

## **What's It Take?**

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Listening to the previous presentations, I'd guess that two questions have occurred to you. First, "Why haven't I heard about this before? Why has it taken the power of the White House to bring it to my attention?" And, second, "What would it take to make this work in my district or school?"

I'd like to take the next few minutes to address those questions.

### **Why Haven't You Heard?**

First, why haven't you heard? There are four reasons, I think. The first has to do with when many of us grew up. The average school administrator today is a shade over 50; many in senior positions are older.<sup>1</sup> This means that they were school kids themselves in the late 1950s and through the '60s—before school libraries became media centers. Librarians were not major players where most of them went to school<sup>2</sup>—and childhood images stay with us.<sup>3</sup>

That's my generation. I have no memory of any of my teachers working in partnership with the librarian. The librarian was someone who came to our classroom with a cartload of books now and again and the woman we saw when we were sent to the library to check out a book—and exactly which book was often immaterial. Of course, we were also expected to be quiet while we were there. One of the interesting things about stereotypes is that they sometimes contain a grain of truth, and many librarians of the 1950s really did seem interested in "shushing" you.

The media of the time reinforced these images. Think of Marian the librarian in "The Music Man" and of Mary in "It's a Wonderful Life". Marian was an old maid who loved her books and wanted a quiet library, and she was only pulled from that life by a flamboyant con man. In "It's a Wonderful Life," Jimmy Stewart's character was granted his wish to see the world as it would have been had he never been born. Without him, instead of being bright and beautiful, Mary's dark and lonely fate was to become a librarian. There was a message there: librarianship was a job from which one should be rescued.

These images haven't yet altogether disappeared. The Saturn company not too long ago aired a commercial touting their car's quiet ride. They showed a gray-haired woman riding in the back seat while two engineers rode up front. The voice-over told us that the car was incredibly quiet and that it passed the most stringent of tests: "Margaret's". "Margaret knows quiet," the voice said, "Margaret's a librarian."

The second reason many administrators still see librarians this way is because nothing in our professional training corrected those impressions. That didn't happen, partly because the images were not completely inaccurate at that time and partly because education and educational administration professors then -- as now -- had no alternative visions to offer us.

Even now, few teacher-training programs contain any systematic instruction in how librarians might contribute to school effectiveness.<sup>4</sup> The predominant model in schooling remains what it has

always been: one adult in one room working with one group of students for one span of time.<sup>5</sup> In elementary schools, the time may be the whole day; in secondary schools, just the length of the period. Even some of the supposed innovations in school organization today—block scheduling and reduced class size, for example—don't alter the basic model. They just change the size of one or more of its components.

Teachers still are predominantly trained as independent operators,<sup>6</sup> and not in the collaborative and consultative models that characterize other professions. Consequently, aspiring teachers don't come to think of school librarians as potential partners in curriculum and instruction.

Robert Louis Stevenson once remarked that the cruelest lies are told in silence. He could have been talking about administrator training programs—where there is a stunning lack of attention to the library and its potential.<sup>7</sup> Administrative training usually does nothing to make administrators aware of how the library and librarian might help them. As a result, few principals recognize themselves as important players in maximizing the librarian's potential to contribute to school quality.

It's easy to see why this happens. Most educational administration professors are former school administrators. They simply bring their own limited perceptions with them to the university, and nothing there challenges them. More than ninety percent of EdAd professors in a recent survey didn't see the principal as an important influence in teacher/librarian collaboration<sup>8</sup>—a notion counter to virtually all research on school site collaboration.<sup>9</sup>

When administrative preparation programs do address library programs, they focus on potential problems rather than on potential benefits. Most often, libraries surface only in school law class discussions of copyright or censorship—leaving administrative students with the impression that school libraries are legal time bombs—instead of with the impression that the library and librarian can make significant contributions to their success. It fosters what I'll call a favorable view of negativity. The "good" isn't defined by a positive act; it's defined by the absence of a negative one. The "good" librarian is one who doesn't get me into trouble. This has a chilling effect on any new principal's willingness to invest a lot in the library. Once in office, they're caught up in the imperatives of the job and it becomes very difficult for them to expand their conceptual horizons. If teaching is demanding,<sup>10</sup> administration is consuming.<sup>11</sup> Every administrator here will confirm what one vice-principal in California told me: "Being a school administrator," he said, "is like living in an Indiana Jones movie. Something happens every eight minutes. I never know what it's going to be. And they won't let me have one of those whips!" In that environment, the library is likely to remain unnoticed—and undervalued.

The third reason your attention hasn't been drawn to libraries probably rests in the very nature of library work. Librarians empower others, and their contributions get swallowed up in what those people do. Teachers and students take what librarians give them and fold it into their own products and performances. The librarian's work gets absorbed into the student's research project or into the teacher's lesson and becomes their own. The integration is so complete that it's very difficult to distinguish the librarian's contribution in the finished work.

This absorbability can cloud administrators' vision. A principal can recognize a successful teacher, but it's very difficult to assess how much of that success might be the result of something the librarian thought of or provided. Unable to see these contributions, administrators withhold recognition

and don't often hesitate to interfere with library operation when pursuing other goals. The library and its staff are often early casualties in tight times. There's irony in this. In rightly doing everything possible to protect the classroom, administrators may unwittingly cut classroom quality support when they cut the library.

And last, the fourth reason that you probably have heard much about the research and library programs before today is because librarians themselves haven't told us much about themselves. Like other educators, they publish and present almost exclusively for each other. Their work is rich with research, tested methods to improve operational effectiveness, and ideas of what school libraries can and ought to be.

The problem is that administrators almost never see these journals or hear these presentations.<sup>12</sup> Very few administrators are exposed to the myriad ways librarians can contribute to school improvement because administrators read administrative journals and attend administrative conferences. They don't read librarian publications and they don't attend library conferences. They have no motivation to because they've not been educated to think about libraries and librarians in that way. Administrators, like librarians, stay attuned to problems and possibilities through their own journals and meetings—and library information is conspicuously absent from those.<sup>13</sup>

So, given all of this, it's no surprise that you haven't heard about the things presented here today.

### **What Will It Take?**

Let me turn now to the second question: "What can you do about this?" —or, more importantly, "What can you do *with* this?" What will it take to put this to work in your place? I obviously can't answer that, but I can identify four things that I know are common across the board.

The first—and the simplest—is to learn what the library really can offer. It's easy to do because much of the research discussed here today is identified and summarized in the notebook you've been given—and much more is easily accessible either on the internet or in print at the closest university library. And you have an in-house source. Research shows that your best source of information about the library program is your own librarian.<sup>14</sup>

The second thing—reconceptualizing the library and its role in your school, specifically in terms of money—is a bit more difficult, although becoming familiar with the research and really taking a close look at your own library will help. Many administrators think of libraries as a cost rather than as an investment. The research examined here today shows that there is a payoff in supporting the library. The investment in school libraries is a good one because the return is good. Quality library media programs, like all quality programs, require substantial funding—but not every program pays off for students across the board the way libraries can. In rethinking the library, how much money it requires is not the operative question. The operative question is what is the return on that money?<sup>15</sup>

A good example—not the only one, but certainly the most familiar—is simply books. The return on money invested in books is substantial. Research shows that book availability is the first requirement for improved reading achievement.<sup>16</sup> It's a straight-forward formula: in elementary schools, books—plus time for free reading as well as for assigned reading—plus encouragement—equals earlier

and better reading. In secondary schools, more books can mean better achievement on the SAT and ACT.<sup>17</sup> Some may argue that the internet has rendered print materials less important, but the research doesn't support that. Book sales in the U.S. continue to grow and the need for books and more books in school libraries is constant.

Last, and the bottom line, comes back to what it always is: the people in your school—specifically, the librarian and the principal. You might be surprised at how many libraries are without a trained librarian. The national average is one to every 953 students, but that figure is deceiving. In California, for example, the ratio is only one certificated librarian to every 4,673 students.<sup>18</sup> But a certificate alone isn't enough. You need a librarian who not only has the technical skills, but an enterprising attitude, someone who looks beyond the traditional role. Some school librarians are hesitant, even resistant, to take on the expanded roles that the previous speakers described as necessary to realize the full benefits for the school and students.<sup>19</sup> They cannot be allowed to remain that way. Working with school districts all over the country, I've seen innovative and powerful library programs in small towns and big cities—and one of two common elements in every one of them is a dynamic librarian.

The other common element is a committed principal—no program is successful without one. The principal is a key player, perhaps *the* key player, in library media programs that make a difference.<sup>20</sup> Review what you heard earlier. Library programs that make a difference not only have certificated librarians in place, adequate support staff, and large up-to-date collections, they also have schedules that allow the librarian time to collaborate with other staff members. Librarians serve on curriculum committees, help with staff development, and participate in a wide variety of school operations. None of that happens if the principal doesn't want it to. The research evidence also is clear that teachers collaborate more with other teachers and with the librarian when the principal openly encourages it and structures schedules that facilitate it.<sup>21</sup> It works even better when assessments of collaborative activities become a part of teacher evaluation. The very best librarian is ready, willing, and able—but that represents only three-quarters of what it takes to make significant contributions. The fourth part is opportunity. And opportunity rests in the principal's hands. The principal is an absolutely essential element in maximizing the return on library investment.

If the principal isn't familiar with the research, sees the librarian in stereotypical terms, doesn't see the library's potential, and regards the library as a cost rather than an investment, opportunities won't open up and chances to do great things will be lost. This is where the superintendent becomes vital.<sup>22</sup> Administrative support transcends just the principal's level because what a principal can do often is defined by the district. The principal must have the district's support, just as the librarian must have the principal's. The elements of success here are nested inside one another like those Russian decorative eggs.

In just a minute, you'll hear some wonderful examples of what can be accomplished when the pieces come together. In those examples, you'll see what Ross Todd, a visiting scholar from Australia, means when he says that we can understand libraries better if we think of them as knowledge spaces rather than information places.<sup>23</sup> It's time to act on evidence, I think, instead of habit. As one futurist puts it, we must be careful that we don't mistake the edge of the rut we're in for the horizon.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Educational Research Service (ERS), National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), and National Association of Secondary School Principals (NAASSP), Is there a shortage of qualified candidates for openings in the principalship? An exploratory study (Arlington, VA: Educational Research Service, 1998).
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- C. E. Feistritzer, Profile of school administrators in the U.S. (Washington, DC: National Center for Education Information, 1988).
- National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Schools and staffing in the United States: A statistical profile 1993-1994. NCES 96-124 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Center for Education Statistics, 1996).
- <sup>2</sup> D.B. Austin and H. Brown, Jr., Report of the Assistant Principalship, Vol. 3: The Study of the Secondary School Principalship (Washington, D. C.: National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1970).
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- D. R. Chamberlain, Career Pathways to the Middle Grade Principalship in Georgia (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Georgia), 1993.
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- E. Miklos, "Administrator Selection, Career Patterns, Succession, and Socialization." In N. J. Boyan (Ed.), Handbook of Research on Educational Administration, pp. 53-76 (New York: Longman Publishers, 1988).
- L. O. Pellicer, L. W. Anderson, J. W. Keefe, E. A. Kelley, and L. E. McCleary, High School Leaders and Their Schools, Volume 1: A National Profile (Reston, VA: National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1988).
- <sup>3</sup> P. Cavill, "Saying Farewell to Miss Prune Face or Marketing School Library Services," Emergency Librarian, volume 14, no. 5 (May-June, 1987), pp. 9-13;
- B. Herrin, L. R. Pointon, and S. Russell, "Personality and Communications Behaviors of Model School Library Media Specialists." In D. V. Loertscher (Ed.), Measures of Excellence for School Library Media Centers, pp. 69-90. (Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited, 1988).
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- <sup>4</sup> E. Getz, Inservice and Preservice Teachers' Attitudes Towards Working Cooperatively With School Librarians (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1992)
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- P. J. Wilson and M. Blake, "The Missing Piece: A School Library Media Center Component in Principal-Preparation Programs." Record In Educational Administration and Supervision, volume 13, no. 2 (Spring/Summer 1993), pp. 65-68.
- <sup>5</sup> S. Feiman-Nemser, and R. E. Floden, "The Cultures of Teaching." In M. C. Wittrock (Ed.), Handbook of Research On Teaching, Third Edition, pp. 505-526 (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1986).
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- <sup>6</sup> M. Friend and L. Cook, Interactions: Collaboration Skills for School Professionals (New York: Longman Publishers, 1992).
- <sup>7</sup> L. Veltze, "School Library Media Program Information in the Principalship Preparation Program." In J. B. Smith and J. G. Coleman, Jr. (Eds.), School Library Media Annual, 1992, Volume Ten, pp. 129-134 (Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited, 1992).
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- <sup>9</sup> R. Barth, "The Principal & The Profession of Teaching." In T. J. Sergioivanni and J. H. Moore (Eds.), Schooling for Tomorrow: Directing Reforms to Issues That Count, pp. 227-250. (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1989)
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- S. C. Smith and J. J. Scott, The Collaborative School: A Work Environment for Effective Instruction (Reston, VA: National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1990).

<sup>10</sup> To get a good sense of the teacher's work life and why there is so little chance for interaction with other faculty members, see works like those below:

- P. W. Jackson, Life in Classrooms (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1968). Jackson found that elementary teachers engage in as many as 300 exchanges with students every hour they work.
- D. Lortie, School Teacher: A Sociological Study (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975). Lortie's work is a classic look at the "press" teachers experience.
- M. W. McLaughlin, J. E. Talbert, and N. Bascia (Eds.), The Contexts of Teaching in Secondary Schools: Teachers' Realities (New York: Teachers' College Press, 1990). A series of readings demonstrating the working conditions of secondary school teachers.
- T. R. Sizer, Horace's Compromise: The Dilemma of the American High School, (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1984). The pressure on high school teachers is clearly represented in "Horace," Sizer's composite representative high school teacher.
- L. M. Smith and W. Geoffrey, The Complexities of an Urban Classroom: An Analysis Toward a General Theory of Teaching (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1968).

<sup>11</sup> For similar insights into administrative pressures, see works such as:

- D.B. Austin and H. Brown, Jr., Report of the Assistant Principalship, Vol. 3: The Study of the Secondary School Principalship (Washington, D. C.: National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1970).
- N. J. Boyan, Handbook of Research in Educational Administration (New York: Longman Publishers, 1988).
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- K. Peterson, "The Principal's Tasks." Administrator's Notebook, volume 26, no. 8 (1977-1978), pp. 1-4.
- <sup>12</sup> "Teacher-Librarians Need to Assume More Responsibility for Writing About Teacher-Librarianship and School Library Programs for Professional Journals Read by Teachers and Administrators," Emergency Librarian (March-April, 1989), p. 38.
- <sup>13</sup> A quick sampling of administrator and teacher journals will illustrate. Between June of 1998 and April of 2002, the American School Board Journal carried only one article on school libraries. The Principal Magazine published one article on libraries, planning for technology in the library, between September of 1998 and April of 2002. The National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin did devote one theme issue to school libraries, edited by Ken Haycock, and offered two other articles in other issues, but that was all between May of 1998 and March of 2002 – and it was rare in the field. The following publications carried not a single article on school libraries between the spring of 1998 and the early spring of 2002: Educational Administration Quarterly, Phi Delta Kappan, Educational Leadership, Clearing House, Schools in the Middle, High School Magazine, High School Journal, Elementary School Journal, American Biology Teacher, The Science Teacher, Mathematics Teacher, Social Studies, The History Teacher, Teacher Education Quarterly.
- <sup>14</sup> J. M. Campbell, Principal-School Library Media Relations as Perceived by Selected North Carolina Elementary Principals and School Library Media Specialists (Doctoral dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1991).
- <sup>15</sup> There's some interesting research on this. Some examples include
- M. J. Bruning, A Statistical Analysis of the Relationship Between Student Achievement and Spending for Libraries in Ohio Public Schools (Doctoral dissertation, Ohio University, 1994).
- M. Bruning, "Is Money Spent on Libraries a Wise Investment?" Ohio Media Spectrum, vol. 46 (Winter, 1994), pp. 18-20.
- N. L. Everhart, An Analysis of the Work Activities of High School Library Media Specialists in Automated and Nonautomated Library Media Centers Using Work Sampling (Doctoral dissertation, Florida State University, 1990).

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- B. J. Hyatt, Relationship Between the Commitment and Role of the Elementary School Principal in Regions I, III, and IV in the State of Florida Regarding Media and the Quality of the School Media Center (Doctoral dissertation, Florida State University, 1987).
- F. Nicholson, The Financial Value of the Teacher Librarian, a paper presented at the Annual Conference of the International Association of School Librarianship, Adelaide, South Australia, September 27-30, 1993. ERIC Document Number ED 399 932.
- R. D. Swetnam, The Relationship Between Financial Expenditures and Student Achievement in Selected Texas School Districts (Doctoral dissertation, East Texas State University, 1992).

<sup>16</sup> There's some interesting research on this that hasn't shown up in administrators' journals. For example:

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- M. Foertsch. Reading In and Out of School (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 1992). 4th, 8th, and 12th graders who reported more reading outside of school performed better on reading comprehension tests. Children who have access to school libraries do more reading and score better on tests of reading comprehension.
- S. Krashen. The Power of Reading: Insights from the Research (Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited, 1993).
- S. Krashen. "School Libraries, Public Libraries, and the NAEP Reading Scores," School Library Media Quarterly, vol. 23, no. 4 (1995), pp. 235-237. Significant predictors of NAEP reading comprehension scores were the number of books per student in school libraries. Software was positively associated with reading scores, but not significantly.
- W. Nagy and P. Herman. "Breadth and Depth of Vocabulary Knowledge: Implications for Acquisition and Instruction," in M. McKeown and M. Curtiss (Eds.), The Nature of Vocabulary Acquisition (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum). A small but statistically reliable increase of word knowledge typically occurred when students encountered unfamiliar words in print.

<sup>17</sup> J. L. McQuillan. Access to Print in Formal Instruction in Reading Acquisition (Doctoral dissertation, University of Southern California, 1997). Access to print via school and public libraries has significant impact on SAT Verbal test scores, even when controlling for effects of socio-economic status, teacher-pupil ratio, and computer software holdings.

C. Snow, W. Barnes, J. Chandler, I. Goodman, and H. Hemphill. Unfulfilled Expectations: Home and School Influences on Literacy (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991). The richer the print environment, the better the literacy development.

<sup>18</sup> California Department of Education – School Library Statistics. Available at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/library/>

<sup>19</sup> J. G. Coleman, Jr., Perceptions of the "Guiding Principles" in Media Programs: District and Library Trends. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Virginia), 1982.

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- J. A. Johnson, The School Library Media Specialist As Instructional Consultant (Doctoral dissertation, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, 1993).
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- B. S. McCoy, A Survey of Practicing School Library Media Specialists to Determine the Job Competencies That They Value Most (Doctoral dissertation, Georgia State University, 2001).
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- S. E. Staples, "Sixty Competency Ratings for School Media Specialists." Instructional Innovator, volume 26 (November 1981), pp. 19-23.
- <sup>20</sup> "The Role of the Principal is the Key Factor in the Development of an Effective School Library Program," Emergency Librarian (January-February, 1989, p. 31.
- K. Bishop and N. Larimer, "Literacy Through Collaboration," Teacher Librarian, volume 27, no. 1 (October, 1999), pp. 15-20.
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- B. S. Campbell and P. A. Cordiero, High School Principal Roles and Implementation Themes for Mainstreaming Information Literacy Instruction. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association (New York, April 8-12, 1996). ERIC Document Number ED 399 667.
- J. B. Charter, Case Study Profiles of Six Exemplary Public High School Library Media Programs (Doctoral dissertation, Florida State University, 1982).
- Executive Summary: Findings from the Evaluation of the National Library Power Program (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin at Madison School of Library and Information Studies and School of Education, 1999).
- V. S. Gehlken, The Role of the High School Library Media Program in Three Nationally Recognized South Carolina Blue Ribbon Secondary Schools (Doctoral dissertation, University of South Carolina, 1994).
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- R. C. Pearson, A Critical Relationship: Rural and Small School Principals and Librarians (1989). ERIC Document Number ED 390 589.
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- <sup>21</sup> S. D. Kruse. Collaboration Efforts Among Teachers: Implications for School Administrators. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the University Council for Educational Administration, Louisville, Kentucky, October 25-27, 1996. ERIC Document Number ED 402 651
- <sup>22</sup> There hasn't been a great deal of research on the superintendent's role in promoting quality library media programs, but a few works do offer some suggestions and insights. These include
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G. Lancaster, Superintendents' Perceptions of the School Library Media Center (Elementary Schools) (Doctoral dissertation, Texas Women's University, 1998).

- <sup>23</sup> R. Todd. Transitions for Preferred Futures of School Libraries: Knowledge Space, Not Information Place; Connections, Not Collections; Actions, Not Positions; Evidence, Not Advocacy. A keynote paper at the 2001 International Association of School Librarianship Conference, Auckland, New Zealand, July 9-12, 2001. Available at <http://www.iasl-slo.org/virtualpaper2001.html>.