The Role of the Principal in an Information Literate School Community: Design and Administration of an International Research Project

[Dianne Oberg](), Professor, Department of Elementary Education, University of Alberta, Canada; [Lyn Hay](), Lecturer, School of Information Studies, Charles Sturt University, Australia; [James Hri]()

and open-ended questions. The closed-choice questions in Instrument 2 employed a five-point scale, with a zero weighting for the additional category "cannot comment." The traditional five-point scale was rejected because the instruments were lengthy and it was felt that there might be an interest in over-using a mid point.

One goal of the researchers was to review their overall research design and methodology in light of their experience with this international project. Discussed below is the design of each of the three instruments used in the study and some of the problems encountered in the data collection process. Also described is the online approach to data collection that was used in the study and the advantages and challenges of such an approach is explored.

Instrument 1: Demographics

Instrument 1 was designed to identify demographic variables for each of the country samples, including the personal and professional characteristics of the principals and teacher-librarians and the characteristics of individual schools. Principal and teacher-librarian respondents were required to complete different versions of Instrument 1. Both principals and teacher-librarians were required to provide their own personal and professional details. In addition, the principals were asked to provide some whole-school data, while the teacher-librarians were asked to provide specific school library resource center data. The researchers decided to split the demographic data across both versions of Instrument 1 to avoid duplication of school-based demographic data and to reduce the data input burden for both principals and teacher-librarians. Examples of the Australian online versions of Instrument 1 can be found at http://farrer.riv.csu.edu.au/principal/survey/PR1_au.html and http://farrer.riv.csu.edu.au/principal/survey/TL1_au.html.

Principal Demographics

Table 3 summarizes the demographic variables for the principal version of Instrument 1. Question 1 contained closed-choice questions in which respondents were asked to select a category or value that best defined their individual school type. A standardized set of values—"government," "gcz Td   [(g)10(ov)-10(e)4(f)-1ue thape. Aepan <</MCID 7 >>B5oct ahoolc2( )-10Tw 10.36 -1(

school days per week). Some respondents indicated a number without indicating whether that value represented either a unit of one day or a unit of one hour. The instrument designers had not foreseen the number of ways in which these data could be presented. For example, a teacher-librarian who teaches three days each week could be reported as either: (a) 3 days; (b) 0.6 of a position, or (c) 18 hours per week. This was the major flaw in the principal version of instrument 1. While the majority of data could be coded correctly, some data were ambiguous and could not be usecieW7r wea9 0.48fe1   [(W7)-b   85(W7)-b   8 reFor instce, the ore ild notaers(f)3(or)3( )-10Scoutorebe(W a7hiena wer esywlve., the data(f)-1(o)-14(r)-1( )]TJ   419823 -1.15 Td   [thiibplewl(r)-11((i)-6nv(a)-8(i)-6(i)-6 d)

6. No. years of teaching prior to appointment as teacher-librarian
7. No. of years in current position as teacher-librarian
8. Were you appointed to an advertised position?:
9. Are you an Advanced Skilled Teacher (AST)?
10. No. years served in Executive positions
11. Membership in professional associations (please name):
12. Subscription to teacher-librarian listservs   Yes
                                                                    No

> If Yes, please name these listservs

13. Teacher-librarian journals read (please name)

	information literacy
38	TL should be timetabled to cover classroom teachers' RFF time
39	TL is an information technology (IT) leader in the school
40	TL should provide flexible timetable for needs of individuals, groups, whole classes
41	Internet access should be available through the SLRC
42	Students should have individual access to the SLRC during class time
43	Principal should supervise the TL
44	TL should provide appropriate inservicing to teaching staff
45	Principals should act as role models/mentors to staff reticent about use of IT
46	CPT should occur in classrooms as well as SLRC
47	When TL is absent, it is necessary to fill position with qualified replacement
48	TLs should be supported to achieve AST status and appropriate executive pos2(i)-u9 12 132 5070 Td.-f 12 0 0 12 132 521Q qn BT (w)-2(el)-6(l)-6(as)-5(S)-18(L)17(R

a script to generate the HTML questionnaires. A questionnaire could be marked up according to an Extensible Markup Language (see www.oasis-open.org/cover/xml.html), DTD, and a script

Figure 3. Example of Principal Survey Submission List for Canadian Data

```
ca0005 TL1 TL2 TL3 PR1 PR2 PR3
ca0006 TL1 TL2 TL3
ca0007 TL1 TL2     PR1 PR2
ca0008 TL1
ca0009 TL1 TL2     PR1 PR2 PR3
ca0013 TL1
ca0014 TL1         PR1
ca0015 TL1 TL2
ca0017             PR1
ca0020 TL1 TL2 TL3 PR1 PR2 PR3
ca0021 TL1 TL2     PR1 PR2
ca0022 TL1 TL2 TL3 PR1
ca0026 TL1         PR1 PR2 PR3
ca0028 TL1 TL2
ca0029             PR1 PR2 PR3
ca0032 TL1 TL2 TL3
ca0035 TL1 TL2 TL3 PR1 PR2 PR3
ca0036 TL1
ca0037 TL1 TL2 TL3
ca0041 TL1 TL2     PR1 PR2 PR3
```

This allowed individual country coordinators and the project managers to monitor the percentage of data collected and allowed simple identification of missing instruments and SINs that had not been submitted (e.g., both principal and teacher-librarian respondents at the schools with SINs ca0005, ca0020 and ca0035 have submitted all three instruments, whereas the teacher-librarians at schools ca0006, ca0032 and ca0037 have submitted all three instruments but the principals at these schools have failed to submit any instruments. This facilitated the chasing of outstanding surveys from schools. In the Canadian study, in a province where Freedom of Information and Privacy legislation limits researchers' matching of respondent names with their responses, the Principals' Survey Submission List, was included in the second reminder letter to schools so that schools could check their own submission status. The success of the project hinged, to some extent, on the successful completion of instruments by the both teacher-librarian and principal of each participating school. The involvement of both allows for analysis on paired responses. If only one of the pair returned their data other analysis could be successfully undertaken, but the value of the study would be diminished somewhat.

Notwithstanding the problems noted above, the use of a Web-based approach to data collection has a number of significant advantages and enormous potential for future large international collaborative research projects. Perhaps most importantly, the approach allows the standardization of survey instruments and coding of data across countries. Likewise, all data from the participating countries can be collected on one server.

Descriptive Data

Descriptive data (mean and standard deviation) were used to provide a quick summary of the present, future, and beliefs data (ordinal data, e.g., 2 is more than 1 in value). Due to the coding and the later use of present, future, and belief data in analyses, it was more appropriate to use mean (average response) rather than share (percentage) for each code (e.g., how many answered "1 - none" to question 1 future, "2 - a little" to question 1 future, and so on). The data were still split at this stage so that teacher-librarian and principal data were analyzed separately. Mean and standard deviation responses were tabulated for each present and future question in one table. Teacher-librarian data were presented first. Average responses to each question were then presented in written form for present and future. Mean and standard deviation responses for principals were then tabulated in the same format as that for the teacher-librarians. Instead of a complete rundown for principals, a short paragraph summary was given for the teacher-librarians responses.

Belief responses were tabulated and presented for the teacher-librarian data followed by a summary of the beliefs that the teacher-librarians as a group believed were accurate and then those which they believed were inaccurate or less than accurate. Any mean greater than 3.0 was seen as being in clear agreement with the belief. Any mean less than 2.5 was seen as being in clear disagreem

Information Literate School Community: An International Research Panel." The papers from this session are available at http://farrer.riv.csu.edu.au/principal/survey/report.html.

Further analysis of the qualitative data was required to explore the forms of support for teacher-librarians offered by principals; the types of actions taken by teacher-librarians to develop principal support; the strategies implemented by principals and teacher-librarians in developing information literate school communities; and the professional development needs of principals and teacher-librarians with respect to developing an information literate school community. Here also the in-depth analysis of the pairs data, that is, the responses of principals and teacher-librarians working together in the same schools, may provide valuable insights into the ways in which they work together and the factors that support and limit their collaborative work. The contribution that this international study makes to the development of information literate school communities will be seen where data from the individual country studies are analyzed to reveal the patterns of collaborative work between principals and teacher-librarians within each country's unique educational context and culture.

Analysis of the quantitative data for each country has identified the significant factors related to the role of the principal and the librarian in creating an information literate school community. Cross-country comparisons have identified some common concerns, priorities, and beliefs of principals and teacher-librarians across a diverse range of educational contexts. This is where individual countries could learn from each other regarding programs and s

3. The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (www.ifla.org) also has a Web site with resources pertaining to library and information science programs, services, and research worldwide.
4. A recently updated ERIC Digest on flexible scheduling is available from http://ericir.syr.edu/V8 rces, a

Henri, James, and Lyn Hay. 1997. Understanding principal patronage: Developing and piloting a quantitative instrument. Paper presented at the IFLA Conference, Section of School Libraries and Resource Centres, Copenhagen, Denmark. Available online at www.ifla.org/IV/ifla63/63heha.htm.

of School Libraries and Resource Centres, Amsterdam, Holland. Available online at
http://farrer.riv.csu.edu.au/principal/survey/paper/FI_htmTm [(o7)Tj ET 972 727.44 01(C EMC BifactI

Loertscher, D. D. 1988. *Taxonomies of the school library media program.* Englewood, Colo.: Libraries Unlimited.

Lundin, R. 1983. The teacher-librarian and information skills—An across the curriculum approach. *Emergency Librarian* 11, no. 1: 8–12.

Morris, B. J., J. T. Gillespie, and D. L. Spirt. 1992. *Administering the school library media center.* 3d ed. New York: Bowker.

Podemski, R. S. 1990. The principal: Key to role effectiveness. In *School Library Media Annual, Vol. 8,* ed. J. B. Smith, 24–31. Englewood, Colo.: Libraries Unlimited.

Prostano, E. T., and J. S. Prostano. 1987. *The school library media center.* 4th ed. Littleton, Colo.: Libraries Unlimited.

Shields, P. 1987. Teacher-librarians: Educational change agents (Master's project, University of British Columbia, 1987).

Turner, P. M. 1980. The relationship between the principal's attitude and the amount and type of instructional development performed by the media professional. *International Journal of Instructional Media* 7, no. 2: 127–38.

Wilson, P. J., M. Blake, and J. A. Lyders. 1993. Principals and teacher-librarians: A study and a plan for partnership. *Emergency Librarian* 21, no. 1: 18–24.

Yesner, B. L., and H. L. Jay. 1987. *The school administrator's guide to evaluating library media programs.* Hamden, Conn.: Library Professional Publications.

Yetter, C. L. 1994. Resource-based learning in the information age school: The intersection of roles and relationships of the school library media specialist, teachers, and principal (Doctoral dissertation, Seattle University, 1994). *Dissertation Abstracts International* 55: 1130A.