all staff development efforts.
- Finds sources of information about new instructional strategies.
- Teams with classroom teachers when moving to a more constructivist approach to teaching and learning.

Helping ensure schools remain committed to good educational practices that go beyond the minimal requirements of NCLB.
One controversial aspect of NCLB is its over-reliance on standardized tests as a measurement of both student and school performance. Such tests often measure only a few basic skills and penalize students who are poor test-takers. Teaching strategies and assessment tools that assess higher level thinking skills and the application of skills are also necessary.

The librarian is an advocate for and creator of assessments that give parents and communities far more meaningful measures of abilities and efficacies. Library programs lead in the development of methods of measuring and reporting the mastery of many different kinds of learning assessments including critiqued portfolios of work that show growth, reports of abilities to work collaboratively, evidence of the skill of self-assessment of work, and use of skills to make a thoughtful difference in society. Donald Norman reminds us that "The danger is that things that cannot be measured play no role in scientific work and are judged to be of little importance." (8)

The library program can also contribute to an improved school climate. By providing a safe, nurturing, and productive space, the school experience for all students improves. A good school library is a quality many parents look for when choosing a school for their children. (9)

Work with your librarians to determine if they:
- Share their expertise in project-based learning and authentic assessment.
- Serve on building leadership teams, curriculum committees, and in other leadership functions.
- Communicate regularly with parents and the community about the library program and participates in the public relations efforts of the district.

Conclusion

A variety of credible studies prove that schools with good library programs have students who do better academically as measured by standardized test scores. (10) So does common sense. As administrators, we should not be asking ourselves if we should be devoting resources to improving test scores or to improving library programs. Improved library programs *do* equal improved test scores – and more.

We may never meet the ambitious NCLB literacy goal of 100% by 2013, but effective library programs will get us closer to that goal. It is in our professional and students' best interests if we look upon NCLB as a challenge and an impetus for positive changes. The school library program is your effective partner in helping create those changes.

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3. Ruby Payne makes this compelling argument in her important book *A Framework for Understanding Poverty* (aha!process, inc., 2003)

4. The Buck Institute for Education's Project Based Learning site at <http://www.bie.org/pbl/index.html> provides a good overview.

5. Van Horn, Royal. "Improving Standardized Test Scores," *Phi Delta Kappan*, Mar. 97, Vol. 78 Issue 7, p584

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Demonstrating Our Impact: Putting Numbers in Context
Originally appeared as Media Matters column, *Leading and Learning*, 2006-07

One of my favorite quotes comes from George Bernard Shaw: *"We should all be obliged to appear before a board every five years and justify our existence...on pain of liquidation."* While Shaw was commenting on one's social worth, his words today could come from any number of administrators, school boards and legislatures and be aimed directly at school library media specialists. Finding a persuasive answer to the question "How do we demonstrate our impact on student achievement?" is increasingly important for every library media specialist in the country.

I have long been frustrated finding a convincing means of answering the accountability question, especially when those asking want empirical rather than anecdotal evidence to support claims of program effectiveness. To me, genuine empirical evidence is the result of a controlled study and no school has the ability or will to do a controlled study on library effectiveness. Would your school:
- Be willing to have a significant portion of its students (and teachers) go without library services and resources as part of a control group?
- Be willing to wait three to four years for reliable longitudinal data?
- Be willing to change nothing else in the school to eliminate all other factors that might influence test scores?
- Be willing to find ways to factor out demographic data that may influence test results?
- Be able to analyze a large enough sample to be considered statistically significant?
- Be willing to provide the statistical and research expertise and manpower needed to make the study valid?"

I know mine wouldn't participate in such a study, no matter how clear-cut the evidence produced. So how do we demonstrate our impact using "numbers?" Let's look at a number of ways, none perfect, but when used in combination, powerful.

1. Standards and checklists. A common means of assessing a school library media program (and by inference assessing its impact on student learning) is by comparing an individual library media program to a state or national set of program standards. AASL's *Planning Guide for Information Power: Building Partnerships for Learning with School Library Media Program Assessment Rubric for the 21st Century* (ALA, 1999) is one example of a tool that can be used to do such a comparison. Many states also have standards that can be used to evaluate library media programs. Minnesota's, for example, can be found at <www.memoweb.org/htmlfiles/linkseffectiveslmp.html>.

Both AASL and MEMO use rubrics that quickly allow a media specialists to evaluate their programs. For example, MEMO's "Standard One" under the **Learning and Teaching** section reads: "Is the program fully integrated?" and gives these levels

Minimum

25-50% of classes use the media program's materials and services the equivalent of at least once each semester.

Standard

50%-100% of classes use the media program's materials and services the equivalent of at least once each semester. The media specialist is a regular member of curriculum teams. All media skills are taught through content-based projects.

Exemplary

50%-100% of classes use the media program's materials and services the equivalent of at least twice each semester. Information literacy skills are an articulated component of a majority of content area curricula.

While standards can and should be used to help evaluate a program, the direct link between meeting such standards and local student achievement is not present. While backed by research, best practices, and the experience of the standards writers who are usually experts in the field, these tools can only suggest what *may* make a local program more effective, not demonstrate that the current program is having an impact. While important, standards are guides, not evidence.

2. Research studies. The Colorado studies are a good example of using statistical regression analysis to look for correlations between variables. In the case of statewide library studies, the relationship of effective library programs and standardized test scores is examined. *School Libraries Work*, (Scholastic, 2006) is an excellent summary of this type of research. <www.scholastic.com/librarians/printables/downloads/ slw_2006.pdf>. These can and should be discussed with principals, not just

placed in their mailboxes. Some statisticians do not approve of regression analyses because they show correlation, not causation, and because it is very difficult to factor out other variables that may have impacted the correlation.

Other formal individual research studies and meta-studies are also worth sharing with administrators. Stephen Krashen's *Power of Reading*, 2nd edition, persuasively stacks up a large number of individual research reports to demonstrate that voluntary free reading can improve student reading ability. And he concludes that when students have access to a wide range of reading resources (in libraries, of course), they do more independent reading.

Unfortunately, just as all politics are local, so are all assessments local. While decision-makers are usually quite willing to read and acknowledge studies done "elsewhere," most still want to know the direct impact their local program is having.

3. Counting things. Year-end reports that include circulation statistics, library usage, and collection size data are a common way for building library programs to demonstrate the degree to which they are being used, and by inference, having an impact on the educational program in the school.

Ontario Library Association's *Teacher Librarian Toolkit for Evidence Based Practice* <accessola.com/osla/toolkit/home.html> contains a number of forms that can be used to track circulation and incidences of collaboration. Jacquie Henry provides a tool for tracking media center usage in the January 2006 issue of *Library Media Connection*.

Our district's "Year End Report" asks library media specialists to enumerate the following:

> **Circulation statistics:**
> Number of print materials circulated
> AV materials circulated
> In-library circulation of print
> In-library circulation AV materials
> AV equipment circulated
>
> **Use of space:**
> Classes held/hosted
> Drop in users
> Computer lab
> After hours
> Other uses
>
> **Collections:**
> Number of books acquired and deleted
> Number of AV materials acquired and deleted
> Number of software programs acquired and deleted
>
> **Leadership team activities: (List any building/district committees on which you have served and your role on them.)**
>
> **Instructional activities:**
> For primary, please list for each grade level library units taught that support classroom units and major skills taught.
> For secondary, please list all units taught collaboratively and skills for which you had major responsibility for teaching.
>
> **Special programs or activities: (in-services, reading promotions, authors, events)**
> Please share a minimum of three instructional highlights for the past year. This is very helpful when concrete examples of media/tech services are needed.
>
> **Communications: (Please list how you have communicated with parents, staff and students this year.)**

There is a movement away from counting things: materials, circulation, online resource uses, website hits, individual student visits, whole class visits and special activities conducted (tech fairs, reading promotions, etc.) to enumerating how many instructional activities were accomplished: booktalks given, skill lessons taught, teacher in-services provided, pathfinders/bibliographies created and collaborative units conducted. Administrators are less concerned about how many materials are available and more concerned about how they are being used.

Information and technology literacy skill attainment, if assessed and reported, is another means of "counting" one's impact. Our elementary library media specialists have primary responsibility for teaching these skills and complete sections of student progress

reports similar to those done in math and reading. At the building level, it is possible for the library media specialist to make a statement like: "89% of 6th grade students have demonstrated mastery of the district's information literacy benchmarked skills."

4. Asking people. Asking library users to complete surveys and participate in focus groups is an effective means of collecting information about the impact of the library media programs.

Here are some simple, common questions that might be included on a student survey. Questions one through twelve can be answered using a 1-4 Likert scale. Questions thirteen through fifteen are open-ended. (The results of surveys that use a Likert scale or other numerical responses are simple to graph, and such graphs can have a dramatic impact when communicating the results of such information.)

Student Survey Questions
1. I feel I can help decide what activities, rules and materials are a part of the library media center.
2. The media specialist lets me know when there are new materials or things to do in the media center.
3. There are enough books and other materials in the media center that I can get what I need.
4. I can find the books, computer software and other materials in the media center I need. I can understand them easily.
5. The materials in the media center are easy to find, are in good condition, and are up-to-date.
6. I think the skills I learn in the media center are important. I use them in class or at home as well as in the media center.
7. I can use the media center whenever I need to.
8. The media specialist helps me with my questions.
9. The media specialist is always there when I need help.
10. I feel welcome and comfortable in the media center.
11. I can get my work done in the media center.
12. I use technology in the media center to help me answer my questions.
13. The thing I like best about the library media center is:
14. One thing that could be changed about the library media center is:
15. Other comments or observations:

Surveys can also be conducted with teachers, administrators and parents, each yielding good information. Some sources of surveys include:
- Johnson, *What Gets Measured Gets Done* (Tools): <www.doug-johnson.com/wgm/wgm.html> (from which the questions above were taken.)
- McGriff, Preddy, and Harvey, *Program Perception* <www.nobl.k12.in.us/media/NorthMedia/lms/data/ percept/percept.htm>
- Valenza, *Power Tools Recharged* (ALA, 2004)

Surveys of both students and teachers can be done either at the project level or on an annual, program level. Joyce Valenza conducts video "exit interviews" of graduating seniors at her high school that help her determine the effectiveness of the media program over the academic career of her students. (See her exemplary "End of Year" report at <http://mciu.org/~spjvweb/annualreport06.pdf>.)

Survey-based data gathering was a powerful tool used by Todd and Kulthau to conduct *Student Learning through Ohio School Libraries: The Ohio Research Study* <www.oelma.org/studentlearning> in 2003. This type of study in which students are asked about the impact the media center has on their learning would be relatively easy to recreate at the building level.

5. Anecdotal data. Is there value to anecdotal evidence and stories? Despite my favorite statistics teacher's dictum that the plural of anecdote is not data, I believe empirical evidence without stories is ineffective. One skill all great salespeople have is the ability to tell compelling personal tales that illustrate the points they wish to make. It's one thing for the guy down at the car dealership to show a potential buyer a *Consumer Reports* study. But the real closer is his story of how Ms. Jones buys this exact model every other year and swears each one is the best car she has ever owned. When "selling" our programs, our visions, and ourselves to those we wish to influence, we need to tell our stories. See "Once Upon a Time," *Library Media Connection*, February 2002. <www.doug-johnson.com/dougwri/storytelling.html>.

Don't discount how powerful "digital storytelling" can be as well. A short video or even photographs of students using the library media center for a variety of activities can be persuasive. How many times have you said, "If only the parents could see this, they would support the library 100%"? Though digital photography and a presentation to the PTA or Kiwanis organization, they *can* see your program.

Context and Focus Numbers alone, of course, mean little. They need to be interpreted and placed in some type of meaningful context. Context can be achieved by setting and meeting goals and by looking at numbers in a historical context. Look, for example, at how each statement gets more powerful:

- 28 teachers participated in collaborative units (Is this good or bad?)
- 78% of teachers in the building participated in collaborative units (This tells me more.)
- 78% of teachers, up from 62% of teachers last year, participated in collaborative teaching units. (This shows a program that is getting stronger.)

In light of NCLB's focus on the achievement of subgroups within a school, data that relate specifically to target populations may be more powerful than that which applies to the entire school population. While numbers showing that book circulation has grown by x% this year is good to report, numbers that show book checkout by the building's ELL (English Language Learners) has increased by x% is probably of more interest to your administration.

David Loertscher's *Project Achievement* <www.davidvl.org/achieve.html> suggests that data collection should be done at three levels in order to triangulate evidence: at the Learner Level; at the Teaching Unit Level; and at the Organization Level and he provides tools to do just that. He also suggests evaluating the impact of the library program on four areas: Reading, Collaborative Planning, Information Literacy and Technology.

My suggestion is to pay careful attention to your building and district goals and annual objectives. If reading is a focus, then look at reading activities, promotions, collection development and circulation. If there is a focus on a particular demographic within your school, focus on it. Your own goals, and the accomplishment of them, can also provide an effective means of assessment.

Traditionally, school curriculum areas and programs have been formally evaluated on a five to seven year cycle. This approach has been replaced in many schools by some form of continuous improvement model. In other words, evaluation - and actions determined by the results of those evaluations - need to be ongoing.

For the school library media program, some form of assessment should be conducted, analyzed and reported several times during the school year. A simple survey, a compilation and analysis of usage numbers of a particular resource, or reporting of units planned and taught become integral parts of regular communication efforts with staff and parents, and then can be easily aggregated for a final year-end report.

We can no longer afford to complete a program evaluation once every five years and have the results thrown in a drawer and never looked at until the next formal assessment. Our assessments need to help us improve our practice, to serve as indicators for our planning efforts, and to be an integral part of our communication efforts with our teachers, administrators, parents and communities. Assessment, of course, takes time, but less time than finding another job.

How are you "demonstrating your media program's impact on student achievement?"