

School Libraries Count!

*The **Second** National Survey of School Libraries*

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*The **Second** National Survey of School Library Media Programs 2008*

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Part I. All Schools Results

The results of analyses of the 6,998 responses received from all schools for the 2008 School Libraries Count survey are presented in Part I.

The first two sets of questions for which data are reported concern library media program staffing. The first set of questions identifies staffing levels—specifically, the number of weekly hours worked by school library media specialists (SLMSs--i.e., teacher-librarians) and by all program staff. The second set of questions determines weekly hours spent on key activities, including planning with teachers, delivering instruction, and overseeing budgets.

The following set of questions address two types of school library media center (SLMC) hours: the total weekly hours the SLMC is open and the number of those hours available for flexible scheduling. The first type of hours indicates the amount of access to the SLMC in the most basic sense, while the second type reveals how available the SLMC is to teachers and students on the basis of curricular needs rather than an arbitrary fixed schedule.

The next four sets of questions elicit a description of the information resources available via the library media program. The first two sets ask about the size of the SLMC's book and periodical programs and the average copyright year for a key segment of the collection—works on health and medicine. The remaining two sets of questions about information resources concern computer and database access. The first of these two sets of questions asks the number of computers available in the SLMC as well as the number of computers elsewhere in the school that are networked to library media resources. The final question in this section concerns whether or not teachers and students can access online databases from remote locations—particularly home.

A subsequent pair of questions asks for the number of individual and group visits to the SLMC. In addition to hours available for flexible scheduling, individual visits are another indicator of how accessible at points of need the SLMC is to students in particular. While group visits may happen on a fixed schedule, they are likely to be more numerous for schools that provide more open access to their SLMCs. In the latter case, group visits are not limited to full class visits, and may include visits by smaller groups of students working together on collaborative assignments.

The last of the core survey questions regards expenditures for the library media program.

Finally, this year—for the first time—the survey closed with a set of topical questions about library media program support of instructional uses of social networking tools.

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School Library Media Specialists & Total SLMP Staff

How much can be achieved by a school library media program depends largely on the level at which it is staffed—its total staffing level, and especially the extent of the presence of a school library media specialist (SLMS).

Half of responding SLMPs (50th percentile) have almost one full-time equivalent (FTE) SLMS—37.5 hours per typical week—and total SLMP staff hours reflecting full-time coverage—40 hours per week.

These figures suggest that, while a full-time SLMS is present about half the time, they

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Enrollment

The top five percent of schools with enrollments of 1,000 or higher reported two or more SLMS FTEs, and the top quarter of those with enrollments of 2,000 or higher reported almost two SLMS FTEs. For schools with enrollments between 300 and 1,000, the top half of responding schools reported one or about one SLMS FTE. For schools with enrollments under 300, half report less than a half-time SLMS—16 hours per week. Half of schools with enrollments of 1,000 and over report two or almost two total SLMP FTEs, while the top five percent report almost four to more than five total SLMP FTEs.

Region¹

SLMP staffing is lower in the West than in other regions. On average, responding SLMPs from Western states report 23.7 hours per week of SLMS staffing and total SLMP staff of 49.7 hours per week. In other regions, SLMS staffing averages 28.3 (Northeast) to 32.7 (South) hours per week, and total SLMP staffing averages 56.2 (Northeast) to 56.8 (South) hours per week.

High Poverty Schools

SLMPs at schools serving more poor students

Selected Activities of School Library Media Specialists

Three activities of school library media specialists are key to their roles as teachers, administrators, and instructional collaborators:

- „ Delivering instruction,
- „ Overseeing a budget, and
- „ Planning with teachers.

Delivering Instruction

Of these three activities, not surprisingly, delivering instruction is the one that demands the most time. At half of responding schools, SLMSs spend at least 12.5 hours per week—or, about two and a half hours per day—on this activity. The top quarter of schools reported 20 or more hours per week of instructional delivery—half of the time of a single full-time equivalent (FTE). The top five percent of schools reported that delivering instruction takes up at least 30 hours per week—three-quarters of a single FTE.

Overseeing SLMP Budget

SLMP budget oversight requires at least two hours per week for half of responding schools, at least five hours for the top quarter of schools, and 14 hours or more per week for the top five percent of respondents.

Planning with Teachers

For collaborative planning of instructional units with classroom teachers, responding SLMPs reported surprisingly low numbers of hours per week. Half of the respondents spend one hour per week or less on this important activity. The top quarter of schools reported three or more hours per week of collaborative planning—on average, a little more than a half hour per day—and the top five percent reported six or more hours for this activity—a little more than an hour a day. It is likely that two reasons above all others explain these figures. Many SLMSs have little or no support staff to cover the SLMC while they meet with teachers. Likewise, many SLMSs are in schools that do not embrace flexible scheduling of visits to the SLMC—very often because fixed schedules are utilized to provide solitary planning periods to teachers, while SLMSs and other SLMC staff are required to supervise students during those periods.

Several factors affect the amount

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School Level

Delivering Instruction

Typically, SLMS hours spent delivering instruction descend with grade level. Median weekly hours spent on this activity are 15 for elementary schools, 10 for middle schools, and eight for high schools. Similarly, though to a lesser degree, the 75th percentiles descend with grade level—24 hours per week for elementary schools, and 20 each for middle schools and high schools. Notably, however, the constraints of the clock limit the number of hours per week an SLMS can devote to instruction. At the middle and high school grade levels, the 95th percentile is 30 hours per week; at the elementary level it is 32 hour per week. In other words, regardless of grade level, only the top five percent of responding SLMPs have staffing levels required to spend 30-plus hours per week teaching, either alone or collaboratively.

Overseeing Budget

Predictably, based on the SLMS staff hours results stated earlier in the survey, an elementary school SLMS has less time to spend on budget oversight than her or his colleagues at middle and high school levels. Half of elementary SLMSs spend only two hours per week on this activity, and the top five percent at that grade level spend 10 or more hours per week. By contrast, half of SLMSs at other grade levels spend at least three hours per week on budget oversight, and the top five percent spend 15 to 16 or more hours per week. SLMSs at secondary schools are probably more likely to have any budgetary authority at all, and more likely to have support staff whose presence makes possible the division of labor that would permit spending more time on fiscal matters.

Planning with Teachers

Time spent on collaborative planning involving SLMSs and teachers is also higher for secondary levels than elementary level. Half of elementary SLMSs report spending less than one hour per week on planning, while half of middle and high school SLMSs report spending two or more hours on this activity. Among the top five percent of respondents at each grade level, however, the gaps are more dramatic—minimum weekly hours devoted to planning rise from five for elementary schools to eight and a half for middle schools to 10 for high schools.

Enrollment

Delivering Instruction

Half of schools with enrollments of 1,000 and over report that the SLMS spends 10 or more hours per week delivering instruction. For schools with enrollments from 300 up to 1,000, half of SLMSs spend 14 or more hours per week teaching. For schools with smaller enrollments—those under 300—half of SLMSs spend eight or fewer hours per week on instruction. Enrollment does not appear to affect significantly SLMS instructional hours among the top quarter and top five percent of respondents. At every grade level, the 75th and 95th percentiles spend at or near 20 and 30 hours per week, respectively, on instruction, except in schools with enrollments over 2,000, where the 95th percentile is 35 hours.

Overseeing Budget

Weekly hours spent on budget oversight by SLMSs varies by school enrollment. For responding schools with enrollments of 1,000 or more students, half of SLMSs spent three or more hours overseeing budgets. For schools with enrollments from 300 up to 1,000, that

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number of hours decreases to two; and, for schools with fewer than 300 students, it drops to one hour per week. The impact of school size on SLMP staffing and thus division of labor is quite obvious when comparing the top five percent of each enrollment cohort: At schools with 2,000 or more students, the top five percent of SLMSs spend 15 or more weekly hours on budget matters. At schools with enrollments under 500, the top five percent of SLMSs spend 10 or more hours on that activity.

Planning with Teachers

For weekly hours SLMSs spend planning with teachers, enrollment of 1,000 students is a critical point. At schools with that many or more students, half of SLMSs spend at least two to three weekly hours planning with teachers, the top quarter spend at least five hours collaborating, and the top five percent spend at least 10 hours. At schools with fewer than 1,000 students, these norms are about one, two to three, and five to six hours per week, respectively. In other words, once a school achieves an enrollment of at least 1,000, the

SLMC Hours Open &

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Region

Hours open and flexibly scheduled hours are not associated with region.

High-Poverty Schools

Both the number of weekly hours a SLMC is open and the number of those hours available for flexible scheduling are associated with poverty status. High-poverty schools average 31 hours open per week, 19 flexibly scheduled, while low-poverty schools average 33 hours open, 23 flexibly scheduled.

Metropolitan Schools

Similarly, flexibly scheduled hours are associated with metropolitan status. Perhaps surprisingly, however, responding non-metro schools average 22 such hours, compared with 20 hours for their metro counterparts.

Public and Private Schools

Private schools average more SLMC hours open and available for flexible scheduling than public schools. Private schools are open an average of 37 hours per week, compared to 32 hours for public schools.

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SLMP Collections

SLMP collections include materials in a wide variety of formats; but, two of the most important ones remain books and periodicals. For that reason, we use them

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Region

While the West stood out as the lowest staffed region, regional differences regarding collections are more mixed. The Midwest and South report smaller average book collections—about 12,400 each—while the Northeast and West report larger average collections—about 13,400 and about 13,100, respectively. On a per-student basis, however, the Midwest averages the largest per student collections at 27 books per student. The Northeast averages 25 books per student, while the West and the South come in last at 22 and 14 books per student, respectively.

Periodical collection size also varies among regions. SLMPs in the Northeast average 30 subscriptions, while those in the South average 23. SLMPs in the Midwest and West average 27 and 16 subscriptions, respectively.

High-Poverty Schools

Not surprisingly, schools with more poor students tend to have smaller book and periodical collections, but the opposite is true for books per student. High-poverty schools average fewer total books, about 11,650, versus about 13,400 for less poor schools, but just a slightly higher average number of books per student (23 versus 22). As with total book collections, high-poverty schools average fewer subscriptions (19) than low-poverty schools (27).

Metropolitan Schools

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Average Copyright

Half of responding schools reported average copyright years for health and medicine information of 1995. The top quarter reported average copyrights of 1999, and the top five percent, 2002.

From information published in 1995—13 years ago—a student would not learn about the cloning of Dolly the sheep (in 1997).

From a book copyrighted 1999—ten years ago—a student would not learn about the first successful isolation of human stem cell lines (first reported in November 1998).

From a work with a 2002 copyright—six years ago—a student would not learn of the completion of the Human Genome Project (2005).

Several factors affect the age of library collections in participating schools:

School Level

Average health and medicine copyright years vary somewhat by grade level. While 1995 is the average across all grade levels, responding middle schools averaged 1996.

Enrollment

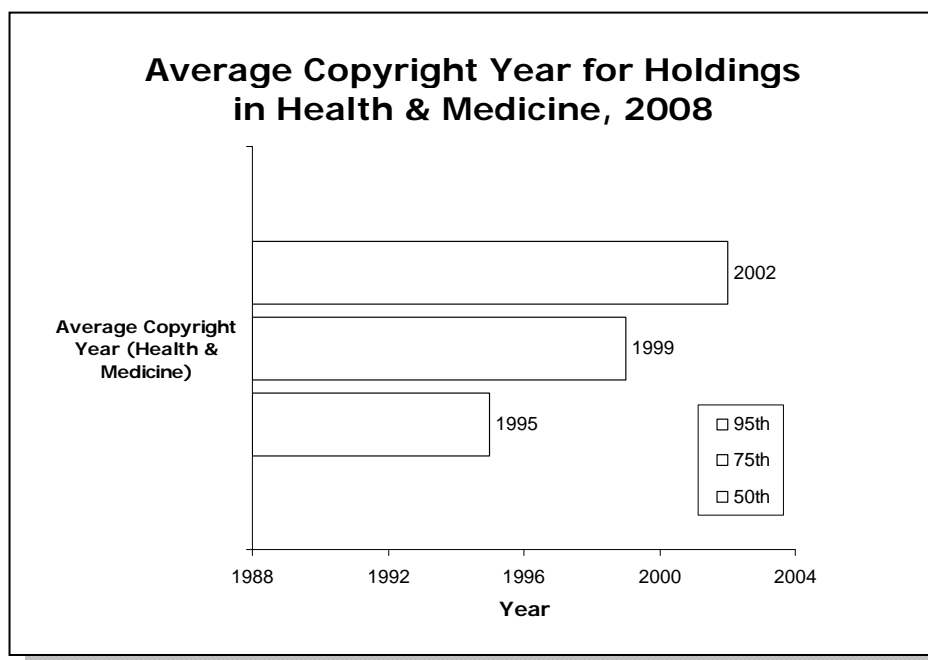
Responding schools with the largest and smallest enrollments suggest that size has some association with collection age. Schools with 2,000 or more students averaged 1996, while those with fewer than 300 students averaged 1994.

Region

There is a statistically significant difference in collection age for responding schools from the Northeast (average health and medicine copyright year of 1993).

High-Poverty Schools

Poverty status is not associated with average health and medicine copyright year.



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Metropolitan Schools

Schools in cities and suburbs average health and medicine copyright years of 1994, while those in outlying towns and rural areas average 1993.

Public and Private Schools

There is a one-year difference in average health and medicine copyright year for public (1994) and private (1993) schools; but, it is a statistically significant one.

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Remote Database Access

Online databases are becoming a ubiquitous feature of school library media programs. Less common is remote database access that enables students and

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Individual & Group Visits to SLMCs

Despite the ability to
use SLMC resources
remotely via
computer, visits to

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Region

Individual visits to SLMCs are significantly lower for respondents from the Midwest (261 per week) compared to their counterparts from the Northeast (340) and Midwest (358).

High-Poverty Schools

High poverty schools average 237 individual visits per week, compared to 357 for low-poverty schools. The difference between low- and high-poverty schools on average SLMC group visits is in approximately the same ratio, 25 to 31 visits per week.

Metropolitan Schools

SLMCs in cities and suburbs average 314 individual and 30 group visits per week, compared to 264 individual and 24 group visits for SLMCs in outlying towns and rural areas.

Public and Private Schools

Public schools average 28 group visits per week, versus 19 for private schools. There is no significant relationship between public-private status and individual visits.

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Library Media Expenditures

The budgets of most school library media programs cover expenditures on information resources (e.g., books, audio and video formats, periodical and database subscriptions) and operating costs. (Expenditures on salaries, wages, and employee benefits are part of the overall school or district payroll.)

Half of responding schools report spending at least \$7,000 annually—or \$12.06 per student—on their LM programs. The top quarter spend \$13,500—or \$21.02—and the top five percent, \$35,000—or \$48.02.

The per-student median, \$12.06, is only two-thirds of the cost of a single work of fiction (\$17.63, according to the March 1, 2008 issue of *School Library Journal*) and about a third of the cost of a single non-

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responding schools with 2,000 or more students, this figure is \$9.00, while for half of respondents with fewer than 300 students, it is almost \$18.00 per student. The 95th percentiles for these two enrollment ranges further dramatize this point—more than \$23.54 and more than \$84.86 per student, respectively.

Region

Responding SLMPs from the Northeast average the highest total and per-student expenditures at almost \$14,000 and almost \$22, respectively. Respondents from the West average the lowest figures in the same categories—less than \$9,300 and \$14, respectively.

High-Poverty Schools

Compared with SLMPs at low-poverty schools, those in high-poverty schools spend less, on average, both in total (less than \$8,604 versus more than \$12,254, respectively) and per student (\$14.59 versus \$16.64).

Metropolitan Schools

Mirroring the association of enrollment with spending measures, schools in cities and suburbs spend somewhat more on average than their counterparts in outlying towns and suburbs in total (about \$11,100 versus about \$9,200, respectively), though not on a per student basis, where the relationship is reversed (\$14.36 versus \$18.44).

Public and Private Schools

Unsurprisingly, private schools tend to spend more on their LM programs than public schools, both total and per-student. Private schools average more than \$16,700 annually—or \$34.13 per student—while public schools average less than \$11,000 annually—or \$16.33 per student.

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2008 Question: Social Networking

The 2008 School Libraries Count survey introduces a new category of questions. The core of the survey is approximately 20 basic statistical questions that measure the status of library media programs quantitatively. Those core questions will be asked each year of the survey. Starting in 2008, there will be a multiple-choice question or questions whose responses will enable AASL to address one of the timely issues facing school library media programs. This year, that issue is social networking. Respondents to this year's questions on this topic totaled 5,170 (74% of the 6,998 overall respondents).

A social network is an online community of people who share interests and activities or who are interested in exploring the interests and activities of others. This phenomenon encompasses a wide variety of types, ranging from:

- „ Virtual worlds (e.g., Second Life), schools, and courses to
- „ Existing “brand name” sites (e.g., My Space, Facebook) and user-created ones (e.g., Nings) to
- „ Collaborative tools (e.g., wikis like the Wikipedia, editors like Google Documents, social libraries like Library Thing) to
- „ A variety of modes of communication (e.g., podcasts, blogs, forums or bulletin boards, chat, texting, instant messaging).

Notably, some may regard this list to be rather broadly inclusive of tools that they might or might not consider within the realm of social networking. A more inclusive interpretation of the term was adopted deliberately, thereby including some tools that one might otherwise associate with the broad concepts of Web 2.0 and mobile communication.

As these wide-ranging technologies have become more common—indeed, in some cases, ubiquitous—school library media specialists, classroom teachers, and other school leaders have begun to embrace them—at least, some of them—as educational tools. In some cases, however, district or school authorities have acted to prohibit the use of these technologies in schools. When referring to “social networking support” in this survey, the word “support” infers working with students (alone or in collaboration with classroom teachers) on units of instruction using social networking tools. The tools can be used alone by the SLMS in planning instruction, or with the teacher and/or student in delivery of instruction to classify as “support.”

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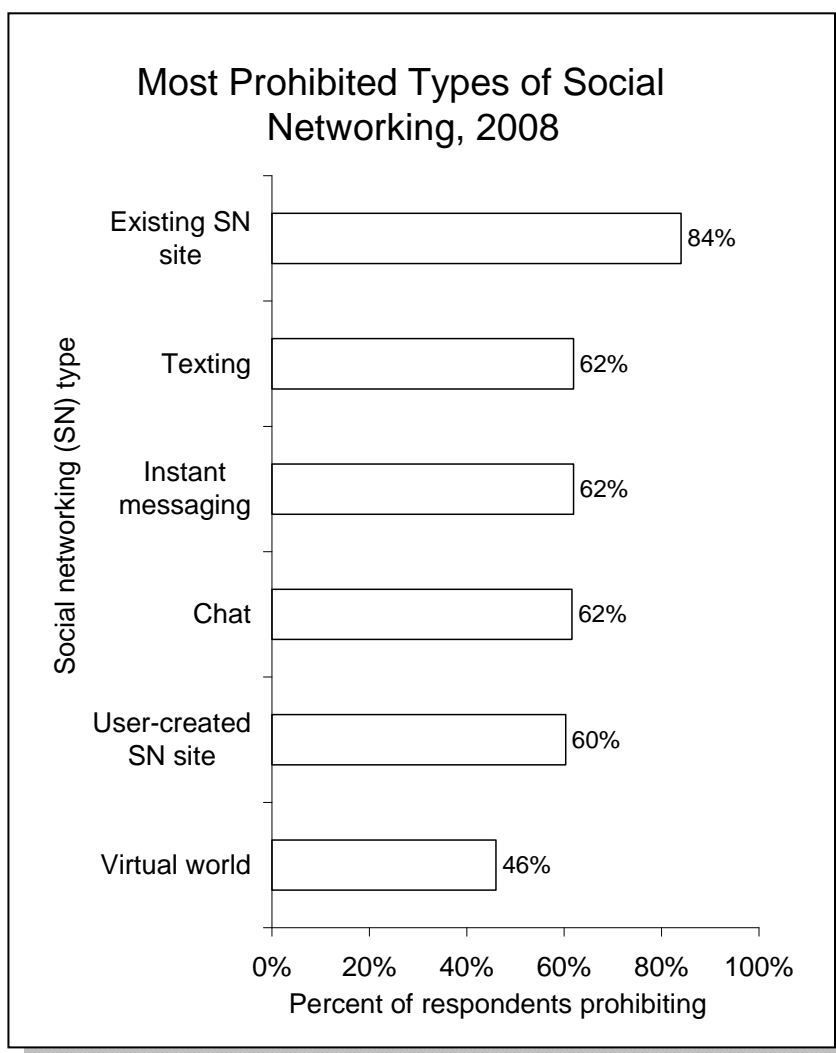
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Most Prohibited Social Networking Types

The remainder of the social networking types are prohibited by a majority (sometimes a vast majority, sometimes a near one) of responding schools. (Such prohibitions may be a matter of either school or district policy.) These prohibited social networking types include: existing social networking sites (84%); instant messaging, texting, and chat (all 62%), user-created social networking sites (60%), and virtual worlds (46%).

Comparing the more popular types of social networking with these, certain distinctions between them seem likely. The types most likely to be prohibited by district or school policy are also ones that many perceive to be less useful for educational purposes and/or sites that may make students vulnerable to online predators. Existing social networking sites, such as MySpace and Facebook, could be used—and certainly are used by a few—for educational purposes; but, accurately or inaccurately, the popular perception is likely to be that they are distractions. This perception probably applies even more strongly to communications, such as chat, texting, and instant messaging. On the other hand, intranets, podcasting, wikis, blogs, and the like are more readily adaptable to educational purposes.



Part II. Cohort Results

The 2008 survey received 6,998 responses. The results calculated from these responses are presented above in Part I. Among these 6,

