Report of the
Delaware School Library Survey
2004

**On behalf of the
Governor's Task Force on School Libraries
Delaware
USA**

**Prepared by Dr Ross J Todd
Director of Research,
Center for International Scholarship in School Libraries (CISSL)
School of Communication, Information and Library Studies
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey**

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CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP
IN SCHOOL LIBRARIES

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REPORT OF THE DELAWARE SCHOOL LIBRARY SURVEY 2004: OVERVIEW

This report contains the major findings and recommendations from the survey of Delaware's school libraries, undertaken by Dr Ross J Todd of the Center for International Scholarship in School Libraries (CISSL) at Rutgers University, New Jersey, and on behalf of the Governor's Task Force on School Libraries, Delaware. Data were collected from 154 public school libraries (91 elementary, 31 middle and 30 high schools, and 2 composite schools) during October 2004 following a period of survey instrument development and pilot testing.

The findings of this survey show that Delaware's school libraries are making progress in reaching infrastructure standards and instructional goals. While there are shortcomings in the provision of infrastructure – resources, full time staffing, as well as instructional opportunities to work with classroom teachers, the responses of the library media specialists, particularly responses to open questions, convey a sense of their commitment and dedication to the provision of high quality library services, and their vision of enabling students to academically achieve through the school library. The library media specialists are well aware of the limitations and barriers, yet they remain optimistic about the future, and their capacity to provide high quality services that impact on student learning.

It is clear from the findings that there are some highly effective school libraries in Delaware – school libraries that are strongly integrated into the learning fabric of the school and which contribute to student learning outcomes. These school libraries have a common set of characteristics:

- a state certified, full time, library media specialist in the building;
- the availability of para-professional staff who undertake routine administrative tasks and free the library media specialist to undertake instructional initiatives and reading literacy initiatives;
- a library program that is based on flexible scheduling so that library media specialists and classromm teachers can engage in collaborative planning and delivery of information literacy instruction;
- an active instructional program of information literacy integrated into curriculum content, and targeted towards learning curriculum content and skills;
- a school library that meets resource recommendations of 15-20 books per child;
- the provision of professional development on information literacy and technology literacies to the teaching faculty;
- a budget allocation of $12-$15 per student per year to ensure currency and vitality of the information base;
- A strong networked information technology infrastructure that facilitates access to and use of information resources in an out of the school.

The report shows that there are key challenges ahead. These challenges are not insurmountable. Delaware has the potential to be identified nationally as one of the first states to achieve high quality school library services and programs and to reach state-based and nationally determined standards. The goal of being a state leader in the provision of school libraries is one that will take several years of coordinated planning of providing the best resource and information technology environments, negotiating school and district improvement plans, professional development of library media specialists, and school communities learning to work together to ensure that high levels of student achievement take place.

DELAWARE'S SCHOOL LIBRARIES
FACTS AND FINDINGS FROM THE STUDY

❖ 71% of library media center employees are state certified library media specialists. 18.8% are library media specialists on emergency or limited certificates. The largest group of non-certified library media specialists or library media specialists on limited certification are in the elementary schools.

❖ 60% of school libraries have paraeducators employed. 54% of elementary school libraries have no paraeducator support. Only 22% of school libraries have full time support staff.

❖ The provision of both adequate professional and para-professional support for elementary school libraries in Delaware is a critical issue and needs some urgent attention

❖ Cooperations (defined as informal communications between teachers and library media specialists), rather than coordinations and collaborations, are the predominant mode of library media specialist's interactions with teaching faculty. These take place in English Language Arts, Social Studies and Science, and are typically multiple cooperations over time.

❖ School libraries where very low levels of cooperations, coordinations and collaborations take place are typically elementary schools without a certified media specialist or who do not have a media specialiat full time in the building. This indicates that some teaching faculty are not able to benefit by learning about curridulum resources, resource use ideas, patterns of library use, or instructional ideas involving resources.

❖ Compared to the number of cooperations and coordinations, the number of collaborations (where the teacher and library media specialist jointly set goals, design learning experiences and teach and evaluate units of study) is low. A small group of library media specialists engage in a high number of collaborations. Given that both Delaware's statement of standards, and AASL national standards, speak to the professional role of library media specialists providing collaborative and integrated instruction in relation to information literacy development, this professional role is not taking place in a widespread and sustained way in Delaware.

❖ The highest number of collaborations (where classroom teachers and library media specials are jointly involved in teaching curriculum units and developing students' competencies with information literacy) take place where there is a full time, certified library media specialist who operates a library program based on flexible scheduling.

❖ Faculty meetings are the primary means that library media specialists use to communicate about library resources and learning initiatives. This is more predominant in the middle and high schools. Other means of communication, such as department meetings and grade level meetings are not heavily utilized.

❖ 54% of library media specialists do not share aspects of their library's programs (either instructional initiatives, resource aspects or reading activities) to parent / community organizations.

❖ 48% of library media specialists are involved in the provision of professional development on information literacy in their school communities.

❖ Library media specialists' participation in district curriculum committees and school improvement plan committees is low (14% and 31% respectively).

❖ Library media specialists participate in at least one professional development activity each year, and these extend into a range of curriculum areas. Participation in reading association conferences, state library conferences, and national school library conferences is very low.

❖ Library media specialists engage in a range of information literacy instruction initiatives. These typically center on knowing about the school library, different sources and formats, the different strategies in doing effective research, learning how to use resources, and evaluating information. Given the low levels of coordinations and collaborations, these would appear to primarily take place in isolation in the school library, and not optimally as part of partnerships with teachers.

❖ Library media specialists engage in a range of instructional activities to help students use information technology in efficient and productive ways. Most typically this includes searching strategies for the world wide web, using UDLib/Search and other electronic databases, evaluating web sites, and teaching about the ethical use of the internet. This takes place more widely in middle and high schools. Given the low levels of conordinations and collaborations, these would appear to primarily take place in isolation in the school library, and not as part of instructional partnerships with classroom teachers.

❖ Library media specialists engage in a range of activities to promote reading across the school. These are typically literature displays and book talks, and promoting information resources, reading incentive programs, and to a lesser extent story telling, book clubs and author visits. These are more pervasive in the elementary school, and decline in frequency through middle school and high school. However, reading activities that are most typically undertaken are primarily passive activities, and reading activities that foster active student engagement, discussion and creative outputs by students have much lower rates of library media specialist involvement.

❖ Approximately two-thirds of library media specialists are actively engaged in systematic weeding of school library collections.

❖ Library media specialists are able to identify a range of learning outcomes enabled by the school library. There is some evidence to show that school libraries in Delaware play a role in helping students learn in their curriculum areas in a number of ways. 39.6% of library media specialists indicated that their school library helps students become effective researchers, and develop in them a range of skills in locating and selecting sources, organizing and evaluating information, and compiling information. 37.7% of library media specialists indicated that their school library helps improve reading sills and helps students develop greater interest in and motivation for reading. 22.1% of library media specialists indicated that their school library helps students develop a range of technology skills related to using the internet effectively, and searching online databases and catalogs. 15.6% of library media specialists indicated that their school library helps students

develop positive attitudes to libraries. Very few library media specialists (4.5%) were able to articulate learning outcomes linked to curriculum standards and goals.

❖ All library media specialists are involved in an extensive range of library administration responsibilities: selection, ordering and processing of resources, supervision of staff and volunteers, as well as technical equipment maintenance. This takes place for the majority on a daily or weekly basis.

❖ There are approximately 1.6 million materials housed in Delaware's school libraries, with an average of 11,500 per school. (10,400 for elementary schools, 12,500 for middle schools and 13,500 for high schools). The average number of materials per student is 15.36.

❖ There are approximately 1.37 million books in Delaware's school libraries. This is 87.5% of the total materials. The average number of books per student is 12.65. While a number of schools have above this average, this figure is well below the minimum resource recommendation of 15 currently useful volumes per student. 37% of Delaware's school libraries do not meet this minimum resource recommendation. Only 38% of Delaware's school libraries have good or exemplary resource levels (that is, above 20 currently useful volumes per student [good], and 25 useful volumes per students [exemplary].

❖ The average number of magazines in school libraries is 21 (13 for elementary schools [minimum recommendation is 15-20], 23 for middle schools [minimum recommendation is 45-55]; and 45 for high schools [minimum recommendation is 55-70]). The average number of newspapers in school libraries is 1.4. Overall, the majority of Delaware's school libraries fall below the minimum recommendations for books, magazines and newspapers.

❖ Follett is the most predominant automated catalog system used in Delaware's school libraries

❖ 40% of school library catalogs are searchable via the internet, providing opportunities for students in some schools to access the school library independently after school time.

❖ The average number of computers in the school libraries available for internet access is 15 (10 in elementary schools, 20 in middle schools, and 29 in high schools).

❖ 56 school libraries have web sites.

❖ Participation in interlibrary lending is low.

❖ Televisions, VCRs and overhead projectors are available in most school libraries. The availability of a range of computer support equipment for information production - data projectors, scanners, digital cameras – is low.

❖ 40% of school libraries operate on flexible scheduling of classes.

❖ Over half of Delaware's school libraries have annual budget allocations below $6,000. 30% of school libraries experienced budget decreases from the 2002-2003 school year.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As documented in the full report, and highlighted in the summary of facts and findings from the study, Delaware's school libraries face some key challenges. These are not insurmountable.

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Delaware has the potential to be identified nationally as one of the first states to achieve high quality school library services and programs and to reach state-based and nationally determined standards. Delaware as a national role model in the provision of school libraries is within reach, and the following recommendations, envisioned over a three to five year development program, can work to meeting this distinction.

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For Immediate Action: Governor's Task Force

1. It is recommended that the Governor's Task Force set up a formal feedback-think tank meeting inviting school principals and superintendents and library media specialists to participate. The purpose of this meeting would be to:
    - present an overview of the findings;
    - identify key issues in school library provision (including staffing patterns, flexible scheduling, budget allocations and expectations related to library media specialist-classroom teacher collaborations);
    - identify enablers and barriers;
    - discuss some agenda of continuous improvement so that all school libraries can continue to grow and flourish.

    The list of priorities identified by library media specialists (see Table 58) may serve as a useful framework for establishing this meeting agenda and a professional development agenda for stakeholders / professional associations to enable library media specialists to take steps to achieving these goals. It is recommended that this meeting take place in Spring 2005 so that actions and development plans can be initiated as whole-school activities for the commencement of the school year 2005-2006.

2. Delaware has the potential to be an exemplary state in the provision of state certified library media specialists, who in turn can make a valuable contribution to student achievement and the development of reading literacy. An important starting point is to ensure that no child misses the opportunity on the basis of inadequate provision of library media specialists and support staff to enable the learning role and reading engagement role of the school library to be articulated and implemented. It is recommended that the Task Force engage in sustained dialogue at appropriate levels (State, District and individual school) with a view to establishing school improvement plans that focus on meeting targeted standards of professional and paraprofessional support for school libraries.

3. Given the concerns with resource levels in Delaware's schools (37% of Delaware's school libraries do not meet the minimum resource recommendation of 15 books per child; only 38% of Delaware's school libraries have good or exemplary resource levels (that is, above 20 currently useful volumes per student [good], and 25 useful volumes per students [exemplary], and low levels of interlibrary loans use, it is recommended that the Governor's Task Force actively participate in state wide initiatives directed to the development and provision of a seamless information environment – an integrated information landscape involving school libraries, public libraries and other types of government, community resource agencies and organizations. In the first instance, this should focus on a statewide single and integrated catalog with appropriate access and dissemination mechanisms to ensure that students do not lack access to in-depth curriculum resources and collections (See P 68-70). Delaware school libraries can and should be exemplary in the provision of state-of-the art information technology and its ongoing technical support.

4. It is recommended that all school communities have access to UDLib/Search Databases, and that the Task Force pursue this with the appropriate funding authority / service provider. Data (P.65-66) show that the key gap in the provision of UDLib/Search Databases is in the elementary schools. This is a fundamental library tool for every school library and one that all teaching faculty should be able to access, regardless of the level of school. While it is primarily targeted for all public high schools and middle schools, it is a significant resource base for every teacher in elementary schools as well.

For longer term action: Governor's Task Force, Library Media Specialists and School Leaders.

Emerging out of the summary of findings are several recommendations that are directly targeted to all library media specialists and their school communities. While this puts emphasis on library media specialists taking action, this action is clearly intended to be **negotiated action**, involving school leaders and school faculty in the process. Given that issues of staffing, resourcing and scheduling are complex issues, it is also anticipated that the Governor's Task Force will act in a leadership capacity through dialogue and expertise at appropriate levels (State and District) to support school communities and library media specialists to ensure that these recommendations are targeted and given focus at the school level.

5. It is recommended that school communities lead by library media specialists, with advice, expertise and direction from the Governor's Task Force, establish school improvement plans (at a minimum, a three year plan) that focus on meeting recommended standards for school libraries, as articulated in "Standards for School Library Media Centers: Delaware Public Schools". Each school community should review the findings in this report and tailor a school library improvement plan which is responsive to the context of the particular school. The plan should establish annual improvement goals for a three to five year period, such as, for example:
    - increases in resource budget allocations;
    - the establishment of collection development targets, aiming first for a minimum resource allocation of $15.00 per student, and then building on that.
    - building collections to recommended levels of resources (books, magazines and newspapers);
    - increasing para-professional support;

- opening up of fixed library schedules to more flexible schedules;
- the initiation of library media specialist-teacher collaborations in targeted curriculum areas;
- development information technology competencies for teaching faculty and students;
- collection evaluation and systematic weeding program. (Whole Report)

6. In the context of increasing costs of print publishing and electronic publishing, including licensing agreements, it is recommended that all schools establish an annual resource allocation that enables collections to be built beyond minimum standards to good and exemplary collections, and to allow for annual growth and weeding to maintain high quality collections. At a minimum, this should be $15.00 per student. (P. 73-77).

7. It is recommended that school communities, lead by library media specialists, and with advice, expertise and direction from the Governor's Task Force, set in place and maintain strong communication channels within and beyond the school that communicates the active role that school libraries can play in student learning, and that ensures that the voice of the library media specialist is heard in all school-based forums and meetings, and meet with key school leaders on a regular basis regarding the library program. (Pages 24-27).

8. The data on reading initiatives of school libraries indicate that the most common reading activities undertaken are primarily passive student activities. Book display, book promotions, promotion of reading programs may, but do not necessarily engage students. It is recommended that all library media specialists in Delaware plan and implement at least one major reading / writing initiative that engages students actively in thinking, discussing, sharing ideas, reflecting and participating, rather than activities where students primarily remain as the passive recipients.   This is particularly timely in the context of state reading and literacy initiatives. (P. 38-41).

For longer term action: Governor's Task Force, Library Media Specialists and Professional Associations.

Emerging out of the summary of findings are several recommendations that are directly targeted to professional associations and agencies with particular interest in the professional development of library media specialists. As with previous recommendations, it is further anticipated that the Governor's Task Force will act in a leadership capacity through dialogue and expertise at appropriate levels (Association, State and District) to realize these recommendations.

9. Given concerns about low levels of participation of library media specialists in key state and national professional activities, it is recommended that the various Delaware associations examine ways to both increase participation in professional activities, and set up mechanisms for the dissemination and sharing of significant research findings and advances in professional practice that emerge from these conferences so that all Delaware library media specialists remain engaged and informed through their professional associations, and see the benefits of active participation. (P. 32-33).

10. A key dimension of the professional role of library media specialists is collaborations, where the teacher and library media specialist jointly set goals, design learning experiences, teach and

evaluate a comprehensive unit of study. Involvement in collaborations is low. It is recommended that ongoing professional development of library media specialists give strong focus to initiating and developing library-classroom teaching partnerships, and through negotiated action, it is recommended that a number of formal collaborations be clearly built into school library improvement plans. (P.16-24).

11. It is recommended that library media specialists in Delaware engage in a professional development that helps them create and implement information literacy instructional interventions linked to curriculum / content knowledge creation and sharing. This recommendation emerges out of a concern that information literacy instruction primarily takes a resource orientation (learning about types and uses of sources, searching and selecting information sources). While this is important and necessary, it is only part of the information literacy equation, which also gives emphasis to helping students analyze and synthesize information and to enable them to use information sources to construct deep understanding and deep knowledge of curriculum content. (P. 33-38).

12. It is recommended that mechanisms be put in place for elementary library media specialists to undertake further professional development in terms of information technology literacy development. (P. 36-38).

13. The findings of the study show that library media specialists appear to have difficulty articulating the outcomes of library initiatives in terms of curriculum standards / goals. They also show that many library media specialists have difficulty focusing on student outcomes, rather, a number articulated (often at length) what they did, identifying instructional inputs and processes, rather than clarifying outcomes from the perspective of the student. It is recommended that all library media specialists undertake a professional development program on Evidence-Based Practice to develop their skills at identifying, documenting, and disseminating student learning outcomes enabled by the school library program, particularly emphasizing curriculum outcomes, rather than library-based outcomes. (P. 41-44). (I would be prepared to run a professional development day in Delaware, free of charge, on this initiative).

14. School libraries in information age schools are centers for both print and digital information resources, as well as safe, authoritative access portals to information available on web services. It is recommended that all school libraries establish a web presence, both within the school and as part of a broader learning-centered advocacy program. Such websites should in the long term provide access to electronic resources, databases both onsite and remotely, should highlight the collaborative instructional partnerships, should identify learning outcomes enabled in the school through the school library, and provide access to research guides and learning techniques. (P. 62-68).

Respectfully submitted,

24th February, 2005.