ILLINOIS Libraries

SPECIAL ISSUE
ILLINOIS SCHOOL LIBRARY MEDIA PROGRAMS

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Jesse White
Secretary of State & State Librarian

I am pleased to present this special issue of *Illinois Libraries* showcasing our outstanding school library media programs in Illinois.

I had the pleasure and good fortune to spend 33 years as a teacher and administrator in the Chicago Public School system. I saw firsthand how important school libraries were to student achievement and the personal development of our children.
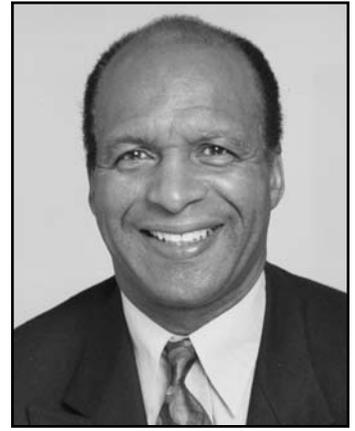
All of us were encouraged last year by the findings of "Powerful Libraries Make Powerful Learners," Keith Curry Lance's landmark study of Illinois school libraries. The Illinois Study showed conclusively that there is a strong link between student academic achievement and the presence of a school library run by a trained school librarian. I am pleased that the Illinois State Library helped fund this important survey. The results indicate that school libraries and the caring, committed staff who run them help to shape students who succeed on tests and achieve higher reading and writing scores.

Every year the State Library awards school library per capita grants to help school libraries buy books, computers and other library materials. Funding also can be used to help librarians and staff with continuing education and professional development. These funds clearly help provide quality library services and enhance student learning. I am proud to say that Illinois was the first state in the nation to implement a public school library per capita grant program, and our program remains an unqualified success. This year, the State Library awarded nearly $1.4 million to 716 public school districts to help provide library services to nearly 2 million students in more than 3,300 school libraries.

I applaud the men and women who work in our school libraries for the outstanding work they do, and I hope you enjoy reading about their wonderful work in this special issue of *Illinois Libraries*.

Jesse White

Jesse White
Secretary of State and State Librarian

ILLINOIS Libraries

Preface

Many thanks to Becky Robinson, president of the Illinois School Library Media Association, for her hard work and enthusiasm in helping to select authors and topics for this issue of *Illinois Libraries*. Becky and Lou Ann Jacobs, former president of ISLMA, each contributed two articles, and other ISLMA leaders made valuable contributions.

One of the interesting features of this special issue is its mix of scholarly informational pieces and personal reflections. There are perspectives on what school libraries mean from a student's point of view, as well as from a principal's and school library volunteer's point of view. There are two excellent stories chronicling the challenges facing school librarians in the Chicago Public School system. You will learn about awards aimed at encouraging students to develop a love of reading, and the many innovative programs our regional library systems have developed that provide valuable professional development opportunities and other services for school librarians.

The message that comes through time and again is how passionate school librarians are about their work. They know they can make a difference in the lives of young people and are committed to their academic achievement. The caring, compassionate nature of our school librarians also is reflected in the last story of this issue, "Making a Difference in New Orleans," which are personal accounts from Leslie Forsman and Becky Robinson about their volunteer work for Hurricane Katrina victims during this year's American Library Association conference in New Orleans.

Thanks to everyone who contributed stories that will allow readers to obtain a better understanding of how important school libraries are to our young people in Illinois.

Patrick McGuckin
Editor

The Status of School Library Programs in Illinois — a Snapshot
by Lou Ann Jacobs
(Media Center Director, retired, Pontiac Township High School)

In 2003, the Illinois School Library Media Association (ISLMA) conducted a study of the impact of school library media programs on student achievement. The results of the study were released in February 2005. The findings were positive — school media programs with professional staff do impact student achievement! At the same time, anecdotal evidence revealed that many school library media programs are facing difficult times in Illinois.

Budget cuts have slashed funding for many school libraries and have resulted in less money for materials and services. Certified and non-certified staff have been reduced and in some cases eliminated. Certified school library media specialists who are retiring are not being replaced.

In November 2005, ISLMA created a task force to examine the status of school library programs and staff in Illinois. A survey was created to obtain a snapshot of the status of school library programs in Illinois. The committee decided that an online survey would be the most affordable and could reach most of those that needed to receive the information. The survey was prepared using the SurveyMonkey Web site and made available to the school library community March 1, 2006. The last day for input was June 30, 2006.

Following is a preliminary report of the data as received. A final report will be prepared later this fall.

- 911 responses were received by the end of June. Most participants provided input but some responses were empty. Others responded to some of the questions but not all.

- 890 respondents provided the name of their school and school district. In some cases, there was more than one response per district. Schools with multiple buildings were encouraged to have each building participate individually. In some cases, respondents stated they were responding for more than one building on one survey.

- When asked if their school was a member of a regional library system, 771 (88.9 %) identified themselves as library system members; 96 (11.1 %) responded that they were not a library system member; 45 skipped the question.

Alliance:	97 (11.1 %)
DuPage:	68 (7.8 %)
Lewis & Clark:	37 (4.3 %)
Lincoln Trail:	31 (3.6 %)
Metropolitan:	87 (10 %)
North Suburban:	147 (17 %)
Prairie Area:	157 (18.1 %)
Rolling Prairie:	73 (8.4 %)
Shawnee:	74 (8.5 %)
Not a Member:	96 (11.1 %)

- When asked, "Does this library has a certified school librarian?"
  - Yes: 625 (76.1%)
  - No: 196 (23.9%)
  - Skipped Question: 90

- Of those who responded yes, 516 (77.8%) stated the person was full time; 147 (22.2%) stated the person was part time.

- The survey asked those who responded yes to the certified staff question three questions in regards to reductions in certified staff: Were there reductions prior to 2000, since 2000, and/or anticipated reductions for the 2006-07 school year:

  Prior to 2000
  - Yes: 120 (14.9%)
  - No: 685 (85.1%)
  - Skipped Question: 106

  Since 2000
  - Yes: 178 (21.9%)
  - No: 635 (78.1%)
  - Skipped Question: 98

  Anticipated for 2006-07
  - Yes: 79 (9.9%)
  - No: 90.1 (90.1%)

Participants were given the opportunity to explain the reductions. Most expressed that they were a result of a district loss of funding or staff not replaced due to retirements.

- In response to the question, "Does this school library have support (i.e., non-certified) staff?," 687 (74.9%) stated Yes; 203 (25.1%) stated No; 101 skipped the question.

- Of those who responded yes, 444 (72%) stated the person was full time and 173 (28%) stated the person was part time.

- The survey asked several questions in regards to reductions in non-certified staff: prior to 2000, since 2000, and/or anticipated reductions for the 2006-07 school year.

  Prior to 2000
  - Yes: 122 (16%)
  - No   642 (84%)
  - Skipped Question: 147

  Since 2000
  - Yes: 218 (28.6%)
  - No: 556 (71.4%)
  - Skipped Question: 137

  Anticipated 2006-07
  - Yes: 61 (8.6%)
  - No: 695 (91.4%)
  - Skipped Question: 155

Participants given the opportunity to explain the reductions stated that they were primarily a result of loss of funding by the school district. Many respondents indicated that non-certified

staff were often terminated in the spring and did not know until the start of school whether or not they were re-employed.

- The next section dealt with funding of school libraries. 771 (97.5%) responded that they received funding; 20 (2.5%) responded that they did not receive funds; 121 skipped the question.

- Of those who responded that they received funding, they described their funding sources by selecting as many of the following as needed:

District or School Building Funds:	742 (95.1%)
Donations:	389 (49.9%)
Federal Grants and Awards:	311 (39.9%)
Illinois School Library Per Capita Grants:	639 (81.9%)
Grants and Awards from Other Sources	269 (34.5%)

- Those who answered Yes to the funding question were asked if there were reductions in funding prior to 2000, since 2000, and if reductions were anticipated for the 2006-2007 school year.

  Prior to 2000
Yes:	150 (20.5%)
No:	580 (79.5%)
Skipped Question:	182

  Since 2000
Yes:	422 (54.1%)
No:	358 (45.9%)
Skipped Question:	132

  Anticipated for 2006-07
Yes:	193 (26.7%)
No:	531 (73.3%)
Skipped Question:	188

Participants were given the opportunity to explain the reductions in funding. Most stated it was due to school district funding being reduced. Several stated loss of federal grants for the district resulted in staff cuts and fewer dollars for materials. Some stated that they would not know their budgets until they returned to school. One expressed that since there were 10% reductions in departmental budgets each of the last three years, there was an expectation for the same for 2006-07. Another stated that she is no longer even asked to submit a budget.

- The final question of the survey was open-ended, allowing respondents to tell ISLMA more about the library media program in their school. 560 respondents replied. Some wrote a sentence or two, while others wrote lengthy paragraphs. It is not possible to print all of the stories received, but following is a sample:

"We are very lucky to have consistent funding both from building and district sources. Our district has supported us with staff and we gave a presentation to the Board last month about the Illinois Study and how well we compared. We thanked them publicly for their support and asked for a renewed commitment to continue the good work we do. We are in a very diverse school (19 different languages) and need to support both second language children and their families.

Through the emphasis on libraries in this district, we have been able to keep our student's reading at high levels."

"Whenever our district looks to make budget cuts, librarians (particularly at the elementary K-6 level) are in jeopardy. I would like to see state standards requiring all schools to have libraries staffed by certified librarians. Our district allows teachers without library hours to fill library positions."

"Our district received an LSTA grant to put tape recorders and audio versions of the novels used in the Language Arts curriculums. Students would check out the audio of the novel they were reading for class and listen as they followed along in the book. For our poorer readers, this helped with comprehension and vocabulary development. At first, we were using this program for our Bilingual and Learning Disabled students, but we expanded it to the rest of the student body as the interest became evident."

"This building is in need of library materials and services. I have students come up to me and remark that their parent once checked out a book that they are looking at. I feel very worried about what kind of information I let my high school students use for their science fair projects. My non-fiction collection is so old and out dated, that really none of the students want to use materials from it. My saving grace for locating and borrowing materials for my students to use has been my membership with Prairie Area Library System. I cannot begin to tell you how helpful the system libraries and librarians have been to me. I cannot come back to this position next year as it was cut to half time. I am single and need to find a full time position. Yet, I worry about who will come after me in this job. How will they offer students what I have offered them?"

"I appreciate the support that the district gives each library for reading materials and have over the past 10 years changed the face of my library completely. I may only be a para-educator but I am capable of running this library in all aspects and am proud of the job I have done."

"I am a solo librarian with approximately 650 students and 75 to 80 faculty and staff members. My budget for '06-'07 is about $4,500 for all my print and non-print items. I was told I had to cut my magazine budget in half since we no longer have study halls. Make sense? Only study hall students read magazines? We are getting 31 new computers, tables, and a ceiling-mounted projector to actually turn the library into a media center. A local community college has also put in a distance learning lab. All for me to keep an eye on by myself. Thank goodness for my student workers!!!!!"

The task force will be working with the data received to extract more information.
This is truly only a snapshot. A more "panoramic view" of the status of school media programs could be obtained utilizing the expertise of the Illinois State Board of Education and perhaps the University of Illinois Graduate School of Library and Information Science and their research staff. ISLMA would welcome such participation.

Libraries and Their Endless Opportunities — A Student's View
by Erica Stein
(Student, Millburn School District #24, Wadsworth)

I firmly believe that scholarly development cannot occur without the assistance of libraries. Throughout my life, I have learned this valuable lesson through my many positive and beneficial experiences. When I first obtained my very own library card at age 5, many new worlds and adventures became opened to me. Even today, I can still be anywhere and anyone through books. Many people utilize books everyday, and libraries provide the most effective ways of exposing children to these indispensable resources. No library has influenced me more than my grade school library.

The Millburn Elementary School library provided my greatest means of literary advantage. Throughout my first nine years of education, my classes would make the weekly trek to the library to check out new books. No day was darker than when I forgot my old library book to exchange for the new. Through this routine, all of us students learned a little responsibility. We all now understand that there are consequences for forgetfulness, and I am now never tardy because of past penalties.

Middle school really taught me that libraries are a wonderful resource. As a sixth-grader, all of us students were given a fantastic opportunity, for we were now able to join the Teen Advisory Board (TAB). This voluntary group of booklovers met throughout the year to discuss our favorite books, eat pizza, and to assist our library. All members of TAB were accountable for making our library appeal to our higher age group. Every year we took a special fieldtrip to Borders bookstore to update our library with young adult novels. All of us greatly enjoyed the task of maintaining the allure of our school library. I am so very grateful that I was able to be a part of TAB. Even now, my grade school librarian invites TAB alumni back for book workshops and activities. This group and its activities convinced me that libraries are essential. TAB is still prominent in my grade school library, and I truly wish my high school had the same program.

The Millburn library is still an enormous factor of my life. Every year, I help with the summer school picnics at Millburn. Once a week during the month of June, summer school students are allowed to eat lunch in the library courtyard and create crafts in the library. These picnics really provide an innovative opportunity for students to see the many uses of libraries. These picnics allow younger students to see how very fun libraries can be. Although I do not eat my lunch in the courtyard and make marvelous jungle crafts, I have learned the very same lesson as the participants.

Libraries have become so important to me throughout my academic years. I have laughed, I have cried, and I have enjoyed wonderful times with my friends, my librarian, and books. I was so very fortunate to become involved in my school library, for it taught me the importance of books for both pleasure and research. Due to my experiences, I love libraries, and I hope that other people get as much out of their library as I do mine. I have utilized my library in a desperate attempt to gain more information for a lengthy speech, and I have sought many great fictional stories there as well. The uses of a library are endless, and I truly wish that all people realized that a wonderful resource, like a library, is always available to assist, inspire, and enjoy.

The Importance of School Libraries — An Administrator's View
by Dr. James Menzer
(Superintendent, Millburn School District #24, Wadsworth)

At both schools in the Millburn C.C. School District #24, the libraries are located in the center of the school. There is a definite, strategic purpose for this allocation of space within the schools: the library is central, both figuratively and literally, to the learning that goes on in the school. As a learning community, we evidence the results of "Powerful Libraries Make Powerful Learners," the Keith Curry Lance research on the importance of Illinois school libraries. The Illinois Study showed that students who visit the library more frequently have improved reading and writing scores.

With the implementation of flexible scheduling at Millburn, the libraries have become virtual classrooms that augment, supplement, and extend the curriculum for the students who attend the two pre-kindergarten/eighth-grade schools. The library has become a true "learning center" within the schools, where children visit for everything from lessons about fossils and forensic research to viewing the menu of weekly student activities on the internal school news loop produced by students for students.

Students are encouraged to "read, read, read" — summer, winter, spring, and fall. The average circulation during the schools' months of operation is 1,440 books each week, in a school with a population of 1,014. The library sponsors summer weekly picnics for the community's parents and children where featured activities include safaris into the jungle, games, stories, quick lessons and celebrations of the summer season. The focus has become more than access to information; it is the engagement in learning through the efforts of the library staff, which has truly become the central teaching staff for the school.

The library provides the students with the opportunity for everything from research resources to pleasure reading through classroom collections wheeled to each classroom, a function that has become almost incidental. Our school library is connected to the community, networked, and immersed in the curriculum, central to the mission of the school, which is to rigorously promote the realization of individual potential and excellence in achievement. The person responsible for our students' success is our certified school library media specialist.

Why I Volunteer in the School Library
by Debbie Mills
(Volunteer, Meridian Middle School, Buffalo Grove)

Why would I want to volunteer in a middle school library? Is it because I like stacking books? No. Is it because I like checking out materials for the children? No. It is because I get to interact with children who are learning how to find information? Yes.

Today's libraries are not simply a center for books. They are centers where information is disseminated in multiple mediums the children need to utilize so they can gain a greater understanding of their topic of choice. This is not so simple to learn. Yes, the children may laugh at some of the work they need to do to obtain answers, but they are already learning how to work in the global marketplace. With each passing year people and countries are closer and closer because of the Internet and other communication mechanisms that can distribute information more quickly from one site to another. Our children will be very comfortable with these mechanisms by the time they reach working age, and it all begins in our media centers. I am proud to be part of this growth process.

The search for information is an amazing discovery. Anyone can find out answers to the common, or not-so-common questions, and open up new doors of thought. The "a-ha!" moment when a child finds an answer to a question is really fun to watch.

I have been part of the information world for the past 25 years. I was 20 years old when I began using rudimentary word processing. Then came access to the mainframe databases utilizing APL over 1,200 band lines, plus a private global packet switched electronic mail service. Today, we have 9- to 12-year-olds learning how to access in minutes what used to take me hours years ago to compile.

I absolutely love being a part of teaching and helping these children "reach for the stars" through information. Knowing how to ask the right questions to gain information will unlock the universe for these children. For my children, and the others I can assist, I gain immense personal satisfaction from my time spent in the library.

Why I Volunteer
by Kathy Armstrong
(Volunteer, Charleston School Library)

I started volunteering in our school library because it gave me another opportunity to be involved in my children's education. Ten years and four school libraries later, I still am helping in the districts' libraries, but my reasons for volunteering have grown.

I still think it is important to be involved in my child's education. My children think so, too, and like seeing me at school. I also believe reading is the foundation of lifelong learning and I enjoy sharing my love of reading and books with the students. I like keeping up to date with the rich variety of today's children literature. I like getting to know the students, teachers, and administrators who are a big part of my children's lives and I feel part of the school community. I enjoy working with the librarians and their aides and consider them my friends. I love learning new things and there is no better place for a trivia lover than a school library.

Most of all, I like the feeling that I'm making a positive contribution to our community, our schools, our teachers, and our students.

Why I Became a Librarian
by Carolyn Roys
(School Library Media Specialist, Lake Park High School-East, Roselle)

Twenty years ago a young naïve English teacher walked into a classroom in Iola, Kansas, and struggled to stay one step ahead of her students. They had writing assignments coming out of their ears, and she was trying to plan a long-distance wedding. She had no friends and no experience, just a hope of making a difference. After two months, she was ready to quit.

To her rescue came a mentor, a teacher, a colleague, a wonderful person who just happened to be the librarian. She had ideas about what a research project should look like, and was willing to take the lead in the collaborative effort. One can't know the gratitude that young English teacher felt. That teacher was me.

The librarian sat down with me and we spent many hours planning the unit and the topics. She ordered materials and checked on obtaining items through interlibrary loan. We didn't have computers back then, so print materials were the only option. She went to the ends of the earth to make the research process painless for the students. It was my job to take them forward from there. This was a great partnership and I made a friend. In fact, that friendship led to many others and I grew to love Iola. Barb then invited me to start my graduate class work by taking a class in young adult literature. It was wonderful for an English teacher, but Barb was setting me up for my next career. My teachers were book-talking guru Joni Bodart and the incredible Mike Printz of the Printz award fame. What an introduction to the library world! I've been "book-talking" ever since.

I left Iola to be married and stayed home to raise my kids until they were in school. I returned to the classroom as a substitute teacher, only to discover that the library in my new school was not a friendly, learning community. I avoided it for years. When the opportunity came to have my own classroom, the principal asked me what I would do if I didn't get the job. I didn't hesitate and said, "Go to library school." Now where did that come from? The best thing that ever happened to me was that I didn't get that job. A principal in Geneseo took a chance on me, and I've never looked back.

I love most aspects of my job but derive my greatest satisfaction making connections with kids and making a difference in their lives. I look back and can owe it all to that crazy, wonderful librarian with the Cocker Spaniels in Iola. Why did I become a librarian? Because someone led the way and showed me what it could be.

Through a "Newbie's" Eyes
by Gayl Dasher Smith
(Teacher/Librarian, Waubonsie Valley High School, Aurora)

I was very surprised to get an invitation in the mail late last spring to attend an Illinois School Library Media Association Leadership Summit at Starved Rock State Park in July. Recently, I had achieved National Board Certification and I am getting some attention as a result, so I thought that was what got me invited to what seemed a fairly prestigious meeting. I was happy to respond that I would be there for the two-day event.

Approaching with trepidation, I noticed upon my arrival that there were many "legends" in attendance, people whose names I'd seen repeatedly in various professional periodicals and as organizational heads of ISLMA and the many fine ISLMA conferences I've enjoyed. It was immediately made clear that ISLMA had many active officers and committee people who had recently retired. One purpose of the summit was to find new "blood" to re-invigorate the organization. I leaned over to another librarian from my district, Debbie Turner, and whispered, "Next comes the pitch for the timeshares." She replied, "I'm holding out for Maui!"

Whatever fears I had at that point were put to rest as I realized that, although recruitment was necessary, that was not the sole function of the gathering. This was an opportunity for me to learn what ISLMA is all about and to learn from the many talented professionals in the room. And learn I did! There were opportunities to share experiences, materials, and strategies on every aspect of my challenging job.

Gail Bush, Lou Ann Jacobs and Becky Robinson did a great job in organizing this event. We all had opportunities to share, and they made certain we came prepared to do that. The focus kept changing and there were opportunities to network and get to know each other. I realized that although we all share the same job title, our responsibilities and challenges vary from school to school, district to district and region to region. As Jane Sharka, president-elect of ISLMA, led a discussion on "Librarians as teachers," I heard ideas for meeting with student-teachers and the PTA in order to promote the library's program. Pam McDermott gave us many great ideas for sharing the Keith Curry Lance Illinois Study with teachers and administrators. Ron Winner of the Illinois State Library and Joyce Karon of the Illinois State Board of Education brought encouragement and news from Springfield. Karaoke rounded out the evening.

The highlight of the second day of the summit was "Speed Leading." In order for us to understand all that is involved in running ISLMA, it was helpful for us to hear the many officers and committee leaders discuss the work they perform. Listening to each person give such a description to the group at large would have been extremely tedious. Instead, our brilliant summit leaders conducted their version of "speed dating." Each veteran took a seat, with a chair facing them. We "newbies" took a number that directed us where to begin. Every few minutes there was a burst of music to tell us to move to the next seat. We got to meet each "player," hear about their work, and ask questions or make comments. This made the process much more fun and personal. I came to realize that it does, indeed, take a village to keep ISLMA going. I also realized how much the organization does for each of us, and felt compelled to seek a more active role. Spending time with these dedicated, knowledgeable and fun-loving individuals would also be a bonus.

During the previous evening, Gail, Lou Ann and Becky had made packets for us from handouts we were all asked to bring from our own stash of collaboration forms, mission statements, promotional materials, Internet release forms, newsletters, etc. This proved to be a treasure trove of ideas. We had interesting discussions at our tables involving scenarios where we were given sample problems that arise on a regular basis in a school library. How fascinating to see how various individuals approach the same situation! Randee Hudson had some great ideas and materials to encourage us to report our successes through statistics to our administrators. Lunch was followed by a final push to attend the ISLMA Conference this fall and to find our place in the leadership structure of ISLMA.

The timing of the summit was perfect. I still had time over the summer to strategize about all I had learned and what I can put into practice at my own school. I am now anxious to get back and share with my fellow teacher/librarians, classroom teachers and administrators all that I learned and to put some innovative ideas to work. Isn't that what fall is for?

Intellectual Freedom and Illinois School Library Media Programs
by Barbara Fiehn, Ed. D., and Karen Woodworth Roman, MLS

(Barbara: Assistant Professor, School Library Media Program, Northern Illinois University;
Karen: Program Advisor, Educational, Technology, Research & Assessments, Northern Illinois University)

What is intellectual freedom? The American Library Association (ALA) defines intellectual freedom as "the right of every individual to both seek and receive information from all points of view without restriction. It provides for free access to all expressions of ideas through which any and all sides of a question, cause or movement may be explored" (ALA, *Intellectual Freedom and Censorship,* 2005*)*.

The abridgement of intellectual freedom for students occurs both subtly and overtly. There is a book in your school mailbox with a Post-it note reading *"remove."* What do you do? Similar scenes occur all too often in schools. If it isn't that direct, it is the books an administrator has checked out (or simply removed) and not returned for months, even after you have sent a friendly reminder. Another tactic used by administrators is the red lining of items on orders because of the title.

Administrators are not the only ones attempting to censor materials in our schools. School board members, teachers, parents, concerned citizens and school librarians engage in such activities. Recently, a Northern Illinois metropolitan school district was faced with a public challenge to the honors English reading list. Teachers restrict reading materials based on "reading level" or location within a media center. Some media specialists don't purchase potentially controversial materials, even those from state and national reading lists. Among classroom and media center teachers there is the fear of job loss if any potentially questionable materials are found in their collections.

Most censorship attempts are based on the premise of protecting children from what may harm them. Even as national legislators are attempting to protect children (through high school age) from Internet predators, concerned adults locally are watching what information and ideas are available in schools. The best protection for children is information literacy. In today's information rich environment, it is the responsibility of all educators and especially school librarians to teach students how to access, evaluate and, most importantly, to reject inaccurate or suspect information.

In 2004, the Illinois School Library Media Association (ISLMA) conducted a survey of school media specialists to find out the state of intellectual freedom (IF) in schools. About 145 were received representing 70 different ZIP codes. Northern Illinois was represented more than Southern Illinois.
- 60.3 % were from schools with less than 25 % of students who received free or reduced cost lunches.
- 53.8 % were from "rural" schools; 46.2 % were from "suburban" schools.
- 90.3 % of valid respondents were from public schools.

What was found from the survey that would indicate there are reasons to be concerned about intellectual freedom?

Selection and Challenge Policies
Of the responding schools, 23.4 % did not have a written policy. Of those with a written policy,

82.4 % were board approved. Most of the written policies (60.2 %) covered the classroom and the library media center (LMC).

There is an indication that in districts without a board approved selection policy there is a greater likelihood of self-censorship. Self-censorship is the practice of avoiding purchase of materials that might be challenged. This self-censorship frequently results from the personal or implied opinion that controversial or less mainstream material does not belong in a school media center. This may result in a bland collection that may not garner complaints.

> Written policies may help to counter the local biases found in many communities, and broaden the selection criteria of some school library media specialists. Written policies may prove to be the difference between an unwillingness to "take a risk" and the willingness to "innovate with a progressive collection" in support of the information needs faced by today's young people. (Callison, 1990, Collection Policies)

Another possible reason that schools without a selection policy have fewer challenges is that they handle things quietly by removing or restricting the item without a fight (Reichman, 1993). Similarly, the reason for more challenges in libraries with a selection policy may be because they have more diverse collections with more diverse viewpoints represented.

Challenges

The survey found 29 schools or 20.4 % of respondents reported a challenge in 2003-04. Of those challenges, 14.3 % were in classrooms and 85.7 % were in LMC. Only one challenge was reported at a private school. Challenged materials included one textbook, two magazines, a video and Internet sites. Books noted as challenged in the survey included:

Title	Author	Publisher	Copyright
10 Books Discussing Teenage Sexuality[1]			
A Wrinkle in Time	Madeleine L'Engle	(Ariel Books)	1962
Achingly Alice	Phyllis Naylor	(Aladdin)	1999
Aliens: Earth Hive	Steve Perry	Bantam	1992
All	Stephen King		
America: A Novel	E.R. Frank	(Atheneum)	2002
Body of Christopher Creed	Carol Plum-Ucci	(Harcourt)	2000
Catcher in the Rye (2)	J. D. Salinger.	(Little, Brown)	1951
Electronic Gaming (Monthly)		(Sendai Publications)	All
In the Night Kitchen (2)	Maurice Sendak	Harper Collins	1970
It's So Amazing[2]	Robie Harris	(Candlewick Press)	1994
Of Mice and Men	John Steinbeck	Bantam	1965
Silence of the Lambs	Thomas Harris	St. Martin's Press	1988
Soulfire	Lorri Hewett	Puffin	1996
Sylvester and the Magic Pebble	William Steig	Aladdin Paperback	1980

Tattooing and Body Piercing: Understanding the Risks	Kathleen Winkler	Enslow	2002
The Body Snatcher	Robert Louis Stevenson		
The Golem	David Wisniewski	Clarion Books	1996
The Pigman and Me	Paul Zindel	(Harper Collins)	1992
There's a Hair in my Dirt	Gary Larson	HarperPerennial	1999
Thrasher			2002
When Dad Killed Mom	Julius Lester	Harcourt	2003
Zach's Lie	Roland Smith	Hyperion Books for Children	2001

[1] Possibly Cart, Michael, ed. 2001. *Love and Sex: Ten Stories of Truth*. Simon and Shuster.
[2] Copyright date of *It's So Amazing* is 1999. Copyright of Robie Harris' *It's Perfectly Normal* is 1994. Information added by authors is in parenthesis.

The most frequent reasons for complaints and frequency of occurrences were "unsuited to age group" (13), offensive language (12) and sexually explicit material (7). Other grounds for challenges include four complaints of nudity and three complaints each of racism and anti-family or parental authority messages. There were two complaints each of anti-ethnic material, cultural insensitivity, sex education, religious viewpoint, and occult/Satanism/supernatural. There was one complaint each regarding issues of sexuality and homosexuality. Twenty-five parents, three teachers, and one administrator initiated challenges. No group was reported to have initiated a challenge.

Since the IF survey there has continued to be challenges to materials in schools. The ISLMA Intellectual Freedom function group chair responded to many requests for information and help during the 2005-06 school year. While the types of challenges remain similar to past years, there was the addition of a challenged graphic novel, title unknown.

A good selection policy is considered a good defense against censorship efforts (Reichman, 1993, 61). However, the ISLMA IF study showed a relationship between whether there is a selection policy and whether there was a challenge. At schools with a selection policy, there were more challenges than would be expected to occur by chance. In schools without a policy, there were fewer challenges than might occur by chance. When there is no policy, challenges still happen, but they may be handled by quietly removing the items. In fact, one respondent who indicated *no* challenges that year stated, "No one supported the complaint. The parent did not like the book, requested its removal due to sexual content and the book was removed." Several other respondents mentioned taking care of things "in-house." Requiring that the challenge be official and in writing is important for ensuring due process of a challenge (Hopkins, 1993). Dianne McAfee Hopkins has stated that "Oral challenges = removal/restriction" (Hopkins, 1997).

This study's results were consistent with an American Association of School Administrators study (as cited in Reichman, 1993, 17) and found a relation between a school library having a selection policy and whether the school had a material challenge. The fact that so many Illinois school media centers do not have a selection policy suggests an ongoing need for professional education. Some school librarians may need an introduction to or a refresher course on intellectual freedom issues such as denial of access to existing resources because of policy,

procedure, age/grade/ability. There also is a need for media specialists to educate the administration, faculty and community about intellectual freedom. After all, intellectual freedom is a First Amendment right that applies to children as well as adults.

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Webinar Series for School Librarians:
Case Study of Online Professional Development
by Erin Drankwalter Wyatt
(Learning Center Director, Highland Middle School)

During the 2005-06 school year, the Illinois School Library Media Association offered a "webinar" series to its membership in partnership with the 21st Century Information Fluency Project at the Illinois Math and Science Academy (IMSA) and LearningTimes. The partnership came about after the February 2005 release of the Illinois Study, *Powerful Libraries Make Powerful Learners* (Lance, 2005).

The impetus for the series was to find new ways to spread the word about the study's findings that school library media programs and qualified school library media specialists positively impact student achievement in Illinois. Early in the thinking about how to share the results of the study, the 21st CIF Project Team approached ISLMA about utilizing Web technology to hold sessions rather than traveling around the state to host meetings. As a way to demonstrate the potential for the project, a webinar (Web-based seminar) was used in the initial meeting with the ISLMA board. As a result of the initial meeting demonstrating the technology, the webinar series was developed utilizing the technical capabilities, professional development expertise, and organizational connection with LearningTimes of the 21st CIF Project Team and ISLMA's membership base and organizational structure.

Webinars remove barriers to participation in professional development due to time restraints, distance and cost. They allow more stakeholders to participate and receive content on-site. As opposed to static learning, a webinar is interactive and participatory, in the mode of a seminar rather than just a broadcast of information. Webinar participation offers multiple models for configuration to allow a hybrid learning experience that combines face-to-face and distance interaction simultaneously in a synchronous environment. In addition, webinars can be archived for asynchronous learning as well. The ISLMA webinar series, "Information Fluency at Your Fingertips," sought to connect librarians and other education professionals around the state in a learning session about issues related to librarianship and information fluency. The planning committee for the series included Dan Balzer and Dennis O'Connor, members of the 21st CIF Project Team, and Gail Janz, ISLMA board member. A tool for offering professional development, the webinars were able to link sites from around the state in a real-time, synchronous experience. It allowed people who were geographically separated by six hours or more to interact and receive the same informational experience.

Elluminate Live was the software used for the Illinois webinars, one of several software products available to facilitate such events. Elluminate Live works as a software plug-in, working fairly seamlessly with very little work to be done by the end user to set up. The space is described as a "virtual classroom" that includes text messaging, voice communications, a whiteboard and polling capabilities. The software includes interactive buttons to allow for facial expressions and gestures such as clapping hands to gage non-verbal type communications. The equipment needed to participate in a webinar is minimal. All that is required is an Internet connection, a computer, speakers and a microphone. If a multiple member group is working at a site, a projector is helpful. To help prepare users for sessions, ISLMA included a site facilitator guide on its Web site at www.islma.org, as well as several live technical check sessions before each of the webinars to ensure that local equipment was fully functional.

The initial webinar session of the series, "Spreading the Word Through Webcast Technology," was held as a concurrent session at the annual ISLMA conference in October 2005. This session was a demonstration of the webinar technology and introduced the model as a vehicle for professional development. This webinar introduced the concept and the sessions for the remainder of the series. It also outlined what would be asked of school-based participants and served to collect contact information for people who would be interested in participating in the upcoming webinars. The programs were offered free to members, but they were asked to have an on-site team participate, including an administrator and a faculty-staff member.

The second webinar session, "NCLB, the Illinois Study and School Libraries," was facilitated by Dr. Gail Bush of Dominican University in January 2006. Librarians, teachers and administrators made up the 62 participants and approximately 30 sites around the state from Chicago to Moline to Decatur and many other places. The session covered the findings of the Illinois Study (Lance, 2005):

- Schools with better-staffed libraries have more students who succeed on tests.
- Students with access to computers that connect to library catalogs and databases, and particularly Internet-connected computers relative to the school's enrollment, average higher test scores.
- Students that visit the library more frequently receive improved reading and writing scores.
- Students with access to larger, more current book collections achieve higher reading, writing and ACT scores.

The session continued with a discussion about school libraries and the four pillars of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001: accountability for results, budgeting for programs, choices for parents and data-driven driven education methods.

The final installment in the webinar series, "Power Searching." was held in February 2006. Facilitated by Dan Balzer and Dennis O'Connor of the 21st CIF Project Team, the session introduced the Digital Information Fluency Model and demonstrated teaching tools that could be used to build information fluency in students and staff members, in particular a series of interactive games that serve as instructional tools for building more powerful queries for searching. This event included registrations from 73 people at 29 sites across Illinois, including middle schools, high schools, library systems and universities.

The ISLMA webinar series offered members a chance to participate in professional development through a format that removed cost, time and place constraints from the learning process. The webinar series in Illinois was able to bring diverse participants from around the state together to meet in real-time to discuss issues related to information fluency and school libraries. Faculty, administrator, and librarians were able to share a learning experience. The relatively small time commitment and the local nature of the experience led to participation otherwise not possible. According to the evaluations completed by participants, more than 90 percent of those evaluating the webinar experience indicated they would be somewhat or very likely to participate in a webinar for professional development in the future. The success of this program shows the potential for using webinars to deliver professional development opportunities.

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Issues in Education and Their Impact on
School Library Media Programs
by Lou Ann Jacobs
(Media Center Director, retired, Pontiac Township High School)

Pick up any newspaper or news magazine today and one finds articles about the condition of education in Illinois and the United States. Television and radio commentators often discuss the condition of education in Illinois and elsewhere. *The Oprah Winfrey Show* recently aired a program on the condition of public education.

The Illinois State Board of Education and the U.S. Department of Education, along with policies such as No Child Left Behind and initiatives such as the "65% solution," have been covered by the media. But little has been written about the effect of these issues on public school library media programs and library media specialists. Concerns have been raised in the school library community that the role school libraries play in K-12 education appears diminished if not threatened.

This article addresses four issues that affect school media programs in Illinois: the ISBE recognition rules, No Child Left Behind, the 65% Solution, and the definition of classroom instructional expenses by the National Center for Education Statistics.

State Board of Education
The Illinois State Board of Education oversees public elementary and secondary education for the state. One of its tasks is to make sure that each school district is in compliance with state laws governing schools, commonly known as the School Code. One section of the Code describes the requirements that each district must meet to be recognized as in compliance with the Code. This includes the statement that "each attendance center shall provide a program of media services to meet the curricular and instructional needs of the school."

The requirements also include certification requirements for teachers. The section in regards to library media specialists states that the person in charge of the media program should be certified as a teacher for the grades served and in the library media field. New certification rules change the title from "media specialist" to "library information specialist" and require 24 hours in library media coursework, an increase over the 18 hours as previously required.

In 2005, ISBE developed a school evaluation format to measure whether or not public school districts were in compliance with the recognition requirements. Section IV, Instructional Programs and Services, lists the criteria for evaluating the "Program of Media Services." Following is the statement from the instrument:
> Each attendance center provides a program of media services as stated in 23 Illinois Admin. Code, Part 1.

This is determined by an onsite visit of the facility, examining the staff roster for certified personnel and looking at the budget for the media program.

The above section in regards to the staff roster states that the high school should have a media specialist, the junior high media specialist should have a minimum of 18 hours, but **"media specialists are not required at the elementary and junior high level"** (author emphasis).

From my discussion with Larry Daghe, an Illinois regional school superintendent, the last statement has been a part of the school recognition process for years. He stated that this was a product of the difficulty school districts have hiring certified media specialists. This allowed districts to hire a certified media specialist at the high school who could supervise non-certified staff in the elementary and junior high schools.

This policy does not take into account that school library media programs have dramatically changed since the 1980's. Library media centers have moved from a place with a collection of materials to more dynamic locations for opportunities for learning and accessing knowledge in all its formats. The role of the media specialist has evolved from the keeper of the materials to a partner and collaborator with teachers in instructing and guiding children in their learning experiences.

Today, there are elementary and unit (K-12) districts that have only one certified media specialist. That person may be in charge of overseeing several libraries with or without non-certified staff. This writer knows of a media specialist who is supervising nine elementary libraries with non-certified staff.

Illinois school districts with funding problems are dismissing staff in order to make up for financial shortfalls. Media specialists feel especially vulnerable because of this situation. If school funding does not improve for public education, school districts will continue to look for ways to contain costs. There will no doubt be more staff cuts that will include media specialists.

No Child Left Behind
In 2001, Congress passed a law re-authorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. This law, known as No Child Left Behind, set high standards for all students and holds schools accountable. The law further states there should be highly qualified teachers in every classroom.

The law did not recognize the vital role that school library media programs and certified media specialists play in the achievement of standards. Recent research studies clearly demonstrate that there is a link between student achievement and reading achievement. If one of the goals is to have all children reading at or above grade level by 2013, it is going to take more than the purchase of a new basal reading set or the implementation of Accelerated Reader.

Student achievement for No Child Left Behind is determined by standardized test scores. Schools are more concerned than ever about test scores. But many are forgetting that the reading portion of these tests require the ability to decipher expository passages, whereas many reading programs use fiction and narrative non-fiction. Media specialists and library media collections can help students become better users of information literacy skills, not only for better reading test results but also for better achievement in other subject areas.

The law also required that each state develop plans to make sure that every classroom teacher was highly qualified by the 2005-06 school year. There is no mention of the need for school media specialists to be highly qualified. However, discussion on ISLMANET-L by the media specialists who examined the Highly Qualified Interactive Worksheets accessible via the ISBE Web site said they would have no trouble attaining the Highly Qualified status.

65% Solution Bill

In January 2006, a bill was introduced in the Illinois House that would require 65 percent of school district funds to be spent on classroom instructional expenditures, as defined by the National Center on Educational Statistics (NCES). HB 4399, or "65% Solution," created considerable consternation within the library community. The definition of classroom expenditures by the NCES included such items as field trips and athletics as classroom expenditures, but did not include library media programs and library media specialists.

The sponsor of the bill received large numbers of messages in opposition to the bill because library media expenditures were not included in the definition of classroom expenditures. The State Board of Education and others opposed the bill because it took away local control of the school budget, and classroom expenditures were considered not well defined by the bill or the NCES.

When the bill was read in the House Elementary and Secondary Education Committee on Feb. 15, 2006, the sponsor amended the bill to include library media expenses and librarian salary as direct classroom expenditures. The amendment passed the committee but when it came time to pass the bill out of committee, the measure died for the lack of a motion.

Illinois was not the only state to face a 65 percent funding initiative. The concept was introduced in several states, but Illinois has the distinction of being the first to defeat the initiative.

With so many school districts nationwide facing funding shortfalls, it's easy to see how concerned citizens would be attracted to an initiative that would appear to ensure limited resources were spent on student instruction. Few are aware of the NCES and how it defines classroom expenditures. Many are not considering the need and value of other support services such as guidance counselors, nurses, social workers, cafeteria services, building maintenance and transportation.

The initiative does not advocate more funding for education but a re-alignment of the school budget with no new money. Education policy pundits view this as an oversimplification of the funding issue as well as poor public policy. Education associations such as NEA and AFT view it as divisive because it would pit teachers against other school employees.

If such an initiative was to be enacted, it could reduce the amount of spending on support services, including library media programs and staff if they are not considered a part of instructional expenditures. Texas plans to adopt the initiative as Education Department policy. Through intense lobbying efforts, the Texas Library Association was able to get the classroom instructional expenses definition changed to include library media services and staff.

Illinois library proponents can rejoice that the bill failed in the recent session of the General Assembly. However, the initiative may resurface. It was encouraging that the sponsor of the bill was willing to amend it to include library media programs and staff as part of the definition of classroom instructional expenses. However, it shows how easily such an initiative can be promoted without a complete understanding of its ramifications. When approached about the definition used in the bill, the sponsor admitted that he did not know what was included and expressed surprise that library media was not included.

National Center for Education Statistics

A part of the U.S. Department of Education, the National Center for Education Statistics developed the definition for classroom expenditures in 1980. Working in consultation with state education agencies, NCES developed a framework for this definition as well as classifying other functions as student support services and instructional support services. School library media programs and staff were placed in the instructional support services classification in the 1950s and remained there in the 1980 revision.

A 1980 classification determined that the 1950s definition did not match the reality of a 21st-century school library media program and professional staff. Today's library media programs and staff are more involved in instructional staff activities, and the library media centers should be considered the same as a classroom. Numerous studies, including Illinois' own, clearly demonstrate the impact that school media programs and certified media specialists have on student achievement.

The American Association of School Librarians has developed a toolkit to address this issue. The kit can be found at www.ala.org/ala/aasl/aaslproftools/toolkits/instructional.htm. The toolkit includes background information on the NCES classification system, the 65 % initiative, the "AASL Position Statement on Instructional Definition," and a plan to change the definition to include library media programs.

Each state education agency has a Common Core of Date State Coordinator for the collection of data for NCES. This coordinator can make recommendations to NCES in regards to this data. AASL encourages all school library media coordinators to contact their state coordinator and ask that person to recommend library media services and staff from "support services—instruction" to "instruction" to accurately reflect the real role of library/media specialists.

When these four issues are put together, it is no wonder that those of us who advocate for school media programs and staff feel threatened. These issues are only a part of the current scene in schools today. One cannot get away from schools without addressing school funding. Add the need for districts to attempt to hold the line on school spending, or in some cases make deep cuts, and all programs that are not mandated or considered essential are in jeopardy.

School media supporters must make the case for maintaining and improving school library media programs. Research supports the need for quality library media programs, adequately staffed with certified and non-certified personnel. ISBE and Department of Education rules will be difficult to change during the present climate. We must lay the foundation for that change by developing coalitions of concerned individuals and groups to work toward that change, informing the decision makers and the public about the role of school media programs and staff in the 21st century.

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It All Started with a Study
by Becky Robinson
(Media Specialist, Galesburg High School; President, Illinois School Library Media Association)

Have you visited a school library lately? It doesn't matter whether it is a primary, middle or high school library — the school library is a busy place! In an average hour, classes are being brought to the library to browse the shelves for a books to read; students are asking for assistance from the librarian, "What is a good book to read?" or "Can you help me find another book like this one?"; the phone rings….a teacher is requesting a collection of books to be pulled from the shelves for her classroom for their next unit; entering the library are four students with a pass, needing help on collecting three different sources of information on a very specific topic for a paper using both printed materials and Web sites, …and did I mention that it was due next hour?

Persons visiting school libraries would be amazed at the various activities taking place today. It is an atmosphere of learning and teaching: in some instances, formal training with scheduled group visits planned, and frequently informal, one-on-one teaching, where students and staff are assisted individually by certified teacher librarians. Displays with recent materials purchased, book discussion group signups, and reading program incentives appear throughout the area, highlighting the fact that children are welcome here – to find the perfect book or maybe just to find a safe haven.

Whatever the reason, students do look forward to their visits to the school library. The recent Keith Curry Lance study in Illinois, "Powerful Libraries Make Powerful Learners," tells us that not only do our students need access to the school library as often as possible, and the chance to checkout more, up-to-date materials, they also need access to the certified teacher librarian. The results are higher test scores in standardized tests in reading and writing. It is all about student achievement today. Students want to be in the library—but we are the ones who know how good it is for them!

Since the Illinois School Library Media Association (ISLMA) published the study, there has been a flurry of activity centered on making the public aware of the report's results. Summaries of the data compiled, an ISLMA produced brochure, together with a Flash CD presentation were shared with local school boards around the state, by school librarians, teachers, administrators and community members, who were specifically trained about the study findings. ISLMA introduced the findings to our members by posting the information on our Web site and through mailings of brochures to every public school and regional Office of Education in Illinois. Members of the study task force presented the study to the Illinois State Board of Education, Illinois State Library Advisory Committee, Illinois Library Association, Illinois Association of School Boards and the Illinois Library Systems. Many of the systems provided training on the study data for school librarians in their regions, and created additional awareness for the importance of quality school library programs to library stakeholders in all types of libraries.

Information packets accompanied with the Flash presentation CD were distributed to legislators during Illinois Library Day in Springfield. Copies of the complete study were sent to all educational organizations, colleges and universities with library programs in Illinois. Surprisingly, even after sending brochures out to each school, many educators had not heard of the study connecting school libraries to student achievement.

It was decided a more hands-on approach was needed to show how the statistics in "Powerful Libraries Make Powerful Learners" could be used together with our Illinois guidelines for school library media programs called *Linking for Learning*. Actual worksheets with examples were provided in the newly revised guidelines that walked librarians through the process of selecting a component to present to local school boards, as a prerequisite of receiving a per capita grant, and tracing the actual pages in the study where a user would find the statistics to back the case. For example, if a presentation was to include an action statement of providing students more access to the library, by providing flexible scheduling time during the day and/or remote access 24/7 from the library Web site, users could point to the statistical comparison of Illinois schools with the highest and lowest test scores and how they differed according to hours of operation.

Many school districts have trained their librarians and administrators in using both the study and the guidelines together. ISLMA used a virtual webinar (Web-based seminar) to reach educators all over the state. This first-time format for professional development reported positive impact from all their participants. There will be a session at ISLMA's fall conference, *Lasting Impressions, The Roles of Teacher Librarians*, Nov. 9-11, 2006, in Arlington Heights (www.islma.org), regarding the experiences and insights witnessed in the Chicago Public Schools because of the efforts to use these tools together.

Despite the findings proving the relationship between quality school library programs, certified library staff, up-to-date collections, and library access with the level of student achievement, many administrators are making tough decisions based on lack of funds and the scarcity of certified library personnel. The shortage of certified school librarians in Illinois is at a critical stage. We need dedicated teachers, reading specialists and technologists to consider entering library master's degree programs to fill the positions of retiring librarians. Certified staff is being replaced with teachers having no library training, or with support staff only.

Because literacy has become a major goal of all school districts and communities today, school librarians are becoming the "go-to" people to provide real world activities for students; participate in multi-type library partnerships; and create lasting impressions on students by creating lifelong learners with the needed comprehension skills in reading and writing.

When students need search techniques for electronic databases and skills to evaluate Web sites, they ask the school librarian. When teachers need to excite students about reading, they ask the school librarian. When administrators need a faculty member to serve on the Curriculum Committee with a broad knowledge of the units of study in a school building, they ask the school librarian.

School librarians in Illinois must be aggressive leaders who volunteer for committees, get involved with the community and regional library system, ISLMA, and, most importantly, ensure that administrators are aware of the crucial roles librarians have as a teacher in school. When librarians go before the school board this year, they should use both *Linking for Learning* and the state study "Powerful Libraries Make Powerful Learners" as the basis for your current library program, as well as the action plan for future changes.

Other library professionals around our state must realize the importance of school libraries and the effect it would have on all other types of library service if local schools no longer had a library, if teacher librarians no longer taught library and technology skills or promoted reading quality literature. If you haven't already, contact the school librarians in your areas for collaborative projects. Together, we are a powerful force!

Urban School Libraries: Making Effective Use of Prep Time
by Patrice Foerster
(Librarian, Vaughn Occupational High School, Chicago)

Several years ago, a Chicago Public Schools (CPS) principal told me about his experience filling the librarian position at his school. "No one wants to work in my library," he said in frustration. He had agreed to be interviewed for the research study, *The Impacts of CPS Libraries on Student Achievement*, conducted November 2003 through May 2004. The study of 46 Chicago elementary schools included questionnaires of both principals and their librarians; site visits and interviews at 11 of the 46 schools; and compilation of information from the CPS *Budget Handbook for Schools*, the Chicago Teachers' Union contract, the CPS Web site, School Improvement Plans, School Report Cards and published test scores averaged over time.

The principal, Richard Morris of Burroughs Elementary School, explained: "I went to job fairs to recruit a librarian. Candidates who were fresh out of library school talked to me about the position. They asked if library was a "prep" period at my school. When I told them it was, they said they wouldn't work at any school that had fixed scheduling for the library." Morris finally hired a first-year, early childhood education teacher for the librarian position. "At least I have someone," he said at the time. "She is trying really hard and doing a good job for someone who wasn't trained in the field."

Of course it is problematic when school districts settle for hiring any type of teacher for the librarian position. This practice, which is pervasive in Chicago because of the shortage of teacher-librarians, may indicate a lack of recognition for library science as a specialized field of study and teaching. But there also is something wrong when library science graduates summarily turn their backs on a school library position based solely on the *scheduling* of the library period. The reality is that the elementary school library will almost certainly be a prep period (or a time when the classroom teacher is free of students to do his/her preparation for class work) if you work in a Chicago public school — and many other urban, suburban and rural districts, for that matter. The responses from the CPS survey bore this out: Thirty-five (about 88 %) of the 40 elementary school librarians indicated library was a prep period for classroom teachers; three (8 %) indicated it was a prep for at least some classes; and only one (3 %) librarian had completely open scheduling.

In Chicago, the union's collective bargaining agreement, which dictates the number of prep periods for its classroom teachers, together with extremely limited funding for additional staff to "fill in" for teachers during these periods, creates a situation where principals have few options *but* to use library as prep time. Principals indicated that the greatest constraints to having the "best possible library program" were a *general lack of funding* (73 %, or 27 of 37 responding principals) and the *lack of options for flexible scheduling* (70 %, from 26 of the principals).

But the idea that quality library programs cannot be provided without fully flexible library scheduling is unwarranted. Library time that doubles as prep time is simply not the anathema that many of us were taught it was. Although librarians may find it extremely challenging to work with so many children throughout the week, the time spent in the library is in fact a crucial resource for the majority of CPS students. During those 40-minute preps, schoolchildren gain much-needed exposure to materials for both pleasure and research reading. Even the best-stocked classroom library does not have the diverse coverage of books and resources for all ages and reading levels that the school's central library has. Principals agree. When asked to list the

most important aspects of their library, the most frequent responses were that the library was where students could *browse for/get books* (55 % of responding principals) and *learn to do research/learn about resources* (62 % of principals).

Stephen Krashen's overview of reading research, *The Power of Reading* (Libraries Unlimited, Inc., 1993 and 2004, 2nd edition), shows that one of the main keys to improved reading achievement is access to books. This is especially true for low-income students, who are not as likely to see the adults around them modeling reading and who do not have the same opportunity to purchase books as do their wealthier counterparts (Haycock, 2003). In Illinois, approximately 25 percent of public school students are from low-income households; in the CPS system, that figure rises to approximately 85 percent. In the sample set, low-income levels ranged from 15 percent to 95 percent of students (with a mean of 69 %). For many CPS students, their school library is virtually the only place they visit regularly that gives them access to a wide range and large quantity of reading resources. As former CPS Department of Libraries and Information Services Director and Chicago Public Library District Chief Kathleen Ryan pointed out, this is at least partially reflective of another reality of Chicago life: Gang-related activities in many neighborhoods actually make the *public* libraries off-limits to school children, for whom crossing the street to a particular library would mean crossing gang boundaries.

But even given the fixed scheduling used in Chicago's elementary schools, the activities occurring in these libraries proved to be much the same as in libraries elsewhere with <u>open</u> scheduling. Thirty-nine of the 40 librarians (98 %) in the sample *taught information literacy skills/research skills* to their students "during a typical week"; *monitored or assisted students in locating books and resources*; and also *read aloud to their students* — another "plus" on the side of improving reading scores (Armbruster et al., 2001). The only librarian who did not answer in the affirmative for these activities is one who functions primarily as the computer technician at his school.

The questionnaire was administered in mid-November through mid-December 2003. Of the 29 librarians in the sample group who had been in their positions for at least a year, each of them had taught students *the use of reference sources* during the prior year; 97 % (28) provided students with information about *the Dewey Decimal Classification system* and about *the Chicago Public Library*; 93 % (27) taught *library procedures;* 79 % (23) taught how to *use the card and/or online catalog, cite reference sources,* and *evaluate source materials;* 76 % (22) taught how to *develop a research topic;* and 55 % (16) taught *note-taking techniques* and *how to paraphrase.*

Chicago's librarians also help frame learning strategies and act in a collaborative capacity at their schools: Of the 40 librarians in the sample, 85 % (34) indicated they were on a curriculum development committee or other faculty committee, the Local School Council, or the PTA/PTO, and 40 % (16) had provided one or more staff in-service training session(s) within the last year. Although only 18 % (7) had collaborative time built into their schedules and the survey was administered just barely into the second quarter of the school year when the group was asked, *In which of the following areas have you had the opportunity to collaborate with classroom teachers so far this year?,* the results were as follows:

Collaborative Effort	Percent of Librarians (*N*)
Develop classroom units of study	43 % (17)
Co-teaching a unit or topic	45 % (18)
Topics of student research	70 % (28)
Identification of supportive library resources	80 % (32)
Provide information on new library materials	65 % (26)
Selection of items for the library	53 % (21)
Notify faculty of available professional materials	53 % (21)

These activities occurred in schools with anywhere from just over 500 students to more than 1,300 students — *all* seen by their librarian during the regularly scheduled weekly prep period. Even still, 87 % (33) of the 38 librarians who have full or partial library-as-prep classes indicated that individual students could actually also use the library at times other than their scheduled period — with *before school* or *during regular class-time with permission of regular class teacher* specified most frequently.

Schools in the sample were located throughout Chicago. Each had a pre-kindergarten/ kindergarten through eighth-grade general education program, 500 or more students, and a mobility rate of less than 25 percent. They also had an average of 50 percent or more of their students reading at or above the national norm on standardized tests, taken in the years 2001 through 2003 (the average three-year scores ranged from 50 % to 77.4 %, with a mean value of 62.9 percent). The questionnaires, the interviews and the School Improvement Plans indicated that there are various programs and activities in these schools that contribute to student achievement in reading. However, if the ultimate goal of the school library is to *provide access to books and to help students become independent seekers and users of information*, these libraries are indeed doing that. These librarians managed to get the job done, *despite* the scheduling used.

We in the library profession must rethink the premise that library-as-a-prep-period is something to be shunned. Instead, let our graduate schools prepare prospective school librarians to work in a variety of challenging settings. In large and diverse urban school districts like Chicago, there simply are battles more crucial to wage concerning library programs than the type of scheduling being used.

Rethinking our ideas about fixed scheduling is not a matter of surrendering our souls and becoming less aggressive in pursuing the best features of library programs. It is a matter of recognizing our vastly different school cultures and financial climates. It also is a matter of admitting, finally, that adherence to a preferred standard is only one way to provide students with information literacy skills. Chicago's public schools defy the conventional wisdom about library scheduling, but they still are worthy places to work, as are other schools in which library is a prep period.

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A Chicago Update: Students Achieve with Quality Libraries
by Paul Whitsitt

(Libraries and Information Services Director, Chicago Public Schools)

Since conducting the research on CPS libraries noted in the previous article, author and librarian Patrice Foerster has spent the past two school years in the library at Vaughn Occupational High School, a school for students with cognitive disabilities. Foerster's collaborative work with teachers and administrators has made the library the center of school activity, and Vaughn students crowd into the small library well before the start of every school day. The library itself was created when students from nearby Northside College Prep High School learned that their disabled peers at Vaughn had no school library and raised the funds to create the space that now helps transform student lives at Vaughn.

The librarian at Burroughs Elementary School, mentioned at the beginning of Foerster's article as a first-year, early-childhood teacher placed in the library with no librarian training or experience, has just completed her Master's of Library and Information Science at Dominican University. After only one year in the library position, Deborah Guidara convinced Principal Morris to let her operate the school library on a flexible schedule "He recently had this to say about the library program and his librarian:

> *The librarian always knows what units are being covered in the classrooms, and the classroom teachers know exactly what is being done in the library. The lesson in the library is directly related to what the children are doing in the classroom. The librarian also is learning all the state standards as a result of this collaboration, and I am thinking that librarians could become natural curriculum coordinators…. They are also learning how to collaborate with other teachers. They become natural leaders because they are dealing with all of these different personalities and forming productive relationships. The librarian position has evolved from an out-of-the-way 'extra' program …to one of the most important and integral positions in the school. I am watching our librarian grow in leaps and bounds…. She is becoming a very valued school leader, and I am fortunate to have her on my staff.*

At the end of the 2005-06 school year, CPS students posted record-high gains on the elementary school Illinois Standards of Achievement Test (ISAT). The district jump of 12.1 percentage points overall in reading means that 59.8 percent of CPS students now meet or exceed standards, up from 47.7 percent a year before. Clearly, gains like these are the result of hard work over time by teachers and administrators from many disciplines. However, we know from studies such as *Powerful Libraries Make Powerful Learners: The Illinois Study* (Lance, K.C., Rodney, M.J., Hamilton-Pennell, C., 2005) that quality library programs have a positive and quantifiable impact on student test scores. In the CPS Department of Libraries and Information Services, we are convinced that the work our librarians are doing to support the literacy initiatives in their schools, collaborate with classroom teachers in all disciplines, and advocate for strong library programs is contributing to the improvements in achievement our students are experiencing – in both flexible and fixed schedule libraries.

Despite the shortage of CPS school librarians, the CPS model remains to staff our 600 libraries with certified teacher-librarians. Through grants from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, partnerships with local universities such as Dominican and Chicago State, and extensive professional development, teachers such as Deborah Guidara at Burroughs Elementary are becoming master librarians and school leaders. And although we continue to advocate for increased flexibility in the library schedule, we know that creative people are producing exciting results in student achievement in all types of CPS libraries.

Digital Information Fluency — Survival in the Information Age
by Dr. David Barr, et al

(Principal Investigator, Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy (retired). Dr. Barr's collaborators on this article include other IMSA personnel: Dan Balzer, Online Development Specialist; Dr. Carl Heine, 21st Century Information Fluency Project Director; Marti Guarin, Collection Development and Reference Librarian (retired); Robert Houston, Director of Operations for External Programs; Dennis O'Connor, Online Development Specialist; Gautam Saha, Software Specialist; and Jane St. Pierre, Director of Marketing and Communication; as well as Dr. Mary McNabb, External Evaluator, Learning Gauge Inc.; and Jane Yoder, Independent Library Consultant.)

Do you have increasing responsibility for locating and developing Internet resources for your patrons or classroom? Does your role include coaching patrons, students and teachers on the use of Internet resources? Are you concerned that patrons and students use only popular commercial Internet search engines to conduct academic research? Do your patrons and students need guidance on how to evaluate the credibility of Internet resources? If you answered yes to any of these questions, this article will discuss what is being done to help to address these issues.

Thanks to a grant from the U.S. Department of Education – Funds for the Advancement of Education, the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy (IMSA) has put together a program called "The 21st Century Information Fluency Project" to address these needs.

Digital Information Fluency: Why Is It Important?
Digital Information Fluency (DIF) is the ability to find, evaluate and ethically use digital information efficiently and effectively. DIF involves knowing how digital information is different from print information; having the skills to use specialized tools for finding digital information; and developing the dispositions needed in the digital information environment. There are compelling reasons why our citizens of today and tomorrow need to become skilled users of the Internet and online resources.

Ready or Not, Online Sources Beginning to Dominate
According to a three-year study conducted by the Electronic Publishing Initiative at Columbia University, electronic resources have become the main tool for gathering information. Stated in the UC Berkeley's School of Information Management and Systems, "How Much Information?" 2003 Study, "Ninety-two percent of the new information was stored on magnetic media, mostly in hard disks." The publication, *Guiding Student Research*, published by the National Consortium for Specialized Secondary Schools of Mathematics, Science and Technology, dedicates an entire chapter to e-research stating, "Electronic resources allow students unparalleled access to information and a plethora of new data, both unavailable a decade ago." This also is true for day-to-day activities, as anyone who fills out their own tax forms has realized that you must go to the Internet to find instructions and forms. Given these trends, the citizens of the future must be able to locate, evaluate and use digital information to survive in whatever profession they pursue.

Manage Vast Amounts of Information
Google, the operator of the world's most popular Internet search service, is partnering with the nation's leading research libraries to convert their holdings into digital files that will be freely searchable over the Web. Now, more than ever, students need help in managing vast amounts of online information.

Improve Student Test Scores

High schools with computers that connect to library catalogs and databases average 6.2 percent improvement on ACT scores. The presence of more library computers is associated with 8 percent improvements for fifth- and eighth-grade ISAT reading scores and nearly 11 percent for eighth grade ISAT writing scores. (Powerful Libraries Make Powerful Learners – The Illinois Study, February 2005).

Get Ready for Formal Testing of Students

The growing relationship between academic success and digital information fluency is prompting a wave of formal testing. The Educational Testing Service (ETS) announced the launch of the ETS ICT (Information and Communication Technology) Literacy Assessment, a simulation-based testing program that measures postsecondary students' ability to define, access, manage, integrate, evaluate, create and communicate information in a technological environment. In addition, the No Child Left Behind Act includes the goal that every eighth-grade student be technologically literate.

User Beware

A 2002 study directed by BJ Fogg, a Stanford psychologist, found that people tend to judge the credibility of a Web site by its appearance. However, anyone can design and place a Web page on the Internet in minutes. There are no rules and no safety nets. The online presence of hoax Web sites, fraudulent information and deceptive practices abound. Online users need skills and expertise in evaluating the credibility of online resources.

Defining the Core Competencies of Digital Information Fluency

Certainly, millions of students, teachers and librarians are already using the Internet for learning and communicating. But do they have the skills to locate information with precision and evaluate the credibility of their findings? What does it mean to be an expert in Digital Information Fluency? A team from IMSA set out to define the core competencies of Digital Information Fluency. Digital Information Fluency involves a specific problem-solving process (see below). DIF is similar to other iterative problem-solving processes such as the Big6, the scientific method, or the writing process.

The Digital Information Fluency Process Model

What information am I looking for?

Where will I find the information?

How will I get there?

How will I ethically use the information?

How good is the information?

Digital Information Fluency Process Model

Following are the core competencies that every learner should be able to demonstrate to function successfully in the digital information environment. The competencies correspond to the five phases of the DIF process.

What information am I looking for?
- Learners create effective and efficient search queries.
- Translate a natural language question into a search query.
- Develop and apply vocabulary-building strategies to effectively conduct a digital information search.
- Revise their search queries based on search results/feedback.

Where will I find the information?
- Learners effectively and efficiently select digital collections.
- Select visible Web collections (and sub-collections).
- Select invisible Web collections (and sub-collections).
- Select other digital collections (and sub-collections).

How will I get there?
- Learners select digital search tools based on their effectiveness and efficiency.
- Select features of a variety of digital tools based on the probability of effectiveness and efficiency:
- Select appropriate search strategies to effectively and efficiently locate reliable digital information related to their academic learning goal(s).
- Learners apply appropriate search strategies to efficiently locate reliable digital information related to their information goal(s).

How good is the information?
- Learners evaluate the usefulness and quality of digital information effectively and efficiently.
- Evaluate the quality of a search result to determine its usefulness in the search process.
- Evaluate the quality of a search result to determine the reliability of its content.

How will I ethically use the information?
- Learners ethically use digital information.
- Decide whether or not to integrate digital information related to a specific information task.
- Give credit to the source and/or author for the selected digital information.

Illinois Educators Become Power Users of Digital Information
In addition to conducting fundamental research on identifying the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to be a fluent digital information researcher, the IMSA team went on to publish these core competencies and create a suite of online resources for learning and teaching these concepts on a rich Web site (http://21cif.imsa.edu/). The Website contains aides, tools, training and practice resources ().

Wizard Toolkit — The Wizard Toolkit is a set of online, context-sensitive help Web pages. The first tool is the **Search Wizard**. The Search Wizard is a "fill-in-the-blanks" template, with three levels of context-sensitive help on tactics and strategies for searching. The software builds and displays your properly formatted search argument, and then passes it on to Google for execution. Results are served by Google without sponsored advertising in a separate window. Google preferences such as content filtering and open page in a new window are also honored.

Evaluation Wizard — The Evaluation Wizard also is a "fill-in-the-blanks" template that guides the student through up to 10 key questions to perform a critical evaluation of the reliability and credibility of the Website. Each page has context sensitive help on what questions one should ask about the site as well as how to find the answers. When finished, the student can print the template for documentation of their research.

Citation Wizard — The Citation Wizard is a "fill-in-the-blanks" template, where the student enters key information about the authorship of the Website. The software then creates a properly formatted citation that can be cut and pasted into the students work in five different styles. This reinforces the need to give credit for another's work and makes it easier.

Micro Modules — Micro Modules are online on-demand learning experiences using an engaging tutorial with audio and video components. There are 47 Micro Modules that cover both tactical and more strategic concepts of locating, evaluating and ethical use. Students or patrons can call up a module to learn or review a particular concept or tactic. Micro Modules also can be used as class assignments.

Search Challenges — Search Challenges are game-like, online exercises that focus on a particular concept. They give scores for successful results and feedback on incorrect answers. This is especially appealing and engaging to students of all ages.

Lesson Plan Repository — As participants in our online classes completed their class assignments they created lesson plans that incorporate the teaching of one or more DIF concepts. The lesson plans are entered into the repository, categorized by national, state and local standards, subject, grade level and topic. Educators can access the repository and search for lesson plans by categories.

Digital Investigator Package — The Digital Investigator Package is designed to give a teacher an example of a complete package for teaching Searching, Evaluating, and Ethical Use of Digital Information in the context of ninth-grade Language Arts. Each of the three modules consists of about three hours of learning experiences. They contain detailed lesson plans and teaching guides and student assignments. Each lesson plan contains Alignment to Standards; Alignment to DIF Core Competencies; Goals and Objectives; and Learning Activities. Teacher's Guides contain worksheets, answer keys and independent study materials.

Resource Kit — Most recently, the team has created the IMSA Digital Information Fluency Resource Kit, a monthly portfolio of thought pieces, research findings, practical tools, stories from the field, curriculum adaptations and interactive learning activities all focused on teaching and learning of digital information fluency concepts created by a team of professional educators and technology experts.

Over the past four years, these materials have been developed and shared with school librarians and educators throughout Illinois. With strong partnership with and help from the Illinois School Library Media Association and the regional library systems to promote these materials, the team conducted more than 112 Online Courses and Face to Face Workshops attended by more than 1,540 educators from more than 700 Illinois schools and district offices.

We agree with Dr. Julie D. Frechette, that "learning will be less about knowledge residing in the head and more about learning the pathways to knowledge." We believe that teaching the citizens of today and tomorrow how to find information is absolutely critical. We have created a set of resources that will help individuals and educators understand and master these skills. We need to find ways to keep this research and resource development funded, insist that our schools teach these skills and make the materials available to our citizens.

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Thinkers Without Borders:
Information Literate Students in Illinois
by Gail Bush
(Director, Center for Teaching through Children's Books, National-Louis University)

In our global community it is comforting to witness organizations like Doctors Without Borders use their knowledge, skills, and dedication to serve those in need, regardless of national affiliation. In Illinois, the multi-type library system serves our residents with equal fervor. While our schoolchildren, unlike most other states, are subjected to a disparate range of financial support, they do benefit from a uniquely cooperative approach toward library services. The strong and proud Illinois library tradition is to work together to build community. How does (or could) this approach manifest itself in the school library, and what should all librarians in our state know about information literacy to best serve our young Illinois residents?

Information Literacy Comes of Age
The next time you want to buy a car, you will be using your own information literacy skills. You will start to strategize how you will scope out the information you need, like talking to your brother-in-law, the car junkie, or reading the automotive section of the Sunday newspapers, or actually watching those car commercials during the 10 p.m. network news. You will locate the information you are seeking and start to organize it and your thoughts. You will start to narrow down your options and decide that you need more information about a particular model. You will look for it parked in the lots and when you drive on the street. You start to think about colors and interiors and insurance. You will share your information with others and eventually come to a decision. You will evaluate your decision based on how you like your car choice and if you would choose it again.

Information literacy is the ability to find the information you seek, to use it with a critical approach, to communicate it, and to evaluate the process (see the National Forum on Information Literacy definition at the end of this article). It is both the historically dreaded research process and also the process we use to solve information problems in our daily lives. The fluency with which we use information fosters an appreciation both of ideas and of all that society has to offer us. It adds value to our seeking out meaning in the vast information wasteland.

Years ago, functional literacy meant that you were facile with the 3 R's, a pencil and paper, and that alone met your needs. Then along came the trials and tribulations of programming the VCR (with or without reading the manual) and everyone dove for cover. Our focus in recent years in both education and the public sector has been to acquaint information seekers with basic technology literacy. It is time now to not only embrace information literacy and what it provides for the lifelong learner, but to recognize how it helps us to build our Illinois library community in the service of all residents.

Information is Personal
Whatever your passion, you seek information to support it. Information literacy facilitates learning more about your favorite artist or football team, your lifelong avocation or your latest hobby. In seeking information and learning more knowledge that is personally meaningful, our appreciation of a life of the mind deepens. Perhaps we meet others who share our interests, and engagement in our own lives become richer and more textured. Helping students to become

independent learners is a fundamental tenet of information literacy. School librarians partner with teachers and students to introduce new resources and explore how they may be used to deepen understanding of content knowledge.

It is the transfer of information-seeking skills that makes our young Illinois scholars truly information literate. Information literacy promotes a healthy appetite for unfettered access to resources. The student who grasps the power of the process will not stop at the school library. That student uses the public library and even the historical society and museums. That student will use the academic library when the time comes, and will become an effective user of any variety of formats and media to garner the most accurate, timely, and meaningful information accessible. That student is a valued member of our local community and will serve society for the greater good because of the understanding of the connections we have with our global community. That student needs us to work together to serve all Illinois residents with a shared vision of information literacy.

Building Illinois Library Communities

Let's revisit our formative question — "How does (or could) this approach manifest itself in the school library, and what should all librarians in our state know about information literacy to best serve our young Illinois residents?" Whether you have a position in an academic, public, government or non-profit library environment, you have a role in building the Illinois library community and reaching out to your colleagues in the schools.

School libraries vary from district to district and sometimes from school to school within consolidated districts. Some districts may have information literacy curricula embedded in the language arts or social science programs. Another district may have a library curriculum as a stand-alone hierarchy of information skills. Another school might translate information literacy into basic computer skills.

Keeping in mind that national information literacy standards are less than 10 years old, there may be practitioners who are not familiar with this terminology and approach to the research process. Talk to your school librarians to learn what is happening in the schools. You may ask about an information curriculum, or you may simply want to know how students in that district are learning how to learn.

Are there programming opportunities that would benefit our Illinois Thinkers Without Borders? Are you satisfied with the level of program participation from area students? Identify one program geared to schoolchildren or youth on which to concentrate your newfound challenge. Reach out to your elementary, middle, or high school librarian with an appreciation for their information literacy goals. What role might your library system have in this endeavor? How could you work together to broaden, heighten, deepen, illuminate, and accentuate the positive power of librarians collaborating for the benefit of our young friends? Start small, start friendly — just *start*.

Information Literacy Resources

American Association of School Librarians, www.ala.org/aasl (Click Professional Tools) — AASL Resource Guides for School Library Media Program Development, Information Literacy webliography of professional tools geared to K–12 education.

Association of College & Research Libraries, www.ala.org/acrl (Click Issues & Advocacy). ACRL's Institute for Information Literacy site includes a peer consultant database, a toolkit for working with the Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education and more.

National Forum on Information Literacy, www.infolit.org. NFIL defines information literacy "as the ability to know when there is a need for information, to be able to identify, locate, evaluate, and effectively use that information for the issue or problem at hand."

Information Literacy Summit — Attend the annual (one-day) Information Literacy Summit held each spring in three locations throughout Illinois. Registration begins in February. Check the Moraine Valley Community College Library/Learning Resource Center Web site for more information.

Information Literacy in an Information Age ERIC Digest — ERIC Identifier: ED372756. Publication date is 1994 but offers a solid foundation in the origins of information literacy.

Reflections on Teachers, Librarians and Collaboration
by Jane Sharka
(Librarian, Naperville Central High School)

Stress is a major problem in most educators' lives these days. With the demand for improved scores (thanks to No Child Left Behind) and the ever increasing need to "exceed expectations" in all curricular areas, it is no wonder teachers, administrators, and students feel overwhelmed, frustrated and just plain stressed out. *So what does this have to do with libraries?*

In February 2005, the "Powerful Libraries Make Powerful Learners" study was released. Fourteenth in a series of statewide studies conducted by Keith Curry Lance, this one reaffirmed that:
1. Schools with better-staffed libraries have more students who succeed on tests.
2. High Schools with computers that connect to library catalogs and databases average 6.2 percent improvement on ACT scores.
3. Students that visit the library more frequently receive improved reading and writing scores.
4. Students with access to larger, more current book collections achieve higher reading, writing, and ACT scores.

Such results indicate that strong library programs, including consistent teacher-librarian collaboration (note item #3), *guarantee* improvement. *So why are administrators and teachers not rushing to make the necessary changes to facilitate success through their libraries and relieve a lot of their own stress?*

Good question, with no easy answer. Common sense tells us that there are several reasons inhibiting the move toward "powerful libraries" and educators' inability to connect libraries and academic improvement. To name a few:
1. It takes MONEY to fund salaries of certified librarians and appropriate support staff – if you can find the certified staff.
2. It takes MONEY to select and purchase current print and electronic resources.
3. It takes MONEY to install the technological infrastructure necessary to supply a school (or district) with the ways and means of accessing those library catalogs and online tools.
4. It takes TIME and TRAINING to weed library collections well as well as select appropriate materials to support the curriculum, not to mention teach students and teachers how to use the existing resources.
5. It also takes TIME and EDUCATION of administrators and teachers with regard to the need for students to learn how to be efficient and effective users of information and what role the library plays in that learning process.
6. It takes an ATTITUDE of openness and flexibility on the part of teachers and administrators to share with or even collaborate with librarians because many of them do not perceive librarians as teachers too.
7. It takes librarians who are WILLING TO CHANGE how they run their libraries, develop their programs, publicize their services, keep up with the technology, and be creative with ideas for collaborative efforts to ease their teachers' workloads.
8. It takes STRATEGIC PLANNING to develop the necessary goals and objectives to accomplish all that the "Powerful Libraries" study indicates.

These reasons all boil down to the need for more money, time, attitude adjustments, and planning. *So what does it take to make this all happen?*

If it is MONEY that is needed, consider getting into the grant-writing mode. If you don't ever ask for money you won't get any. Even though applying for grant money is a challenge, it is certainly worth the effort if you get the funds for the tools, resources, or whatever you seek. Your local library system youth services consultant might be able to help identify available grants or funding sources through the state library, or you can do some research on your own. You might also consider checking out the following opportunities:

- **Best Buy Te@ch Grants** — http://communications.bestbuy.com/communityrelations/teach.asp
- **Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Library Grants** — www.gatesfoundation.org/Libraries/
- **Dollar General Back-To-School Grants** — www.dollargeneral.com/community/communityinvestments.aspx
- **Literacy Through School Libraries (U.S. Department of Education) Grants** — answers.ed.gov (search "technology innovation challenge grants")
- **Summary of Federal Grants for 2007** — www.ala.org/ala/washoff/WOissues/washfunding/funding.htm

If it is TIME that you need, make the time by carefully examining how you currently use your time or others' time. Consider *when* you do major tasks – can you opt to do some traditional projects like inventory at a time other than the start or end of the school year? Do you *really* need to do an inventory *every* year? Maybe there are some tasks or projects that are no longer relevant but are done out of habit. We live in a technological age — original cataloging, maintaining and keeping extensive periodical collections in good repair are not needed if you have online resources. Forget about combing through newspapers for current topic articles! Vertical files are not needed unless the material is very unique, historic, or relevant to specific projects going on in your school. Are there volunteers you can commandeer to help with really necessary tasks like shelving? Look at all that is going on and see where you can recover time that can go into collaborative planning with teachers and other area librarians, or in working on special events to bring students into your facility.

Sometimes it is possible to persuade administrators to consider using staff development time for collaboration between the library and specific departments, teams, or groups of teachers. Offering yourself as a trainer for those in-service programs is a way to get time with your teachers. Suggest that helping teachers improve *their* research skills during an in-service will make it possible for them to help their students be better researchers. If you don't succeed the first time you ask, keep at it. Sometimes persistence pays off!

If it is ATTITUTE changes that are necessary, begin with a bit of self-reflection. Are some of the problems you face because of your own inability to be flexible or to change? Do you need to update your own skill sets to help your teachers and students do their jobs more effectively and efficiently? If so, take a class, sign up for a free **LibraryU** course [http://mylearning.libraryu.org/home/], or head for the **21st Century Fluency** Web site [http://21cif.imsa.edu/] for the wonderful tutorials and free toolkit. Should the attitude changes be needed in other individuals in your building, invite them to join you as you address some of these challenges. Ask for their input or assistance to make the necessary changes. There is nothing like struggling together with a new skill to bond you with another educator! And it wouldn't hurt to drag one of your administrators along too!

IF PLANNING (or lack thereof) is needed, then you and whomever you can coerce into joining you should sit down at the drawing board and pull together the plans that are missing. Most

schools have three- or five-year plans for curriculum, technology, and or vision implementation. All schools must have School Improvement Plans. Do you have correlating plans for the library? Does your school's long-range planning include the library? If not, these plans are critically important for you to develop as soon as possible. Start small – get one or two colleagues or an administrator to sit down with you and discuss the need for a plan. Consider asking students, clerical staff, and parents for input. Write down everything, select and prioritize your needs, determine a calendar for implementing the plan.

As you move through this planning process, keep in mind it cannot be done in a day. It could take a full school year to develop your plans. Make sure that once you have a plan with its implementation calendar, share it. Publicize your results. Encourage the people who worked with you to develop the plan to help you make it happen. It is amazing when others "buy in" to what you worked so hard to identify. The results can often pleasantly surprise everyone.

By now you may recognize that you cannot accomplish anything without other people. The old adage, "No man is an island," is true. Working together is absolutely necessary for you — and your school — to overcome the obstacles of not enough money, time, right attitude, and planning. And the definition of collaboration is just that, "to work together, especially in a joint intellectual effort"! **

Just one bit of advice … keep track of the opportunities you have to "work with" anyone else. Each instance of collaborative effort should be documented for your own affirmation and to demonstrate you really are doing something. Sometimes those collaborations take place at lunch, in the hallway, formally or informally. Whenever and wherever it takes place, keep a record. At the end of your school year you may be surprised at how much you accomplished.

*** Dictionary.com, "collaborate".*

The Role of Illinois' Regional Library Systems in Professional Development for School Library Media Specialists

by Pamela K. Kramer

(Director of Educational Services, DuPage Library System)

School librarianship, like the entire field of librarianship, has seen enormous changes in the last decade. With the publication of *Information Power: Building Partnerships for Learning* (American Library Association, 1998), through two editions of *Linking for Learning* (Illinois School Library Media Association,1999, 2005), and the release of *Powerful Libraries Make Powerful Learners: the Illinois Study* (Illinois School Library Media Association, 2005), Illinois school librarians have been challenged to learn new ways to communicate, collaborate, and create meaningful library programs for their students.

Along the way, they have learned new technologies and have begun to apply them. At the same time, school librarians are being challenged by the issues surrounding these applications: plagiarism, authenticity of content and use of social spaces. They have been challenged to motivate children and young adults to read with collections of materials that may be outdated and tattered. They know that research shows that school librarians and good school libraries do make a difference in the level of student achievement on the high-stakes tests. But school librarians continue to be challenged to make their programs vital and visible. Finally, as they honor the core values of the profession, they are challenged to change their roles from just "teaching how to find information" to "providing guidance in what to do with information. All these challenges create a fertile field of professional development opportunities. There can be no ignoring the need for continuous learning. The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) requires that all certified personnel in schools, including school librarians, develop a professional development plan that includes taking courses and attending workshops in order to be re-certified.

The Illinois School Library Media Association holds an annual conference filled with sessions and speakers that address the needs of school librarians. But one conference, in one location, cannot meet the needs of all school librarians in a state as geographically and economically diverse as Illinois. Therefore, the multitype regional library systems have assumed an important role in providing professional development opportunities for school librarians. The regional library systems provide consulting services, interlibrary loan, e-mail lists, discounts, networking opportunities, professional development, site visits and much more for all their member libraries, including schools. Because the needs in each system are different, each system takes a somewhat different approach to working with school librarians.

Because school librarians may not be able to get away during the school year, or the distances they have to travel preclude attending meetings at system headquarters after school or during the day, several regional library systems offer "camp" or "summer school" for school librarians.

Alliance Library System — The system offers Summer Camp for School Librarians. According to Diane Colletti, "the sharing of information and networking among the participants was amazing!" During the five days spread over two weeks, "campers" took a "road trip" to visit school libraries to see best practices. They learned to use the Statewide Illinois Library Catalog (SILC) and OCLC Connexion for cataloging. They focused on 21st-Century Information Literacy and resources available from the Library of Congress. Campers explored Ask?Away Illinois, a new 24/7 virtual reference program, gained insight into rights and regulations that pertain to

schools within the context of access to information and had serious dialogues about looking to the future, mentoring and networking.

Lewis and Clark Library System — The system also offers Summer School for School Librarians. System standards require 16 hours of continuing education for every full-time equivalent staff member in libraries. School librarians can earn up to 20 hours of CE credit. A morning and an afternoon session are spread out over four weeks, one day a week. Topics include technology trends, grant writing, book talks and promoting reading, locating materials using tools from the Library of Congress and FirstSearch.

Rolling Prairie Library System — The system offers a Summer Camp for School Librarians in a one-day format. Workshops cover six topics from which each attendee selects three. Among the topics this past summer were ILL/FirstSearch, statistics, storytelling, Library of Congress resources, collaboration, and references.

Shawnee Library System — The system has created regional training centers so that any member librarian has no more than an hour to drive for a CE event. Thus, school librarians are able to attend many of the system's regularly scheduled CE events.

Metropolitan Library System — Regular programming covers both youth and school librarians, including Young Adult Boot camp, designed for those working with teens. Because of the wide geographic area covered by the system, there are regional networking groups for school librarians.

As mentioned previously, professional development is critical to school librarians. Most Regional Offices of Education schedule "institute" days for certified personnel in their respective counties. Several library systems have found that these institute days offer an excellent opportunity to provide specialized programming for school librarians.

DuPage Library System — The system has collaborated since 1968 with the DuPage and Kane County Regional Offices of Education to offer the DuKane County Institute for School Librarians. Each year, the program has featured a nationally known keynote speaker or author. Concurrent sessions include book talks, reading motivation, Illinois State Library offerings, such as SILC and Ask?Away, and member librarians sharing their best practices. As Pamela Kramer explained, "One year the two counties did not choose the same day for Institute. Even though DLS held the exact same institute twice, members missed the wider networking opportunities of the two-county event. They were delighted when the two counties decided to choose the same day the following year."

Prairie Area Library System — The system also has partnered with local Regional Offices of Education to provide relevant continuing education options for school librarians on dates specified by the offices. The library system provides the content and speakers. Jane Lenser reports, "It is a "win-win" situation and has forged communication and relationships with the ROEs." Both LCLS and RPLS have also forged ties to ROEs to provide specialized library-related in-service programming on countywide institute days.

In a totally different kind of collaboration, the library system is tackling the librarian shortage issue by offering formal education in a convenient setting. Students can receive an ALA-accredited MLS from the University of Wisconsin-Madison by attending four video-teleconferenced classes as a cohort group in person at one of the three library system service

centers. The remainder of the classes can be taken online. For certified teachers who are interested in obtaining their school library endorsement or certification, the system has partnered with Northern Illinois University to offer those along with a Master's Degree in Instructional Technology. These classes also are held via video-teleconference at the three service centers, as well as in DeKalb, and combine class time with online learning. Both programs are being offered by the Prairie Area Library System without the benefit of grant funding.

All the library systems are using e-mail lists to provide information and consulting services to school library members. Judy Rake from the Lewis and Clark Library System sums up the effectiveness of electronic lists: "They have enabled me to provide assistance with grant writing and promote CE activities provided by other systems and institutions. Members use the list to get answers to their questions from their peers as well."

North Suburban Library System — The system offers a unique form of electronic collaboration. The system created two virtual communities, the School and High School Communities of Practice, for the purpose of gathering, storing and sharing information and best practices. All NSLS school librarians are invited to become a member of these communities. While still meeting face-to-face at networking group meetings, members use the online community sites for facilitating threaded discussions, which are searchable and available; maintaining a shared calendar of related events; maintaining an updated directory of school library personnel, including all contact information; storing meeting minutes, handouts, program ideas, etc., easily accessible by all community members; and listing useful Web site links for professional development purposes. According to Sharon Ball, "These virtual communities are thriving, streamlining communication among all NSLS school librarians.

Web Conferencing — Using OPAL, Web conferencing is offering library systems another tool for professional development and networking. School librarians can participate from their own computers in their own libraries or from home, thus eliminating long drives and excessive travel times. In an experiment using OPAL technology, the DuPage Library System hosted the introduction and book talks for the three Illinois Children's Choice Awards – the Monarch, Caudill and Lincoln. By using OPAL, the system was able to reach not only its own school librarians, but also others from the other regional library systems. Because the programs are archived, they are available throughout the state and nation 24/7. Lewis and Clark Library System reports that in 2006-07 it will begin to use OPAL to deliver continuing education. Rachel Miller of Rolling Prairie Library System reports, "We sponsor training sessions during after-school times and have started offering some of the training sessions on OPAL to make it even easier for school librarians to participate. At the same time we still encourage and facilitate regional library networking groups that are formed based on geographic proximity."

This is just a snapshot of the activities regional library systems use to support school librarians. The individuals at each regional library system charged with working with schools and youth meet quarterly to share best practices and keep abreast of the latest issues in the field. With the anticipated 2007 revision of the *Information Power,* regional library systems will continue to take a lead with ISLMA in providing professional development and growth to school librarians.

1. Information for this article was developed from submissions from the regional library systems to a request from the author.
2. The term "school librarian" is used throughout this article. Much of the literature, including the publications cited in the first paragraph, use the term "school library media specialist." The Illinois State Board of Education now uses the term "library information specialist" in its certification standards and documents.

The Monarch Award Takes Flight
by Pam Storm
(Monarch Committee Chair, Illinois School Library Media Association)

With the advent of the Caudill Award for fourth- through eighth-graders in the late 1980s, those of us serving primary grade students began regularly saying, "I wish we had an award for K-3." This litany continued for almost 15 years, before a group of Illinois School Library Media Association past presidents took action.

In summer 2002 at a social function, Carol Fox, Jane Yoder, and I said, "Let's do it." Our sketchy proposal was taken to the ISLMA. We were asked to refine the proposal and to estimate how much financial support would be needed to get the award off the ground. At the fall 2002 ISLMA Conference, Cynthia Mitchell sat in on an informal steering committee meeting and was asked to join our group. Guidelines modeled after the Caudill Award continued to be refined, reports were made to ISLMA, and a suggestion to add a public library member to the steering committee led to the addition of Sharon Ball to our group. One challenge remained — what to call the award.

At a meeting in early spring 2003, Cynthia suggested we name the new award "The Monarch Award." The committee loved the name and the comparisons it invoked between the Monarch butterfly's metamorphosis and the emergence of the new reader.

Brochures were prepared in time for the 2003 conference seeking schools and libraries to register and to nominate books for the first award to be given in 2005. A readers committee narrowed the nominations to the Master List of 20 books. Over 670 schools and libraries registered; over 95,000 children voted; and the 2005 Monarch Award winner was *David Gets in Trouble*, by David Shannon.

The award's popularity continues to grow, with 719 schools and libraries registered in 2006, over 115,000 children voting, and the 2006 Award winner, *My Lucky Day,* by Keiko Kasza. The 2007 Master List has been chosen and registration is underway. Go to www.islma.org/monarch.htm for all the latest information!

Bookin' With Abe:
The Abraham Lincoln Illinois High School Book Award
by Kathy Shannon
(Executive Committee Chair, Abraham Lincoln Illinois High School Book Award)

"Why would we need a secondary students' choice book award anyway? Everyone knows that high school kids don't read for fun, except maybe *Seventeen* or *Sports Illustrated*. They sure aren't going to read four or five entire *books* just so they can vote for some award!" This was the reaction we got from many adults, especially those *not* working with high school students, when we first proposed such an award back in 1994.

There was no doubt then that the Rebecca Caudill Young Readers' Book Award, jointly sponsored by the Illinois School Library Media Association, the Illinois Association of Teachers of English, and the Illinois Reading Council, which targeted grades 4-8, was already a success, and many people were eager to see a similar students' choice award established for grades K-3. But one for teenagers? Who would bother knowing that no one would participate? In fact, at that time, the idea was tabled for lack of sponsorship, and nothing further was done about establishing a new award for several years.

However, a statewide survey of school librarians, conducted by the committee that had investigated the idea of a secondary award, showed that many high school librarians were *very* enthusiastic about the idea. With that knowledge, and the encouragement of then-ISLMA president Kathy Oberhardt, the push for a 9-12 book award took on new life in 2003, and support and funding was approved by the ISLMA Board.

A new committee was formed, consisting of Kathy Shannon, then a librarian at Thornwood High School in South Holland; Jane Lenser, youth services consultant for the Northern Illinois (now Prairie Area) Library System; and Kathleen Traci, director of media services for the Rockford Public Schools. Kathleen had some experience with Indiana's Eliot Rosewater H.S. Book Award (the Rosie), and the committee borrowed some ideas and procedures from our neighboring state in setting up the machinery for the Illinois award, which was named the Abraham Lincoln Illinois High School Book Award (soon known as The Abe Award). An effort was made to maintain as much consistency as possible with the procedures of the Rebecca Caudill Award, and with the new primary grades award, the Monarch, which was established concurrently with the Abe Award.

Committee members decided they needed to get the program going immediately so that the first award could be *presented* in fall 2005. Thus, the first year was something of a fly-by-the-seat-of-their-pants venture, which continues to be fine-tuned as experience is gained. With a dedicated band of 12 adult readers from around the state, and nominations of more than 200 titles from librarians, teachers and students, the committee produced a Master List of 22 titles for the 2005 Abe Award. Students in more than 200 school and public libraries read and voted during the 2004-05 school year, and the first award was presented at the 2005 fall ISLMA conference. The overwhelming winner was Dave Pelzer for his memoir, *A Child Called 'It'*. In second place was *The Lovely Bones,* with *Speak* placing third. Nearly 1,400 students in grades 9-12 voted the first year, and many others (according to participating library media specialists) read from the Master List but did not vote for various reasons.

For the 2006 Award year, the Reader Panel was increased to 30, including four high school students from all parts of Illinois. A Nominations Committee was formed, which now pares down all nominations received to a semifinal list of 75 for the Reader Panel to work from. The timeline was revised to be more consistent with the Monarch and Caudill Awards and to get the new list out earlier so students can read over the summer. The second year, roughly the same number of libraries again registered to participate, and the 1,500 students who voted chose *My Sister's Keeper* as the 2006 Abe Award winner.

Participating librarians have found that the Abe Award gives them several ways to increase teen reading for pleasure. Participation in a statewide program – something bigger than just their high school – is a motivator for some students. The program also is a tool for involving classroom teachers in Abe-related reading activities, ranging from elaborate projects centering on the Abe reading list to simply encouraging reading from the list by granting extra credit in class. Many Illinois high school students have participated in the Rebecca Caudill Award during grades 4-8, and the Abe Award encourages them to continue the reading habits developed earlier. Finally, the annual Master Lists serve as a collection development tool for librarians seeking to build a current, teen-friendly collection of fiction and nonfiction titles that their students will be interested in reading.

Has everything gone smoothly as we worked to get the new secondary award up and running? In general, we believe things have gone quite well. Kathleen Traci has now retired and left Illinois, and two new members have joined the committee: Carolyn Roys of Lake Park High School in Roselle and Gayl Smith of Waubonsie Valley High School in Aurora. An increase in the number of participating libraries and the number of students who actually cast votes for the current award nominees is welcomed. Efforts are being made to achieve both of those goals. Some concern has been expressed by adults about the literary quality of some of the titles nominated, and indeed our aim each year is to create a list of quality titles with appeal for the diverse range of students who make up our secondary population in Illinois. Yet when all is said and done, this *is* a students' choice award, not the Nobel Prize for Literature, and there will probably always be at least some titles on the Master List that are of more current teen interest than lasting literary value.

The Executive Committee believes that as the Abe Award becomes more established, more libraries and their teen constituents will participate. Now that Illinois has students' choice awards for all grades from K-12, the Abe will also benefit from the participants in the Monarch and Caudill Awards, who will have grown up reading and voting for book awards and naturally expect to keep doing so in high school. Further information about the Abe Award is available at the ISLMA Web site at www.islma.org.

(Editor's note: High school students may also be interested in participating in the Illinois State Library's Read for a Lifetime program. For more information, visit www.cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/library/whats_new/rfl.html.)

Making a Difference in New Orleans
by Leslie Forsman and Becky Robinson

(Leslie: Past-President, Illinois School Library Media Association, and School Librarian, Triopia CUSD #27, Concord;
Becky: ISLMA President and Media Specialist, Galesburg High School)

Leslie's Story

Ah, New Orleans! A belle of the South, at least until two very destructive ladies stormed through last fall. Last August, Hurricane Katrina destroyed many areas in the Gulf Coast region. Shortly (too shortly) thereafter, Hurricane Rita followed a very similar path. Unfortunately, New Orleans was hit hard by both storms.

I attended the American Library Association conference in Toronto during the SARS epidemic without a second thought. I went to Orlando and Chicago for ALA conferences in their hottest parts of summer. I flew into and out of Boston's Logan Airport (for an ALA Midwinter Conference) with much worry. However, the idea of going to New Orleans after the hurricanes for this year's ALA conference concerned me.

The week before ALA, I spoke with a gentleman from New Orleans who explained their situation this way: "You know how when you stop by a friend's house unexpectedly, and of course you are welcome to come in and have a seat, but they have to 'tidy up a bit'? Well, that's how it is here in New Orleans. We are glad to have you, but we need to tidy up around here." That was a bit of an understatement! I am glad that I had not been to New Orleans before, because I didn't have the memories of how it used to look, of businesses that used to be there. The tears that welled in my eyes weren't from my memories, but from the stories the people of New Orleans (and the Gulf Coast) told of their experiences and losses.

The stories of water standing 16 feet deep in their homes, of walls of mud and silt (from the levee breaks) 5 feet tall crashing through the back of their homes, right through and out the front door, then remaining in the front yard for months until it erodes from wind and rain. The unofficial mini tour that the bus driver gave us on the way back from the workday went through areas of destruction that are beyond words. Even in the French Quarter, many of the buildings bear the marks of floodwaters, fires, vandalism and time.

Yet in the middle of all of it, the spirit of the people champions on. They rebuild, they clean and mop, they commute from 100 miles away to go to work. The emergency personnel live in the hotels so that they can be on hand if needed. Each has a tale from their "Kat-Rita" experience; each has a hope for a future in the hometown they love.

As I listened and observed, I knew I had made the right decision in coming to the conference in New Orleans. I am glad I was there to help on volunteer day and be a part of the first group to show New Orleans that we believed in their efforts to rebuild. I grew up watching "The Six Million Dollar Man." In the opening segment was a statement similar to "We can rebuild him, we have the technology, we can make him better, faster, stronger." I believe that New Orleans can be a $6 million (plus inflation) city.

The people of New Orleans, the storeowners and workers, the restaurant personnel were all so happy to see us. There were signs that said, "The librarians are coming," "Thank you librarians," and "We are happy you are here." We were made to feel so welcome, but they do still need to "tidy up a bit."

I encourage you to consider a visit to New Orleans; they really are ready for us. I must add a comment about the restaurants — the wait staff was wonderful and the food was awesome! I could eat pecan crusted crabmeat cheesecake, blue crab cakes, and even alligator, often and enjoy it each time. I even bought a cookbook from one of the restaurants. Do they sell blue crab or alligator meat in Illinois?

ALA provided an opportunity to volunteer in New Orleans, for which I thank them. Volunteer positions ranged from library clean up and organization, to various community service groups. Approximately 1,000 ALA members signed up to help over the two days. We were dubbed the "Yellow Swarm" because of the yellow shirts we received to make us easily identifiable at our worksites. I signed up to help at the Second Harvest Food Pantry. We repacked various food items that had been donated by people and businesses (bashed and dented, items from multi-packs that had been separated, etc.) by general category. We also packaged "lagniappes" (small packs of single serving items for students who still do not have regular meals at home over the weekends — often the one meal during the day at school is their one meal a day!)."Lagniappe" is a Creole word that means "a little something extra". Tyrus Thomas was expecting to be drafted into the NBA the following week, so we created "publicity boxes" for Second Harvest to use at the event. Again, the people who live there had stories to share that made you want to cry, because of their experiences and for their strength and stamina to help others while still trying to deal with their own tragedies. Some of the employees still live in FEMA trailers in the front yard of Second Harvest, in an industrial warehouse zone! One of the volunteer group leaders works at Tulane University, and she told of her experiences both at home and at the university.

Back at the convention center, the exhibits hall seemed to have more empty spaces than usual, and it was easier to navigate the hall since many ALA members did not come to New Orleans. One of the exhibitors compared the turnout to what would be expected at a Midwinter conference. Even the book cart drill team contest had only four teams entered. (The team from Tulane University won.) The AASL Affiliate Assembly did have a good turnout, though, with most states having representatives there.

We were fortunate enough to be able to attend a "Town Hall" meeting that featured First Lady Laura Bush. Mrs. Bush spoke of the importance of getting the children of the hurricane areas, especially New Orleans, back to school, back to normal routines, of getting schools ready for the children. After Mrs. Bush's speech, which also highlighted special funds available for those in the hurricane areas, there was a panel discussion involving people from the schools in the New Orleans area, Keith Curry Lance and representatives of ALA/AASL. While the questions strayed from the topic at hand, in the end it was clear that the area still needs financial and people power help in their recovery. Lester Holt, the moderator of the discussion, mentioned the book and money collection that NBC and Scholastic are sponsoring to help the school libraries in the area.

On Sunday afternoon, we attended the Trailer Library reception at the Algiers Public Library site. The trailer is about the size of a construction trailer and houses eight computers (connected to the Internet), approximately 20 compact discs, about 50 adult books and a children's electronic learning station. It fills a critical need for contact with the "outside world" via the Internet. We also had the opportunity to step into the remains of the disaster that struck the library building — the collapsed ceiling, the mildewed books, water stained floors, walls, and shelving, the smell…conditions I have been blessed to not ever have seen before.

At the 2005 ISLMA conference, we asked our members to fill children's rain boots with cash donations for school libraries in the hurricane areas. ALA suggested that I contact the Algiers Charter Schools for a recipient; I found two. The money the ISLMA conference attendees donated was sent to the Algiers Charter Schools to be divided between the Martin Berhman School Library and the Harriet Tubman Elementary School Library. I have had several e-mail conversations with the librarian from the Berhman School. He is very grateful for the donation, as I'm sure the librarian from Harriet Tubman School also will be.

While there will always be stories of people who abuse a terrible situation for personal gain, the spirit that shined through to my limited contacts with New Orleans proves that people will answer the call and put their "best foot forward" when given the chance and when needed. More importantly, the people of the hurricane ravaged areas, especially the New Orleans area, realize that people from around the country are trying to help rebuild in any way they can — monetary donations, physical help, food and clothing donations, etc. and visiting the areas. In spite of my concerns, and the National Guard being called in the weekend before the conference, I am glad I went.

Becky's Story

Very seldom do we get a chance to really make a difference in people's lives, but this summer I had that chance. As president-elect of the Illinois School Library Media Association, I attended the ALA conference in New Orleans in June. Because this was the first major conference in the city since Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast, we were treated as special guests. Just walking the streets that had been flooded, passing by the Super Dome and attending sessions at the Convention Center seemed so strange. I kept seeing images of CNN newscasts last summer running through my mind.

This was my third trip to New Orleans, and the most memorable. Is New Orleans coming back? It is, but slowly. Walking around the French Quarter you could almost forget about last summer's storm — almost. In other areas there might be just one business on a block open. It was eerie to see so many fast-food restaurants and apartment complexes just sitting empty. Thankfully, the hotels and big-name restaurants were reopening, and their fresh seafood remained the high quality that you think of with New Orleans.

Reports of National Guard moving into the city were disturbing, but with more than 20 city policemen living in our hotel, we felt very safe. As we walked downtown on Canal Street residents would come up to us and thank us for coming to their city. Even the mayor welcomed us and encouraged all 18,000 of us to enjoy their city and help their economy by spending money!

The ALA conference offered vendor exhibits, library presentations and many keynote speakers like Anderson Cooper, Madeleine Albright, Cokie Roberts, and even the First Lady Laura Bush. However, the real highlight of the conference was being a part of a volunteer program called "Libraries Building Communities," which brought together over 900 librarians to work in 20 local libraries, schools, colleges and organizations. I spent a day at Ben Franklin High School, located just three blocks from one of the broken levees.

Just driving to the school was traumatic. We passed block after block of deserted homes, businesses, schools, and churches, with holes chopped through roofs, writing spray painted by searchers on every house, and an occasional FEMA trailer in a front yard. As we neared the levee, the sight changed somewhat. We saw dead trees, debris still piled up along the streets and

Leslie Forsman, Ellen Popit, Bev Obert and Becky Robinson ready to volunteer in New Orleans.

a desolate quietness. Because I had driven in with a librarian who had actually attended Ben Franklin High School, we took the time to stop and actually walk around the neighborhood, talking to workers actually building the new flood gates by the levee. Standing on the levee and looking out over the roofs of abandoned homes, it made me wonder about all those displaced families. However, I soon learned that not everyone had left.

 As we made our way back to our vehicle, a small older gentleman ambled over to us. He asked if we knew the woman who had lived in the house by our car. Sadly, we told him no, and why we were in the area. He was so worried about her and said he had last seen her on her roof. He invited us to his house where he and his 92-year-old mother had lived for generations. In his backyard we spotted the tent that they lived in for three months until a FEMA trailer arrived, and a boat that made it possible to get around after the flood. I asked why they didn't evacuate? His mother would not leave her two dogs. After a tour of what a broken levee can do to your home, we listened to his story, a story he needed to share, wished him good luck on rebuilding his home, and headed to the school.

In the middle of this devastated neighborhood stood the high school. Only 15 years old, the building had withstood the flood well, with water damage only on the first floor. The school had reopened in January as a charter school. Unfortunately, the school library was housed on the first floor and had suffered much damage; thousands of books had to be thrown out because of mold. Our job was to get their school library open for students in the fall.

As we arrived we were met by a television crew anxious to find out why we agreed to come down to New Orleans and volunteer. I remember being handed gloves and asked to wear them

when handling the books because of recurring mold problems. We began by assembling shelves in the new library, moving their remaining book collection, and discarding ruined equipment and software. By the end of the day, we started processing new donated books from many generous publishers. The television crew was on site recording each task that day for the citizen's of New Orleans to watch that night. At the end of the day we sat — tired and hot — in the new media center listening to the high school librarian say thank you with tears in her eyes.

However, our work is not finished. There are schools and libraries still needing so much. ISLMA has already collected money from our members to help two school libraries in New Orleans, and I hope to continue to collect monetary donations this year to foster a continued relationship with them. Those of us who have personally seen the destruction in the city of New Orleans, or heard firsthand stories of survival know that New Orleans is coming back… and that we really did make a difference.

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Name	Term Expires
Barbara Aron, Winnetka-Northfield Public Library District, Winnetka	2006
Bradley Baker, Northeastern Illinois University, Chicago	2008
Yvonne Beechler Bergendorf, Wood Dale Public Library District	2006
Patricia Burg, Illinois State Museum, Springfield	2008
Barbara Burroughs, Chillicothe	2008
Gail Bush, National-Louis University	2009
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Lynda Clemmons, Harrisburg	2006
Mary Dempsey, Chicago Public Library, Ex Officio	
John Dittmer, Bowen	2006
Kristine Hammerstrand, CARLI, Champaign	2008
Diane Harmon, Joliet Public Library, ILA President	
Joe Harris, Shawnee Library System	2008
Kay Langston, Triton College	2006
Barry Levine, Homer Glen	2008
Carol Little, Auburn	2008
Barbara Lund, Lisle Senior High School	2006
Robert McKay, Prairie Area Library System, Coal Valley	2008
Chadwick Raymond, Northbrook Public Library	2008
Rebecca (Becky) Robinson, Galesburg	2008