

What gets measured gets done: a school library media and technology program self-study workbook (2007)

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Along with this document, I have provided the following documents:

- A sample of a completed self-study **sample.pdf**
- A set of tools: surveys, rubrics, and miscellaneous checklists **tools.pdf**
- A template for a self-study **template.pdf**

Contents	
Introduction	p. 3
Organization	p. 5
Data gathering	p. 6
Data analysis	p. 7
The outside consultant	p. 8
The written report	p. 9
Sharing the findings	p. 10
Follow-up	p. 10
Addendum: Demonstrating Our Impact: Putting Numbers in Context	p. 12
Resources for library media program assessment tools	p. 18

Introduction

Since this guide was written six years ago, program assessment practices have undergone some radical changes:

1. Programs are increasingly being assessed on an on-going basis, not on a 3-7 year cycle.
2. Empirical data is necessary in determining whether a program is effective.
3. It is the impact on student learning that forms the basis of all programmatic effectiveness – at least in theory
4. School programs, not content areas, are the focus of accreditation/improvement efforts.

This necessitates some changes in this guide. While it will remain primarily a resource for those educators wanting to do a formal, major library/technology program assessment, the guide will also address some things that should be done annually. It will also look at the challenges of providing empirical evidence that the library and technology programs are having an impact on student achievement.

One major change is the addendum that describes my current thinking on how we “do” assessment on an on-going basis and demonstrate our impact on student achievement. This is challenging (impossible?) but vitally important in an era of accountability. I will be anxious to see how things turn out myself!

Formal program evaluations

Program assessments generally cause far too much stress for school library media specialists. Those I’ve participated in nearly always meant hours of work, sometimes resulted in undeserved criticism publicly stated and, far too often, did not result in any positive change.

Is it any wonder many of us shudder when we hear, “Your program is under review this year?”

So why develop this little handbook? After having participated as both the victim and perpetrator of about a dozen library media and technology program evaluations, I strongly believe three things:

1. Program evaluations do not need to be long, tortuous, stultifying ordeals. By collecting and interpreting only meaningful data, the process can be not just painless, but interesting and possibly even fun.
2. Program evaluations should only exist as tools that will help us increase our budgets, improve our working conditions, and make our programs essential to our students’ learning. An effective program evaluation used as a starting point for long-range planning is the *only* thing that can improve a school’s library media program significantly and permanently.
3. The data gleaned from program evaluations should drive both our planning and reporting efforts. The identified areas of strength and concern should help us target areas where resources should be devoted and base our long term goals and short term objectives on them. They should help drive our budgets. And the progress toward meeting these goals should provide the framework of all our reporting efforts – to our supervisors, to our parents, and to our communities.

As the title of this booklet, taken from oft-quoted business guru Tom Peters, suggests, program evaluation is about measurement. And that’s true. But it is also about making meaning of those things quantified. I hope this booklet helps provide guidance in doing both those things.

This booklet will offer brief comments about each of the following areas and provide some concrete tools for the evaluator's use when needed.

1. Organization
 - a. Leadership
 - b. Participants
 - c. Determining purpose
 - d. Timeline
 - e.
2. Data gathering
 - a. Surveys
 - b. Focus groups
 - c. Counting stuff
 - d. Evaluation rubrics
3. Data analysis
 - a. Identifying strengths
 - b. Identifying concerns
 - c. Identifying recommendations
4. The written report
5. Using a consultant as an evaluator
6. Communicating the findings
7. Follow-up
8. Addendum: *Demonstrating our Impact*
9. Tools and resource links

Purpose and organization of program assessment

Purpose

The purpose of a formal program evaluation is to help improve the school library media and technology program. Like it or not, school library media programs have changed dramatically since most community members, parents and school staff were in school themselves. The addition of new technologies, the increased importance of information literacy skills, and the demand that all students show proficiency in basic skills through standardized testing have changed the role of the library from a quiet place for study run by a teacher who was unable to cope in a classroom to a dynamic combination of programs and resources that can genuinely improve educational opportunities for all students directed by a team of cutting-edge educators.

The end results of a program review should include:

- Assessment of the current status of district media/technology programs
- Agreement on long-term (3-5 year) goals based on recognized standards (see the list of standards documents at the end of this booklet) and building/district needs
- Establishment of short term objectives that help meet those goals
- Development of a formal method for reporting the attainment of those goals and objectives
- Assessment of the program as a part of the library media specialist's professional evaluation

A Team Approach to Evaluation

Library media and technology program assessment is most effective when the media specialists, building principals, and district personnel all share the responsibility for it. The team needs to recognize and approve of all elements of the evaluation process if that process is to lead to genuine improvement. The team should include not just media and technology specialists, but administrators, teachers, parents and possibly students as well. All members of the assessment team need to be identified and their roles and responsibilities clearly identified. As part of the assessment process, an outside consultant may be brought in to help determine the validity of the findings and recommendations of the community-based committee. (See separate chapter.)

The team leader is ideally the administrator in the district in charge of media and technology programs. It is this individual's job to organize the team, help it identify its goals, facilitate the visit of the outside evaluator, and see that the final report is completed. If the district does not have an administrator in such a position, an experienced media specialist given release time or additional compensation makes an excellent team leader.

Timeline

A complete study of a district media technology program should allow time for planning, distribution, return and analysis of surveys; compilation of the written self-study; a visit by an outside evaluator; and a report to the school board. A possible timeline

September	Selection of study committee and its leader. Initial meetings
October	Review and selection of external standards. Determination of purpose of study. Design or modification of surveys.
November	Distribution of surveys. Meetings of media professionals to complete standards rubrics. Collection of inventory information
December	Collection of surveys and compilation of findings.
January	Analysis of data from surveys and draft of program strengths, concerns, and actions. Writing draft self-study.
February	Review of self-study draft by stakeholders
March	Visit by outside evaluator. Writing of findings of outside evaluator.
April	Report from evaluator reviewed and accepted.
May	Presentation of consultant report and self study to board and administrative team.

Data gathering

Evaluation rubrics tied to external standards.

Happily, there are a number of tools based on state and national standards that provide a guide for assessing school library media programs. These guides, checklists, and rubrics offer a description of the services of an effective media center. The rubric-like organization of some of these guides can provide a growth path for all media centers regardless of their current level. **Check to see if your state has specific guidelines for school library media programs.** The Minnesota Educational Media Organization's rubrics for program evaluation based on AASL's *Information Power II* can be found in the *Tools* document that comes with this booklet. <http://www.doug-johnson.com/storage/tools.pdf> The NY Library Program Rubrics 2004 are comprehensive and worth a look. <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/nyc/Library/RubricsJan2004.doc>

An important use of such an assessment tool is to determine the current state of a building or district's library media program. The media specialist can do this, but the baseline established is more meaningful and accurate when others on the building staff serving on building media advisory committees participate as well. Media specialists should have the opportunity to discuss the evaluation tools prior to completing them for their own buildings so that common understandings of terms can be agreed upon and any questions clarified.

Most of these assessment tools have more measurable areas than are practical to deal with in a single year or improvement cycle. So it's **extremely important** that the media specialist, principal and building staff use their own building goals to help them select a few areas for focused improvements. One way to determine which areas should be the focus of the evaluation is to consider overall building and district educational goals. This approach helps make the media program a vital part of the entire school program.

Surveys and Focus Groups

An important source of information about the media program comes from the patrons it serves. Short, easily understood surveys like those found in the *Tools* document specially designed for parents,

students, teachers, and principals should be given to a random sample of these groups in every building. Self-addressed stamped envelopes are both polite and will result in a higher percentage of survey returns from parents. Online tools like *SurveyMonkey* or *Boomerang* make creating and analyzing easy as well as quick and convenient for the those completing them. Student surveys can be completed during visits to the media center; parent surveys during PTO meetings, open houses or Parent-Teacher conferences. All survey responses should be anonymous in order to get more accurate findings.

Focus groups of students, teachers, and/or parents can also provide good data. Discussions using a survey as a means of guiding the discussion along a good recorder taking notes of the discussion can result in more complete observations and comments than written surveys alone.

Counting stuff

It is important to have a good inventory of the resources that make up the media program. These resources include personnel, print materials, budgets, and technology. Simple spreadsheets that allow quick analysis of data such as professionals per student are a good way to report such data. Examples of such spreadsheets can be found in the *Tools* document also.

One of the more difficult parts of completing an inventory is agreeing on what and how things should be counted. Should all computers be counted or just the ones which are less than 5 years old? A building that counts all its old computers that may be running keyboarding programs may show a significantly higher computer to student ration than one that only counts the multi-media, networked computers. A library collection that counts each copy of a book will show a higher book to student ratio than one that only counts each title of its collection. The study team can choose whatever criteria it would like to count items, but the criteria should be as consistent as possible throughout the study and clearly identified in the findings.

You may have noticed that the tools include those that count technologies throughout the building rather than just those found in library media centers. Our district has a combined media and technology department and so when evaluating one we evaluate both. Use the counting tools that best suit your own organizational structure.

The forms in this document are tables for the sake of formatting and printing ease. Putting inventories in a spreadsheet makes analyzing the data (ratios, totals, etc.) much, much easier. I would convert these tables to spreadsheets when actually conducting the self-study.

In this version of the tools, I've also added a technology survey we give our teachers based on the five major goal areas we have for our technology department. Take a look.

Data analysis

The purpose of gathering data, of course, is to help identify both the strong and weak areas of the library media program. While we usually dwell on the areas we know need work, it's also important that we use program evaluation to highlight our strengths and successes. My experience has been that a district will fund programs it knows to be successful and popular.

Weaknesses (or concerns) should be used to help develop a long-range plan for improvement. Identifying recommendations for improving stated areas of weakness are the final step in the data analysis process.

The data gathered by the surveys, inventories and rubrics should be carefully tabulated and examined for patterns that indicate a high degree of agreement in particular areas. Anecdotal comments from surveys and focus groups can powerfully illustrate points that cold numbers only suggest.

The kernel of the program evaluation report is the identification of the strengths, weakness and recommendations for improvement, and each of these areas should be supported by empirical or anecdotal evidence found elsewhere in the report.

I would recommend that a commitment be made to a set of tools so that longitudinal data can be collected. By using the same tools overtime, growth, decline, trends and changes will become apparent. It will place numbers into meaningful context.

Data analysis, at least to me, is as much an art as it is a science. For most of us, good empirical or anecdotal evidence will support the gut-level knowledge that we already have about our programs. We may sense that our libraries are too small. We may feel that there is a better student to computer ratio at the secondary level than at the elementary level. We may believe that our collections have aged as a result of inadequate funding. These are all things we can *demonstrate* to decision-makers through strong evidence.

But I also hope that by keeping open minds and a spirit of genuine inquiry, the self-study team members will also look for trends, patterns, and problems that may be less apparent. For example if students, parents and teachers consistently rate library climate as a concern, we should be willing to consider the reasons for those ratings even if they may seem critical or opposite the view of the media professionals. Such evidence can help make genuine improvements to the quality of the media program and the entire school.

The outside consultant

Should a district hire a consultant from outside the district to help evaluate its library media program? Since I have at times served as a consultant myself, you need to know that my advice may be somewhat self-serving. But here it is anyway...

There are a number of very good reasons *not* to hire a consultant to help in the evaluation process:

- Good consultants are expensive. *(An alternative to a hired gun is to have a reciprocal agreement with another district to trade external evaluators. The North Central Association uses volunteer evaluators from member schools. These folks know they in turn will get volunteers when they are evaluated.)*
- Consultants may not understand the culture, philosophy, and goals of the district.
- Consultants may come to the evaluation with a set of prejudices not in keeping with district philosophy or professional best practices.
- Consultants may not come from recent practice in the field.
- Consultants can only discover a limited amount of information during a site visit. One or two conversations or experiences may play too important a factor in the consultant's final recommendations.

Other than that, we are charming and lovable people and can add value to the evaluation process:

- Consultants can bring a sense of objectivity to the evaluation.
- Consultants can bring expertise in building good programs to the district.
- Consultants can lend credibility and validity to the work done by the district evaluation team if the administrative team and school board regard them as impartial and expert.
- Consultants can bring knowledge of current best practice and future trends in the field, and may have knowledge of what other schools are doing that is innovative and effective.

If you want to get the most bang for your buck from a consultant:

- Spell out exactly what result you expect from his/her involvement. (Site visit, written report, follow-up, etc.)
- Have good information for the consultant to use. Inventories, survey results etc, should be done prior to his/her involvement. (Although a good consultant should be able to provide sources for good evaluative tools.) The consultant should only be analyzing the data and making recommendations, not gathering it.
- Get recommendations from others who have used the consultant. Ask about his or her communication skills, timeliness, reliability, and the usability of the consultant's product.
- Hire someone with credibility and recent experience in the library media field.

When I visit a district as a program evaluator, my main objective is to help the head of the library media/technology department get across whatever message he or she needs to have the administration and board hear. Most people for whom I have worked have a very realistic picture of the strengths and weaknesses of their programs.

I also attempt to answer genuine questions these folks might have: Why are more classes not using technology for research purposes? To what extent do our physical facilities help or hinder our library media programs? How can we better use the computers we have in our elementary schools? Do our print collections meet the needs of our students and staff? How can we better allocate our media and technology dollars?

The main point here is that the better the district knows what it wants from an outside consultant evaluator, the better off that person is able to provide it. And this leaves everyone satisfied and the district with useful information that can be used to improve.

The written report

The written report as indicated earlier has at its heart, the findings of strengths and weakness of the program, recommendations for improvement, and the data used to draw those conclusions.

In order to place the recommendations and data in context for an audience who may not be familiar with the school district, an effective report may need additional information. This information may include demographic information about the district, copies of the district's technology plan, library/media curriculum, organization chart, and library policy manual.

This document can make the difference between getting a meaningful evaluation by an outside consultant and wasting your district's money. Most outside evaluators can visit a district for a short time and spend very, very little time in individual buildings. When I visit a district for the purpose of helping evaluate its media/technology program, I rely heavily on documents, especially the self-study, for specific things I want to look at.

The final report will consist of the self-study and, if used, the consultant's report that validates the self-study and may add additional observations, comments and recommendations.

Can a report be too long? Absolutely. The body of the report should be short with as much data placed in a separate document of attachments as possible.

A sample written report is included in this planning guide with this booklet. **sample.pdf**

Sharing the findings

There isn't much sense in spending time, money, and effort on doing a program evaluation only to have its results sit in a drawer of the superintendent's desk. The results of any program evaluation effort should be disseminated as widely as possible.

Copies of the **full written report** should give to the administrative team, school board, district media/technology advisory committee members, and members of any building-level library media/technology advisory team. A copy of the report converted to an Adobe Acrobat PDF document that can be downloaded from the district's website would allow any interested individual to read and print all or part of it.

An **oral presentation summarizing the findings** of the evaluation should be presented at a regular school board meeting, at the district media technology advisory committee, and at building staff meetings.

A **one-page executive summary** should be shared with all district staff members. (Many administrators may well read this that will ignore the full document.)

The lead of the evaluation committee or the school's public relations department should write a **news release** about the study. This release should be written so that buildings can customize it for publication in their parent newsletter.

As library media or technology director, I would also offer to present the findings at the meetings of local service organizations such as Rotary, Kiwanis or Lions. Members of these organizations are often powerful opinion leaders in the community and they appreciate interesting programs for their meetings.

Follow-up

Good assessment tools are not used to simply evaluate work at the end of a given time period. They should serve as a guide and reminder for day-to-day activities. Regular conferences with the principal and/or building media committee have always helped force me into working on objectives through out the year rather letting my natural sense of procrastination convince me to set them aside until May. Progress toward long-term goals based on the needs outlined through a formal program assessment can guide the discussion at such conferences.

If media goals truly support the building goals, then everyone who has responsibility for achieving building goals should be apprised of if and how well they have been met. As a part of a staff meeting or as a distributed written report, the media specialist needs to say, "Yes, this, this and this were accomplished; this is nearly done; and this did not happen because..." It's called accountability.

Once general goals are established and recommendations made, the hard work of identifying specific objectives that will help meet those goals must be articulated. What are the specific things that media specialists and administrators should do within a stated time frame that can be measured, can be observed, or can be produced? We like to use the old SMART guidelines for objective. They must be **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**esults-centered, and **T**ime bound. I like setting yearly objectives, some of which may have an earlier deadline. (By the end of the first semester, I will offer three classes to teachers on how to create a webpage.)

Asking the media specialist to be accountable for specific objectives creates a natural bridge to the evaluation of the media specialist as well as the assessment of the media program. An often-heard complaint among media people is that principals often use the same forms and methods to evaluate them that they use to evaluate classroom teachers. While such evaluation methods can and should be used to help evaluate the media specialist's teaching abilities, principals need to recognize that a large part of the media specialist's job falls outside what such methods evaluate. Media specialists have administrative duties such as budgeting, supervision of paraprofessionals, public relations, collection development, and policy-making. The degree of effectiveness of the individual in these areas is directly reflected in the degree to which he or she has met the yearly objectives established by district and building plans which in turn are in part based on the findings of a formal evaluation.

The cumulative effect of developing long-range goals and yearly objectives then is that by the time another formal program evaluation is conducted, the weakness identified in the previous study have been effectively addressed.

Addendum: Demonstrating Our Impact: Putting Numbers in Context

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. Do remember that 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*.

Mankato Area Public School's "Year End Report" asks library media specialists to enumerate the following: (Included in the **Tools** document.)

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

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:

- The tools section of this document.
- McGriff, Predy, 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. <<http://www.doug-johnson.com/dougwri/once-upon-a-time-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.

Selected resources for library media program assessment tools

(links valid 7/2007)

Alabama Department of Education. *Literacy Partners - A Principal's Guide to an Effective Library Media Program for the 21st Century*.

<http://www.alsde.edu/html/doc_download.asp?id=593§ion=61>

American Association of School Librarians. *A Planning Guide for Information Power: Building Partnerships for Learning*. Chicago: American Library Association, 1999.

Donham, Jean. *Enhancing Teaching and Learning: A Leadership Guide for School Library Media Specialists*. New York: Neal-Schuman, 1998.

Johnson, Doug. "A 13 Point Library/Media Checklist for Administrators" *The Indispensable Librarian: Surviving (and Thriving) in School Library Media Centers in the Information Age*. Worthington, OH: Linworth, 1997.

<<http://www.doug-johnson.com/dougwri/13-point-checklist.html>>

Loertscher, David V. *Reinvent Your School's Library in the Age of Technology: A Guide for Principals and Superintendents*. San Jose, CA: Hi Willow Research and Publishing, 1998.

Project Achievement

<www.davidvl.org/achieve.html>

McGriff, Preddy, and Harvey, *Program Perception* <www.nobl.k12.in.us/media/NorthMedia/lms/data/percept/percept.htm>

Minnesota Educational Media Organization *Standards for Minnesota School Library Programs*

<<http://www.memoweb.org/htmlfiles/linkseffectiveslmp.html>>

New York State Education Department, "School Library Media Program Evaluation" 2004

<<http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/nyc/Library/RubricsJan2004.doc>>

Ontario Library Association's "Teacher Librarian Toolkit for Evidence Based Practice"

<<http://accessola.com/osl toolkit/home.html>>

"Learning Media Services Section 7." (Sixth Edition) National Study of School Evaluation, 1987.

<<http://www.nsse.org>>

"Resource Guides for School Library Media Program Development" American Association of School Librarians

<<http://www.ala.org/aasl/resources/>>

School Libraries Work, (Scholastic, 2006)

<http://www.scholastic.com/librarians/printables/downloads/slw_2006.pdf>

Student Learning through Ohio School Libraries: The Ohio Research Study

<www.oelma.org/studentlearning>

Valenza, J. "End of Year" report at <<http://mciu.org/~spjvweb/annualreport06.pdf>>

Power Tools Recharged (ALA, 2004)