



**Powering Achievement:  
School Library Media Programs  
Make a Difference:  
The Evidence**

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## Introduction

Since the 1960s, school library media programs in the United States have been developing and changing from a classroom collection or tiny library filled with books to a modern library media center containing print and digital information. The multimedia information-rich environment is now extending far beyond the confines of four LMC walls into classrooms and homes. The LMC is fast becoming a vital 24 hour, 7 days-a-week information partner for teachers and learners.

But library media centers are expensive. They require huge investments to create the information technology networks, fund large quality collections, and particularly to staff with professional, paraprofessional, and technical personnel. Library media specialists fight the battle of the budget regularly. When teacher salaries rise above 90% of the total dollars available for a school district, the competition for scarce resources places tremendous pressures on administrators to find places in the budget to cut. The arts and libraries are often the first to be cut.

At first, library media specialists may seem self-serving when they try to present data showing how much they contribute to education. An audience may feel that jobs are at stake and that it is natural for any person to try to preserve the status quo.

However, there is a larger issue. Many local, state and federal government leaders target education as a top priority. These leaders realize that the nation's future depends on the next generation's ability to compete in a new world that places information, critical thinking, and problem solving at a premium.

The larger issue is this: The research is mounting that young people and teachers are at risk if they lack the types of information technology a strong library media program can deliver. Teachers suffer as their content knowledge ages and their teaching strategies become antiquated. Young people are in danger of piling ignorance, misinformation, and technological backwardness deeper and deeper. There is growing evidence that to cut LMC funding and effectiveness is to strike a blow at progress currently measured by academic achievement! To ignore the growth and development of solid library media programs contributes to the gap between the knowledgeable and connected vs. the ignorant and unskilled.

Simply stated, a teacher with a textbook is not enough. The world of information is simply too ubiquitous and too massive to ignore. Every young person and teacher must learn to survive information overload and data smog. And, every learner needs an equal opportunity to succeed. In classes where 60% of the learners cannot read and understand the textbook, the result is obvious. Yet many communities expect teachers to magically compensate. It is a problem many love to ignore.

Then there are the quick-fix folks who want to hand the library a one-time budget pot, expecting that a feel-good contribution will salve the wound. These are the folks that somehow ignore the fact that libraries require the same care and feeding as paying the electrical bills, keeping school busses running, or paying teacher salaries. When the money stops, there are consequences. Somehow, though, the “stop” in the library is invisible. Today, we did not purchase the latest data for the library collection, but service went right on. No matter that the learner copied outdated or incorrect information into their reports. No matter if they still think that Bill Clinton is the President of the United States, or that they read “boys can become doctors and girls can become nurses” in an out-of-date book. The world is full of misinformation. What harm is a little more?

Luckily, the amount of evidence that strong library media programs and academic achievement are linked is rising. It is all too uncommon common sense.

The Lance studies and other research in this presentation booklet show that, as a whole, library media specialists and the programs they create do make a difference. This means that there are enough strong programs in the state being researched, that their impact begins to show up in a “quality education.” Sadly, there are also enough weak programs that they dilute the effect. And, the weak cloud the potential for everyone.

The purpose of this short volume is to assist the busy library media specialist who desires to make presentations about the effectiveness of library media programs to various audiences and to begin discussions from the research about the direction local programs should take. Considering that there are differing amounts of time to present the research, the authors have created both brief and longer recommended presentations complete with the visuals and handouts to accompany them.

Part one contains four presentations:

- A one-minute presentation of the Lance studies
- A one-minute presentation about the Krashen/McQuillan research about school libraries and reading
- A five-minute presentation of the Lance studies and other research
- A fifteen-minute presentation of the Lance studies and other research

Each of these presentations has a set of PowerPoint slides appended and also available for downloading on the web at the url below. In addition, right after the first presentation, there is a tri-fold brochure that can be reproduced freely to give to the audiences of any of the presentations. For the readers of the brochure who may have additional questions about the research, the authors have created a supplement to each of the important statements of the brochure on the web at [www.lmcsource.com](http://www.lmcsource.com) under “freebies.”

Part two contains eight discussion starters based on various aspects of the research. The idea is to focus groups of library media specialists, teachers, parent groups, or administrators on issues connected to school libraries. Each of the discussions is based the Lance studies and other research that has brought some significant findings for

focusing on academic achievement and library media programs. The authors recommend that these discussion starters be modified for your local groups and the particular concerns they have. PowerPoint slides accompany each of the discussion starters and the brochure from part one can be duplicated freely as a supplement to these discussions with its references to many studies and the supplementary information on the web site.

Part three contains the authors' recommendations for planning to implement the research findings and measuring the impact of local programs on academic achievement. Most people want to know if national research would apply or has already applied to local programs. Do we already make a difference with our library media program, or could we plan an initiative to improve the local program and monitor the results on achievement?

Finally, in the appendix, various previously-published brochures and handouts have been reprinted here for the convenience of the user. All of these brochures and handouts may be freely reproduced.

For the users of this publication, reading the studies from which these presentations were created will help fill in many details. And the reader should know that future developments and other studies now being completed will be announced on the Colorado State Library's research page: [www.lrs.org](http://www.lrs.org). That source should be accessed before any presentation just to see if any new information has been added.

**Acquiring the background studies.** Here is a list of the studies that were used to create these presentations and where to obtain them. They should be read carefully to build in-depth knowledge of the research studies. Throughout the publication, shorthand citations have been used for the studies. Consult the list below for the full citations.

- Gaver            Gaver, Mary V. *Effectiveness of Centralized Library Service in Elementary Schools*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1963 (out of print, find in many academic libraries or school district professional libraries).
- Colorado I      Lance, Keith C, Linda Welborn, and Christine Hamilton-Pennell. *The Impact of School Library Media Centers on Academic Achievement*. Castle Rock, CO: Hi Willow Research and Publishing, 1993 (available from LMC Source, PO Box 720400, San Jose CA 95172, and online at <http://www.lmcsource.com>).
- Colorado II     Lance, Keith C., Marcia J. Rodney and Christine Hamilton-Pennell. *How School Librarians Help Kids Achieve Standards: The Second Colorado Study*. San Jose, CA: Hi Willow Research and Publishing, 2000 (available from LMC Source, PO Box 720400, San Jose CA 95172, and online at <http://www.lmcsource.com>).

- Alaska Lance, Keith C., Christine Hamilton-Pennell, Marcia J. Rodney, with Lois Peterson and Clara Sitter. *Information Empowered: The School Librarian as an Agent of Academic Achievement in Alaska Schools*. Revised ed. Juneau, AK: Alaska State Library, 2000 (available for \$10 from The Alaska State Library, PO Box 110571, Juneau, AK 98811).
- Pennsylvania Lance, Keith C., Marcia J. Rodney and Christine Hamilton-Pennell. *Measuring up to Standards: The Impact of School Library Programs & Information Literacy in Pennsylvania Schools*. Greensburg, PA: Pennsylvania Citizens for Better Libraries, 2000 (available online at [http://lrs.org/html/school\\_studies.html](http://lrs.org/html/school_studies.html)).
- Krashen Krashen, Stephen. *The Power of Reading*. Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited, 1993 (available online at <http://www.lu.com>).
- McQuillan McQuillan, Jeff. *The Literacy Crisis*. Portsmouth NH: Heinemann, 1998 (available online at <http://www.heinemann.com>).

**Tips for presenting:** For the shorter presentations and discussion starters, we recommend that they be adapted and then memorized. The PowerPoint slides should be clue enough to prompt you. Also, good presentation techniques such as pace of presentation, stressing of important ideas, and ability to speak clearly apply here. Do not hesitate to adapt the slides and the text for local use. But make certain that what you do add or modify is supported by the research.

Powering achievement: School library media programs make a difference: The evidence (3rd ed.). Salt Lake City, UT: Hi Willow Research & Publishing. Google Scholar. Lonsdale, M. (2003). Impact of school libraries on student achievement: A review of the research. Australian Council for Educational Research. Retrieved 20, Mar 2008, from [www.asla.org.au/research/index.htm](http://www.asla.org.au/research/index.htm).  
Student learning through Wisconsin school library media centers: Case study report. Madison, WI: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. Google Scholar. Starkman, N. (2007). Assistive technology: Making the impossible possible. *T.H.E. Journal*, 34(1), 27-32. Google Scholar. Todd, R., & Kuhlthau, C. (2005).