

# The Teaching Role: Are Librarians Teachers?

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I'm still surprised when teachers and administrators underestimate the amount, level, and importance of the library media specialist (LMS) teaching role. I'm even more surprised when this role is questioned by some of my students and even some practitioners (as in a recent discussion on LM\_NET). You have probably found, as I have, that teaching activities often consume a significant portion of the LMS day, ranging from one-on-one individualized

Carr (1990) called attention to the urgent need to teach **integrated**, thinking process skills, including critical reading and problem solving, at all levels of education. Around the same time, Millbrook Press commissioned **task** examining the changing role of the school library. Using the results of interviews and surveys with elementary, middle, and high school librarians as well as principals and superintendents, The Millbrook Report indicated that more than one quarter (27 percent) of a **LMS** time is spent in class instruction and teacher training. This amounted to more than 13 hours per week in which the LMS is involved in teaching activities.

In a study the following year, Ceperley (1991) surveyed more than 2,000 **library media** specialists in four states using a **42** questionnaire to determine their perceived training needs. With a 38 percent response rate, she found that perceptions of the importance of the teaching role differed among LMSs, depending on the **teaching** levels of educational preparation. This finding was consistent with the Millbrook data, which indicated that certified librarians spent an average of over five hours more in the teaching role than those without professional certification.

Tallman and van Deusen (1994) investigated the impact of several factors on the perception and implementation of both the instructional consultation and teaching roles of the elementary LMS. Among the factors they found most enhanced the likelihood of LMSs **performing** these roles were principal expectations, flexible or mixed scheduling, and more time spent in collaborative planning with teachers.

In a discussion of the school librarian **role** in the 'electronic age', Simpson reiterates the importance of the **LMS** instructional role in teaching both information literacy skills and the ethical use of retrieved materials to both students and teachers. For this latter group, she cites staff development as constituting a significant portion of a **LMS**.

Unfortunately there have been few studies on the teaching role of the LMS in the past few years. The need to continue to examine this role offers a wonderful opportunity for both researchers and practitioners in the field. The growing importance of technology **for** teaching and learning has expanded that opportunity. For example, what are the best methods for teaching teachers and students how to effectively use technology for teaching and learning? What is the impact of information and technology literacy instruction **on** the way teachers teach and the way students learn? Has the need for technology training increased the amount of time the LMS spends in the role of instructor? Is **LMS** teacher cooperative planning and team teaching of information technology skills more **effective** than the same instruction conducted by only one or the other? What kinds of experiences (e.g., courses, internships) **must** **prepare** library and information science graduate programs provide to school library media students to best prepare them for their teaching role? Investigating and reporting the answers to such questions through quality research studies will help to increase our importance within our schools and districts and continue to heighten the stature of our profession.

## Works Cited

Carr, Kathryn S. 1990. How Can We Teach Critical Thinking? ERIC Digest. Urban **ERIC** Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education. (ED326304)

