We, the Teachers:
High School Teachers and Their
Library Connections

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What is wrong with this picture? It was discovered that 85% (102) of one district's high school teachers visited their school library at least once a week. Yet, only two teachers brought their classes to the library for instruction (McCoy et al. 1979).

Library use is one activity that undergirds students' study skills and habits, and also supports life-long learning. Two different research studies (Lubans, 1972 and Blazek, 1975) both affirmed: teachers have an influence on students' use of libraries. The formula is very simple: The more teachers promote libraries, the more students will use them.

Although one report (McCoy et al., 1979) found that most teachers used their high school libraries, it was not determined how frequently they gave their students library-centered assign-ments. Indeed, as we move through our "age of information", how often do teachers connect with libraries other than their own school libraries? In essence, what are high school teachers' library connections? Further, what visions do teachers hold for the public library's connections to the students?

The intent of my research was to examine a group of Indiana high school teachers' library connections to answer those questions. I explored the teachers' use of several libraries, in and around Bloomington, Indiana, focusing particularly on the Ellettsville Branch Library. While my survey data analysis highlights some issues, my goal was to let the teachers' voices come through and speak as "We, the Teachers". Thus, a segment of this report incorporates their comments and visions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teachers and their library connections have been examined from varied perspectives. For example, one study (Wilkins, 1992) explored faculty use of an education library. From another angle, the cooperative efforts of elementary school teachers and school library media specialists have been documented by many scholars including a study in Texas by Bell and Totten (1992). My brief review section primarily considers results of studies dealing with: 1) high school teachers and their interactions with school libraries; and 2) high school teachers' involvement with public libraries.

High School Teachers and School Libraries

Two reports (McCoy et al. 1979), and (Griffin and Lamb, 1987) illustrate high school teachers' use of high school libraries. In McCoy's report, a Canadian research study measured the frequency, among other factors, of school library use by high school teachers. The survey data revealed that 85% (102) of 120 teachers visited their school library at least once a week. However, only two teachers brought their students to the library for instruction (McCoy et al. 1979, 6). My research differs from McCoy's, in that I wished to determine: to what

extent do teachers give students assignments requiring them to use libraries?

The second report was authored by Griffin (a junior high school social studies teacher), and Lamb (a library media specialist). They were disturbed by teachers' lack of use of the library for instruction, and comments such as "your library is dull, dull, dull. I enter, look at motionless bodies...", and yawn." So moved were they to create the right environment, that Griffin and Lamb presented solutions and put forth a model emphasizing positive elements to build communications' connections, thereby fostering improved library and classroom teacher relationships.

High School Teachers and The Public Library

While looking at teachers and public library connections, several studies illustrate utilization dimensions. In an analysis of 452 University of Michigan faculty, one study discovered that only 24% (108) owned public library cards (Marchant, 1969, 446). In another Michigan study which reported on statewide reference and research needs, 47.7% of 1,440 queried elementary and secondary teachers used public libraries (Nelson Associates, 1966, 36).

A recent investigation, which explored occupational groups and public library use in Indiana, confirmed from a sample of 395 teachers that 45.3% (179) used the public library (Kim, 1990, 13). Teachers used the public library approximately four times more than other occupational groups. (Kim, 1990, 15)

Summarily, the research literature conveys that high school teachers are connected to libraries in varying degrees of underutilization.

METHODS

Almost all previously cited research studies gathered information through surveys. Fittingly, the method of data collection for my study is a survey questionnaire administered to a purposive sample of Edgewood High School teachers in May 1991.

Background

I chose to survey teachers at Edgewood High School in Ellettsville, Indiana because it was nearby, and because of its proximity to a public library branch. In fact, the school's entrance is about 1/5 of a mile from the Ellettsville Branch of the Monroe County Public Library. Moreover, the library had only been operating in its newly constructed facility for about nine months when I conducted this study so this seemed like fertile ground for research.

The Sample

In the Spring of 1991 there were fifty teachers instructing 723 high school students from Ellettsville and from two unincorporated townships. Although I had planned to administer the survey instrument to each teacher, I was unable to do so because of the school's political climate at that time: the administrative stance was to deny outsiders access to the faculty. Therefore, acting upon a referral from the Monroe County Public Library's Youth Services Librarian, Dana Burton, I obtained a purposive sample of twelve teachers.

These seasoned teachers averaged 12.6 years of teaching experience, ranging from seven to twenty-nine years. Collectively their teaching experience totaled 152 years. There were nine female and three male teachers in this sample. Their subject disciplines represented a cross section of traditional library-oriented fields, such as English and History; and also some fringe library user disciplines such as physical education. In all, thirteen subject departments were represented, with some teachers specializing in several subjects. The subject departments included:

°English   °Home Economics

°French   °Physical Education

°German   °Driver's Education

°History   °Health

°Current Events/Social Studies

The Survey Instrument

The survey instrument consisted of thirty questions in four parts, including a "comments" section for open-ended responses. My pretest survey questionnaire was based largely on *A Planning Process for Public Libraries* (Palmour, Bellassi and DeWath, 1980), whose survey instruments have been tested for validity and reliability. All returned questionnaires were usable.

THE ANALYSIS

The analysis included a partial set of findings divided into three segments: 1) Teachers' Connections with the High School Library, 2) Teachers' Connections with the County Public Library Branch, and 3) Views and Visions.

I. Teachers Connections with the High School Library

Materials

- 75% (9) of the teachers believed that adequate teacher support materials were housed in the high school library

On Giving Assignments

- No teachers gave weekly assignments requiring use of the library

- 41.7% (5) gave monthly assignments to their students which required use of the high school library

- 16.7% (2) seldom gave assignments using the high school library

- 16.7% (2) never gave assignments using the high school library

- 24% (3) did not answer this question

II. Teachers' Connections with the County Public Library Branch

Teachers' Personal Use of the County Public Library Branch

- 33.3% (4) teachers used the county library branch for non-school personal affairs (e.g. programs, recreational purposes, reference sources)

- 58% (7) of the teachers were not aware of young adult materials in the branch library for their subject areas

- Only one teacher checked the branch library before giving assignments

Referral of Students to the Public Library Branch

- 33.3% (4) referred their students to the public library branch

- 50% (6) did not give referrals to the library
- 15.7% (2) did not respond to this question

III. VIEWS AND VISIONS
Views of General Activities
- 75% (9) of the respondents supported having a librarian with sole responsibility for young adults
- 58% (7) of the respondents thought class trips to the library would be useful; whereas, 33% (4) disagreed
- In response to the survey question which asked if it would be a valuable experience if the public library's youth services librarian visited classes on a continuing basis with booktalks, information, etc.:

    25% (3) answered "yes"
    25% (3) answered "maybe"
    33% (4) answered "no"

Homework Assistance
In a survey question which asked if the public library should provide homework/assignment related programs and services, most teachers thought the library should do so for English and science subjects, but writing and research skills subjects had the lowest priority.

Young Adult Publications
Information about the library's role in producing young adult oriented aids was sought in one question which asked if it would be valuable for the Ellettsville Branch Library to help produce publications for young adults?. Nine respondents ranked the following as possible publications:

1st place	hot topics lists
	special bibliographies
	newsletters
2nd place	bulletin boards
3rd place	book reviews
	bookmarks

High School and Branch Library Coordination
One question asked if the Edgewood High School librarians and the Ellettsville Branch Library should work together to offer activities and services for young adults? Areas in which they agreed they should were ranked:

1st place	homework/assignment related activities
	volunteer opportunities
2nd place	coordinated resources
	information and communication skills
3rd place	personal interest/ hobbies
	reading motivation
4th place	computer software availability

Student Attitudes

Respondents were asked how they wanted their students to view libraries. The teachers ranked:

1st place   useful

2nd place   friendly

3rd place   educational

4th place   non-threatening

5th place   entertaining; and up-to-date

6th place   available place to be

7th place   broad-minded/comprehensive

We, The Teachers Respond

Other views expressed by the teachers were:

Teacher #1:

"Since I've not been able to visit the Library in Ellettsville, I do use the main Monroe County Branch. I think the library here can be very helpful, not only in materials, but its location. That is why I feel that if the library can build itself up in materials that many students will use the library here and not have to travel to Bloomington."

Teacher #2:

"The library needs to be open longer for those students whose parents do not get home from work till 6 pm. By the time they eat supper and get to the library it would be 7 pm or later giving them only an hour. The library does not need to be open as early here since many are working outside this area and not home till later. I'm not sure on weekends but they need to be longer to accommodate the new trend on parenting. Sunday evening many students need to be at the library finishing projects."

Teacher #5:

"The Ellettsville Branch is a great addition to our school and community. Its' use will grow more and more with each year."

Teacher #9:

"-I would make class available for booktalks.

-Many students are apathetic.

-One student said the Ellettsville branch needed more reference books."

Teacher #11:

"I haven't used the Ellettsville Library personally because I live in Bloomington. Probably, I will use it for myself and my students as I become more used to its being here right on the way home!"

SUMMARY

From the survey questionnaire data, I found that this group of Indiana high school teachers had weak connections to their public library branch. The

data demonstrates rare use of checking the public library's collections before giving students assignments. Yet, approximately one-third of the teachers referred students to the library. Further, a tenuous link was revealed between the high school teacher and the library, by survey findings indicating that 58% (7) of the teachers were not aware of library's holdings in their subject areas.

Nonetheless, 90% (11) of the teachers wanted their to students to view the library as useful. 58% (7) of those surveyed believed class trips to the library branch would be valuable. However, 25% (3) did not want a librarian to visit their classes and 25% (3) had reservations.

In our current information age, the public library is a key resource. As indicated by the survey data, the connections between high school teachers and a near-by resource, the public library branch, need building and strengthening. It rests with the public library to reach-out and form bridges to bring in the teachers, and make them aware of library services and collections. When the teachers are reached, the students will be better served as well.

In the past, both the public library and the school library have been operating under a cloud of misconception. "Although both institutions [public library and school systems] possess related missions, there has been a perception in the library profession that the public library's active participation in the schools might hinder the development of strong school libraries." (Sager, 1992, 11) As more local area networks and state-wide networks expand (Epler and Tuzinski, 1991), cooperation between high schools and public libraries will prosper.

The road to connection and cooperation with schools is not easy for the public library whose mandates are multiple. One librarian (O'Brien, 1992) addressed this "crossroad" between service and the marketing of public libraries. The awareness of the need for services to children is great. In a recent poll concerning future directions, library directors ranked "group programs for children in the library" as a service priority (McCrossan, 1991, 13). By extension, I infer programs for young adults. If high school teachers are reached and become connected to the public library, the potential for positive change in work with young adults will perhaps augment.

As indicated in my survey data,

there is much room for change concerning high school teachers and their public libraries. Future research might involve:

1) studies of experimental designs placing high school teachers and librarians in cooperative arrangements

2) investigation of high school teachers' electronic connections with their public libraries

3) a follow-up or re-study of, "We, the Teachers"

All of these future research ideas can be viable endeavors, working to promote stronger connections between high school teachers and public libraries. Thus, as a forecast, teachers and students will be actively involved with libraries, and nothing will be wrong with the picture.

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