



# The Idaho School Library Impact Study—2009: How Idaho Librarians, Teachers, and Administrators Collaborate for Student Success

Research Brief Spring 2010

## Highlights

1. Schools have more students scoring at the advanced level on both reading and language arts tests if their administrators' self-assessment of Information, Communication and Technology (ICT)\* standards (or skills) teaching was high.
2. Schools at every grade level tend to have more students scoring advanced on IRI tests and ISAT reading and language arts tests when school administrators value more highly, and when teachers and librarians report more frequent occurrences of:
  - collaboration between teachers and librarians,
  - librarians being resource people in the instructional design process, and
  - librarians providing in-service professional development activities for faculty.

\* According to Educational Testing Service (ETS), ICT literacy is using digital technology, communications tools, and/or networks to access, manage, integrate, evaluate, and create information in order to function in a knowledge society. (*Digital Transformation—A Framework for ICT Literacy*, a report of the International ICT Literacy Panel. Publisher: Princeton, NJ. Educational Testing Service. 2001. [www.ets.org/Media/Research/pdf/ICTREPORT.pdf](http://www.ets.org/Media/Research/pdf/ICTREPORT.pdf))

A study for the Idaho Commission for Libraries by RSL Research Group: Keith Curry Lance, Marcia J. Rodney, and Bill Schwarz, 2010

**Note: The complete report of the study is online at <http://libraries.idaho.gov/study>.**

## Background

This research brief summarizes a study contracted for by the Idaho Commission for Libraries and endorsed by the Idaho Department of Education. Building on previous studies completed in a number of other states (see *The Idaho School Library Impact Study—2009*, page 1) and designed to assess the impact of school libraries on student success, researchers set out to determine:

- the relationships administrators and teachers have with librarians,
- how school libraries and librarians are valued and perceived, and
- how those factors affect libraries and their impact on academic achievement by students.

Two of the most significant findings from the study are highlighted in the sidebar (left). The bottom line is that students are more likely to succeed when librarians play active and collaborative roles with other teachers and with administrators. Best practices for library programs that contribute to student achievement include the following:

- Library access is scheduled based on instructional needs.
- Librarian and teacher design instructional units together.
- Librarian provides professional development to faculty.
- Librarian is appointed to school committees.
- Librarian and principal meet regularly.
- Librarian's role is addressed when hiring teachers.

During spring of 2009, school administrators, teachers, and librarians were surveyed about:

- The library environment, including how administrators and teachers learned about libraries and librarians, practices valued by administrators, activities reported by librarians and teachers, and librarian roles as perceived by administrators, teachers, and librarians.
- Librarian, teacher, and administrator self-assessments of Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) standards (or skills) teaching in their schools and districts.
- 2009 Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI) scores reported for elementary grade school levels and the Idaho Standards Achievement Tests (ISAT) reading and language arts scores reported for middle and high school grade levels.

The Commission asked school librarians statewide to nominate themselves, up to five of their closest teacher colleagues, and their principals and up to two other administrators for participation in a series of surveys during Spring 2009<sup>(1)</sup>.

## Bottom Line— Everyone Collaborates to Teach ICT Skills

Where librarians teach students—as well as their teacher colleagues—students are more likely to succeed academically.

Recommendations for encouraging collaboration between librarians, teachers, and administrators:

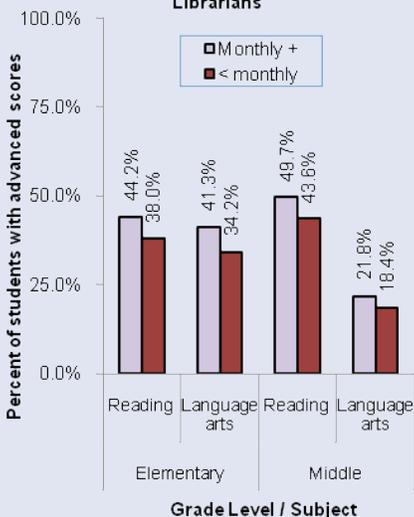
### Administrators

- Make it known that they expect collaboration
- Meet regularly with their librarians
- Address the librarian’s role with new teachers during hiring interviews

### Staff

- Teachers: turn to librarians as fellow instructors
- Librarians: be receptive to collaboration, especially to teach or co-teach

Percent of Students with Advanced ISAT Scores by Grade Level and Subject by Frequency of Teacher-Initiated Collaboration Reported by Librarians



## Methodology

Three statistical procedures were used to analyze the survey data:

1. Simple frequencies (the numbers and percentages of cases giving each possible response) were determined for each question.
2. Responses to each question were cross-tabulated<sup>(2)</sup> with selected potential predictors of the answer to the question.
3. Comparison-of-means analysis<sup>(3)</sup> was used to measure differences in test performance between schools where members of the educator groups (librarians, teachers, and administrators) expressed different perceptions.

## Findings and Recommendations

### Sources of learning about libraries and librarians

Learning about libraries and librarians from on-the-job experience and undergraduate or graduate courses correlated most closely with better teacher self-assessments of ICT standards teaching. Teachers reported learning the most from informal sources, as shown in the table below.

| Learning Sources for Teachers                 | Percent |
|---|---------|
| On-the-job experience                         | 78.4    |
| Informal communication with school librarians | 77.1    |
| Undergraduate/graduate courses                | 36.7    |
| Personal experience                           | 27.7    |
| In-service professional development           | 12.7    |
| Professional reading                          | 9.7     |
| Conference sessions or workshops              | 9.0     |

School administrators also reported learning the most about libraries and librarians from informal sources (see below). The study authors note:

*When one realizes that the majority of administrators attribute what they know about libraries and librarians to direct, albeit informal, experience, the importance of ensuring that administrators are exposed as early as possible to strong library programs and accomplished librarians cannot be overstated (The Idaho School Library Impact Study—2009, page 90).*

| Learning Sources for Principals and Other Administrators | Percent |
|--|---------|
| Personal experience                                      | 84.7    |
| On-the-job experience                                    | 81.3    |
| Informal communication with school librarians            | 80.7    |
| Undergraduate/graduate courses                           | 21.6    |
| Professional reading                                     | 21.0    |
| In-service professional development                      | 11.9    |
| Conference sessions or workshops                         | 11.9    |

**Bottom Line—  
Everyone Contributes  
to Improving Access to  
Instructional Resources**

Where teachers experience librarians as instructional colleagues and technology integrators, students are more likely to excel academically.

Recommendations for improving access to instructional resources:

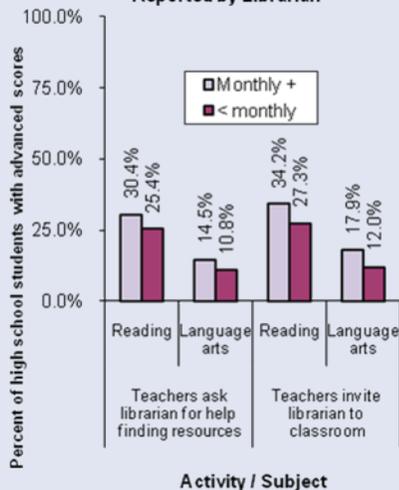
**Administrators**

- Make it school policy to schedule flexible library access
- Appoint librarians to committees that will help them understand school instructional resource needs

**Staff**

- Teachers: turn to librarians as instructional support, curricular/instructional resources managers, website managers, and technology troubleshooters
- Librarians: ensure that teachers have the instructional resources they need

**Percent of High School Students with Advanced ISAT Scores by Frequency of Selected Library-Related Activities Reported by Librarian**



**Self-assessments of ICT Standards (or Skills) Teaching**

In addition to correlating with how teachers and school administrators learn about libraries and librarians, self-assessments of ICT standards teaching tend to be better when:

- Teachers and librarians report more “porous” relationships between classroom and library and administrators value activities such as more flexibly scheduled visits to the library, more frequent instances of teachers accompanying classes to the library, librarians being invited to the classroom, and teachers relying on librarians as sources of instructional design resources.
- Teachers and administrators identify librarians as teachers, school leaders, curriculum designers, curricular/instructional resources managers, and technology troubleshooters.
- Administrators value librarian-teacher instructional collaboration and when librarians and teachers report it happening more frequently.

**IRI and ISAT Reading and Language Arts Scores**

For purposes of this analysis, academic achievement was represented by the percentage of students in a school at a particular grade level who received advanced scores<sup>(4)</sup>.

**At elementary schools,** IRI scores tended to be higher when librarians proactively provided teachers with resources needed for instructional design.

**At middle schools,** ISAT scores tended to be higher where:

- librarians proactively provided teachers with resources needed for instructional design.
- teachers perceive librarians as instructional support, in-service professional development providers, and website managers.

**At the high school level,** higher ISAT results were associated with:

- teachers asking their librarians for help finding instructional design resources.
- teachers inviting librarians to teach or co-teach in the classrooms.
- teachers perceiving librarians as curricular/instructional resources managers, technology troubleshooters, and technology instructors.

Schools at every grade level tended to have more students scoring advanced on the IRI tests and ISAT reading and language arts tests when school administrators value more highly, and when teachers and librarians report more frequent occurrences of:

- instructional collaboration between teachers and librarians.
- librarians being resource people in the instructional design process.
- librarians providing in-service professional development activities for faculty.

Notably, all of these attributes of a strong librarian and a strong library are more frequently reported when librarians are certified by the state as library media specialists. LMS librarians were three times as likely as non-LMS librarians to report at least weekly instructional collaboration and provision of in-service professional development.

## Bottom Line— Administrators Value Library Programs and Services

Where administrators value strong library programs and can see them doing their part for student success, students are more likely to thrive academically.

Recommendations for improving skills of teachers:

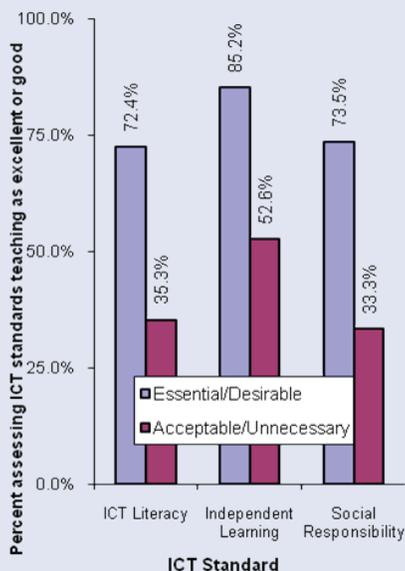
### Administrators

- Foster the creation of schedules, facilities, and relationships that enable librarians to be “resident” providers of in-service professional development to teachers

### Staff

- Teachers: turn to librarians as “resident” in-service providers
- Librarians: be proactive in inviting teachers to in-service learning opportunities to improve their ICT skills

Administrator Assessments of ICT Standards Teaching as Excellent or Good by Value of Librarian/Teacher Collaboration



## Conclusion

This study examined the library-related perceptions and attitudes of librarians, teachers, and school administrators at selected Idaho schools. These perceptions and attitudes were related to two other phenomena in turn: self-assessments of ICT standards teaching and IRI scores or ISAT reading and language arts scores:

- School administrators who evaluated highly the teaching of ICT standards in their schools and districts—and, in turn, whose students were more likely to have advanced IRI or ISAT scores—also wished their librarians to be teachers, school leaders, curriculum designers, curricular/instructional resources managers, and technology troubleshooters.
- Schools tended to have more students with advanced IRI or ISAT scores if their administrators expected these roles of librarians and if their teachers reported librarians actually performing these roles more frequently.
- Study results suggest that these valued practices and frequently reported library-related activities be recommended, because of their demonstrated relationships to students’ IRI or ISAT performance. Perhaps most importantly, a school culture in which ICT standards (or skills) teaching is valued highly by administrators is recommended to foster advanced IRI or ISAT scores.

## Footnotes

(1) Usable responses to the surveys were received from 238 librarians, 668 teachers, and 174 administrators. Random sampling was not practical for this phase of this study, because it was necessary to ask librarian respondents if they are credentialed by the state as library media specialists (LMSs) and to ask them to identify teachers and administrators with whom they work sufficiently closely that those individuals and could provide meaningful responses. Thus, this self-selected sample is necessarily biased toward librarians, teachers, and administrators who have some experience working closely together—an underlying assumption of the questions being asked.

(2) For example, administrators’ self-assessments of ICT standards teaching in their schools or districts were cross-tabulated with their answers to questions about what they value in a school library program. Pearson’s chi-square was calculated for each of these cross-tabulation tables to determine if there was a statistically significant difference between the response from one group and another.

(3) Comparison-of-means analysis was used to measure differences in test performance between schools where members of the three groups (librarians, teachers, and administrators) expressed different perceptions. Then, the percentage of students with advanced scores was averaged for each group, and the difference was subjected to a statistical test (the t test) to determine if that difference is statistically significant (i.e., non-random).

(4) Relative student performance levels for elementary, middle, and high schools are represented by 2009 reading and language arts scores for grades 3, 4, and 5; grades 7 and 8; and grade 10, respectively. The analysis of IRI and ISAT scores focused on the relationships between those scores and the perceptions of libraries and librarians reported by librarians, teachers, and administrators. For purposes of this analysis, academic achievement was represented by the percentage of students in a school at a particular grade level who received advanced scores.

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## About the Idaho Commission for Libraries

The Idaho Commission for Libraries assists libraries to build the capacity to better serve their clientele. To learn more about ICFL, visit <http://libraries.idaho.gov/>.

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## About RSL Research Group

RSL Research Group combines the experience of professionals from divergent backgrounds for a complete approach to research needs, including library research and statistics. See [www.rslresearch.com](http://www.rslresearch.com).