



5 Roles for Empowering* School Librarians

*ones who impact academic achievement

Keith Curry Lance
Director
Library Research Service
Colorado State Library &
University of Denver



Outline

- A school librarian's job description
- Research on the impact of school librarians on academic achievement
- What we know from this research, or 5 roles for empowering school librarians
- Uses of the 5 roles



A Librarian's Job Description (from a recent e-mail)


I ...

- Order and catalog books
- Check books in and out
- Reshelve books
- Run Accelerated Reader program
- Tend library computers
- Teach keyboarding
- Chair the book fair



Is Anything Missing?

- What activities that you associate with a school librarian were not on that list?
- What activities that are on that list do you not associate with a school librarian?



An empowered and empowering school librarian is

1. a school leader
2. a program administrator
3. an information navigator
4. a technology facilitator
5. a collaborative teacher and learner



The Research That Backs It Up

- Since 2000
- At least 5 teams of researchers
- More than 12 U.S. states
- Data on over 4,000 schools—all levels, all sizes—and their communities
- Building-level summary test scores representing over 1 million students



Key Research Findings

- Links between

- Academic achievement (represented by scores on standards-based state tests of reading/language arts skills) and
 - library staffing levels, librarian activities, collection size, technology integration, library usage

- Schools with stronger school library programs average 10-20% higher test scores



More Findings ...

- Controlling for key school and community differences, library still explains 3-8% of test score variation
- Poverty explains away other school and community differences—like the teacher-pupil ratio, per pupil spending, and parents' education—but not the impact of school libraries



Secret to a Strong School Library Program

- An Empowered—and Empowering—
School Librarian


What does that mean? ...

- Let's talk about the 5 roles of a school
librarian...



A school librarian is a **school leader**

- Someone who has the education, training and credentials required to be a leader in the job
- Someone who regularly...
 - ☐ meets with the principal,
 - ☐ attends faculty meetings,
 - ☐ serves on key committees, and
 - ☐ meets with other library staff



A school librarian is a **program administrator**

- An effective manager of a school library program that is adequately staffed, stocked, and funded
 - Requires planning, budgeting, reporting, and evaluation
- Someone who works with students and teachers on a flexible schedule
 - Requires support staff



A school librarian is an **information navigator**

- A selector of print, non-print, and electronic resources that support the school's curriculum and the state's standards
- Someone who teaches others how to be information literate—i.e., to recognize an information need and to locate, evaluate, and apply information in critical thinking to solve a problem



A school librarian is a **technology facilitator**

- Someone who selects licensed databases and identifies authoritative free websites
- Someone who bridges gaps between students and teachers, online information, and curriculum and instruction



A school librarian is a **collaborative teacher and learner**

- A teacher of students who collaborates with classroom teachers in design and delivery of instruction
- A teacher of other teachers who creates more self-reliant users of information resources and technology
- A colleague who attends local library staff meetings and state and national conferences regularly



Once more ...

An empowered and empowering
school librarian is ...

- a school leader
- a program administrator
- an information navigator
- a technology facilitator
- a collaborative teacher and learner



How Does Your School Stack Up?

- Is your school librarian empowered by the administration to perform these 5 roles?
- Does your school librarian empower other teachers and students to succeed?
- What more can your school do to enable its librarian to perform all 5 roles?



Uses of 5 Roles for Empowering School Librarians

- Setting school goals
- Establishing a teaching-learning environment (a climate of collaboration, the value of information literacy skills)
- Writing the librarian's job description
- Hiring a new librarian
- “Growing your own” librarian, or cultivating leadership and excellence
- Planning and budgeting for the library program
- Establishing performance expectations of the librarian
- Evaluating the library and librarian (if it's broken, don't throw it away; fix it!)
- Continuing education for current library staff
- In-service training for all school staff



For more information...

- Visit <http://www.LRS.org/impact.asp>
- Contact Keith Curry Lance
 - Tel.: 303-866-6737
 - Fax: 303-866-6940
 - E-mail: lance_k@cde.state.co.us