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AN INVESTIGATIVE STUDY OF THE LIBRARY INFORMATION SKILLS
TAUGHT BY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LIBRARY MEDIA
SPECIALISTS IN CAMDEN CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

by

Michele Gold Feldman

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree
of
The Graduate School
at
Rowan University
May 11, 2006

Approved by
Professor

Date Approved May 11, 2006

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ABSTRACT

Michele Gold Feldman
AN INVESTIGATIVE STUDY OF THE INFORMATION SKILLS TAUGHT
BY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LIBRARY MEDIA SPECIALISTS IN
CAMDEN CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
2005/2006

Dr. Marilyn L. Shontz
Master of Arts in School Librarianship

The purpose of this investigative study was to explore the library information skills that elementary school library media specialists in the Camden City Public Schools taught to students in kindergarten through fifth grade. The study was conducted to determine the school library media specialists' perceptions of the collaboration that existed for one selected research project. Of the 12 respondents to the mailed survey, all 12 replied that they taught alphabetical order, 10 taught the Dewey Decimal System, 10 taught use of an index, 8 taught how to use the Internet, and only 2 taught the Big6/Super3 Skills. Instruction in library and information skills was seen as a valuable and essential part of the school library media program. The majority of school librarians, 92%, responded that they did not assist with fourth grade PowerPoint presentations during the 2004/2005 school year. One recommendation resulting from this study is that there should be district sponsored workshops/in-services to train elementary school library media specialists when a district required project is assigned.

DEDICATION

First and foremost, I want to thank my husband, Gary, for his encouragement in my pursuit of a Master's of School Librarianship Degree. Throughout this five-year journey at Rowan University's Graduate School, Gary has listened to my concerns and offered valuable advice. I truly appreciated those late night dinners provided by Gary when I returned home tired and famished after a long day following an evening course at Rowan. Special thanks to my adult children, Harris Neal Feldman, Esq., and Jodie Elana Feldman. Their help and encouragement, particularly during the onset of this program was a great stimulus. My family's belief in me to obtain my master's degree was constant, and I am lucky to have such a supportive family!

Thanks to Dr. Holly G. Willett, Program Advisor, for her help whenever I requested assistance. Dr. Marilyn L. Shontz, my professor for seven courses (50% of the School Librarianship program), including Graduate Thesis in Library Services, was a pillar of patience. Dr. Shontz always had a positive outlook and gave me a feeling of security throughout this program. I am also appreciative of her expertise, especially during Thesis, as she expertly edited my chapters.

Devoted friends, Cheryl, Linnie, Sharon, and Royal, and cousins Bobbie and Maury, always expressed their encouragement throughout this five-year endeavor. I am thankful for their flexibility and willingness to accommodate my school schedule.

Thanks, too, to the Camden City Public School librarians who participated in my survey, without whose input my study would be invalid.

Finally, extra special thanks to my carpool commuter friends, Elizabeth Reilly-Stern, and Cynthia O'Reilly. Liz and Cindy were so much more than just classmates and travel mates. Our conversations, on a broad range of topics, during our drive from Cherry Hill to Glassboro, were hilarious and therapeutic! Both of you are my personal role models as school librarians.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
LIST OF FIGURES	vi
ONE STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM.....	1
TWO LITERATURE SEARCH.....	8
THREE METHODOLOGY.....	22
FOUR ANALYSIS OF DATA.....	28
FIVE SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	38
REFERENCE LIST.....	43
APPENDIX A-QUESTIONNAIRE	45
APPENDIX B-COVER LETTER.....	48
APPENDIX C-LIST OF SCHOOLS.....	50

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE	PAGE
1 Type of Scheduled Library Periods	30
2 Frequency of Scheduled Library Periods.....	31
3 Library Assistant/Clerk Assigned to Help in the School Library Media Center.....	32
4 Importance of Teaching Research Skills as Part of the Elementary School Library Curriculum.....	33
5 Elementary School Library Media Specialists in the CCST Who Assisted with PowerPoint Presentations in 2004/2005	34
6 Skills/Topics Used to Teach Research Skills in the Elementary School Library Program.....	35
7 Print Reference Books Used to Teach Research Skills in the Elementary School Library	36
8 Forms of Technology Utilized to Teach Research Skills in the Elementary School Library	37

CHAPTER ONE

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Significance of the Topic

One of the primary roles of the school library media specialist is to provide instruction to students in library and information skills. Students need to locate, analyze, evaluate, interpret and use information from both print and electronic sources. The school library media specialist must work collaboratively with classroom teachers to help students fulfill research project assignments. Current research confirmed that library and information skills need to be taught in conjunction with classroom curriculum, not in isolation.

Michael B. Eisenberg, former Syracuse University Professor, stated, “The overriding conclusion is still true, namely, that there is a critical need for research related to library and information skills instruction” (Eisenberg & Brown, 1992, p. 2). Elaine K. Didier, Ph.D., professor and current Library Director of the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library and Museum, examined more than thirty-five research studies related to the impact of library media programs on student learning and achievement. Didier concluded, “Research specific to library and information skills instruction confirms that knowledge of library skills can be related to improvements in student achievement, performance on standardized tests, and grade point average” (Didier, 1985, p. 34). Scott Lanning and John Bryner, authors of *Essential Reference Services for Today's School Media Specialists*, stated that,

Each reference encounter with students is an informal opportunity to teach information literacy skills. Each library instruction session is a formal opportunity to teach these essential information literacy skills (Lanning & Bryner, 2004, p. xiii)...The library media specialist can simply teach students the skills directly, but it is more effective to integrate the teaching of those skills with other school assignments and goals. (Lanning & Bryner, 2004, p. 92)

Purpose of the Proposed Study

This investigative study was conducted to explore the library information skills that elementary school library media specialists in the Camden City Public Schools teach to students in kindergarten through fourth grade. Another purpose of this study was to determine the school library media specialists' perceptions of the collaboration that existed between the classroom teacher, computer teacher, technology teacher, and the school library media specialist for one selected research project.

In 2005, all fourth grade students in the Camden City Public Schools were required to prepare and present a PowerPoint presentation on a topic of their choice. Development of skills necessary to perform this task must be a collaborative effort among various teachers, students, and school librarians/media specialists. Since no curriculum guide existed for the library information skills program, there was a strong need to coordinate the instruction in order to promote success and encourage students to take responsibility for their learning.

The results of this investigative study were intended to be used to develop a fourth grade curriculum guide with specific goals on teaching library information skills, including the Big6 and Super3, and sharing the responsibility for research with other

teaching staff. Results of this investigative study can also be helpful to school library media specialists who can be limited in the use of electronic media and must rely primarily on print reference books for student research projects. An additional result can be the continued integration of information skills into the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards for Language Arts Literacy for fourth grade students.

Research Questions

1. How important did elementary school library media specialists perceive research skills as useful components of the school library curriculum?
2. Which skills/topics did elementary school library media specialists utilize to teach research skills?
3. Which forms of technology, such as the Internet, were used by elementary school library media specialists to teach research skills?
4. Which other educators in the elementary school collaborated with the school library media specialist for the district required PowerPoint presentation in the 2004/2005 school year? What print research skills were these educators teaching?

Definition of Terms

Almanac- “a summary of data and statistics used to answer ready reference questions”

(McCain & Merrill, 2001).

Atlas- “a collection of maps that often includes some geographical information” (McCain

& Merrill, 2001).

Collaboration- “refers to the cooperative efforts between teachers and library media specialists to plan, develop, and implement information literacy skills into the classroom curriculum” (McCain & Merrill, 2001).

Curriculum guide- “a written plan covering one or more facets of curriculum and instruction (goals and objectives, teaching strategies, learning activities, specific resources, evaluation and assessment techniques) for use within an instructional unit as small as a classroom or as large as a school district or state” (Reitz, 2005).

Dictionary- “an alphabetical arrangement of words with their definitions, spelling, pronunciation, and usage” (McCain & Merrill).

Electronic resource- “material consisting of data and/or computer program(s) encoded for reading and manipulation by a computer by the use of a peripheral device directly connected to the computer, such as a CD-ROM drive, or remotely via a network, such as the Internet” (Reitz, 2005).

Library- “a collection of materials organized to provide physical, bibliographic, and intellectual access to a specific group” (McCain & Merrill, 2001).

Library media center- “an area in a school that contains varied formats of materials and equipment with programs and services provided by a library media specialist” (McCain & Merrill, 2001).

PowerPoint presentation- for the purpose of this study, this refers to a fourth grade assignment required by the school district that includes text related to a topic of the student’s choice and is presented in a slide show format.

Research- “an investigation of a topic, often employing hypothesis and experimentation, undertaken by a person intent on revealing new facts, theories, or principles, or determining the current state of knowledge of the subject” (Reitz, 2005).

Research skills- for the purpose of this study, this refers to all information skills taught to fourth grade students, including the almanac, atlas, dictionary, encyclopedia, and the Big6/Super3.

Student- for the purpose of this study, fourth grade students are all students enrolled in the Camden City Public School District for the 2005-2006 school year.

Super3- information problem-solving skills developed by Mike Eisenberg and Bob Berkowitz specifically for younger students. The concepts are as follows: Plan- (Beginning); Do- (Middle); Review- (End) (Eisenberg, 2001).

Assumptions and Limitations

There were several assumptions about the research skills and the influence of information literacy skills in a library curriculum to consider when conducting this investigative study. First, it was assumed that educators generally agreed that it was beneficial for students to research a topic, and to use a variety of reference materials, and that both print and electronic resources were beneficial for exploring a topic. To determine the usefulness of information literacy skills in the elementary school library curriculum, the best source for information about the extent of information literacy skill instruction would be the elementary school library media specialists who taught the students these skills and observed students working on research projects.

A second assumption in this research study was that elementary school library media specialists in the Camden City Public Schools answered accurately and honestly when they responded to the survey. Finally, a third assumption of this information literacy skills investigative study was that some school library media

specialists surveyed actually conducted valid instruction in information literacy skills for their fourth grade students to help students do research.

This investigative study was limited to elementary school libraries/media centers, and elementary school librarians/media specialists. This study was conducted using selected elementary school library media specialists in the Camden City Public Schools in Camden, New Jersey. This study was limited by the fact that individual elementary school library media specialists introduced fourth grade students to information literacy skills using many different reference materials that varied from school to school. These factors limited the generalization of the study's results.

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CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE SEARCH

Importance of Research Skills for Grades K-4

Recently, school library media programs shifted the focus of emphasis from developing collections to a strong emphasis on student learning (Lanning & Bryner, 2004).

It is particularly important that a school media specialist maintain a good reference section, because in K-12 schools we are trying not only to answer our students' questions but to help them know how to access and use typical library resources to learn throughout their lives (Lanning & Bryner, 2004, p. 95).

Four reference books were the focus of this particular study of research skills. This study was limited to the following types of reference books: almanacs, atlases, dictionaries, and encyclopedias. A brief summary of the value and importance of each of these books is given in the next section.

Print and Electronic Resources Used

Almanacs are a staple of the reference collection and contain short entries with a major portion of the information arranged into tables and lists. The advantage of using an almanac is the availability of quick facts or figures to compare facts and update statistics and information from an encyclopedia article. Published yearly, almanacs have broad coverage and include both current and historical information (Lanning & Bryner, 2004).

Most are familiar with Rand-McNally's road atlas and world atlases with detailed maps of geographical features. Other functions of atlases include results of voting in presidential elections, the movements of people and cultures, and diagrams of a battle plan. In short, any information that may be interpreted in a geographic view can be included in an atlas. The design of an atlas may vary according to the intended audience. One example of this is the *National Geographic World Atlas for Young Explorers* (Lanning & Bryner, 2004).

"Dictionary" refers to a wide range of reference sources useful to students. Special dictionaries are designed for elementary school students (Lanning & Bryner, 2004). Current research suggested that dictionaries are used about equally in the process of reading or writing, and sometimes when studying/learning. Spelling and meaning are the information most often looked up by students (Lanning & Bryner, 2004).

The meaning of "encyclopedia" is based on the ancient Greeks who talked about the circle of the arts and sciences. "If you were well-educated, you were knowledgeable in the circle of the arts and sciences; and therefore, you were well-rounded" (Lanning & Bryner, 2004, p. 37). Articles in encyclopedias are longer than in other reference sources (Lanning & Bryner, 2004, p. 38). Color illustrations are also numerous in encyclopedias aimed at a younger audience (Lanning & Bryner, 2004, p. 38).

Dictionary Skills and Their Impact on Students' Skills

Two studies on dictionary use that were conducted by John R. Beech showed the relationship between patterns of use, skill and frequency of use and the correlation to reading, spelling, and phonological development (Beech, 2004, p. 19). The first study (no specific age given) compared poor readers with average readers. In the second study, 241

children ages seven to eleven years old, were divided on the basis of being above or below nine years old to examine developmental change. In both studies, levels of non-verbal IQ scores were controlled between groups. Tests of reading vocabulary, spelling, non-word reading, and speed and accuracy in looking up words in a dictionary were given. The results indicated that for poor readers, dictionary skills were significantly slower and less accurate in looking up words in a dictionary than their age peers who were average readers. Dictionary usage patterns varied with age. Younger readers were three times more likely to give first preference to use of a dictionary to look up spellings; older readers were more split between checking spelling and looking up meaning. The poor readers were much closer to their age peers in patterns of use. Skilled readers and spellers primarily used the dictionary for locating the meaning of a word or to check its spelling. The trend was to use the word processor to correct spelling errors (Beech, 2004).

Techniques for Teaching Research Skills

In the past, library instruction centered on seek-and-find skills related to sources-- locating, accessing, and using sources. Often these skills were taught out of subject context and without any formal curriculum. More recently, school librarians/media specialists have created scope-and-sequence for information skills. The most challenging steps in the information-problem solving process most likely are reading for specific information and taking notes. Students tend to copy out of an encyclopedia or other source unless taught effective note-taking strategies. In the last decade, a new approach to information skills instruction appeared. It is known as a process approach to library and information skills. The focus of this method is to develop cognitive skills that increase

the students' effective use of information and resources. Two examples of the process approach are: the Big6 Skills and Super3 (Eisenberg & Berkowitz, 1988) and Stripling and Pitts' Research Process. The later one is a ten-step method of library research as a thinking process. "The citation technique involves exact copying of specific facts" (Stripling & Pitts, 1988, p. 116). To avoid plagiarism, the notes should be turned in with the final project, whether or not it is written. And, of course, the more creativity that the final project requires, students should have no reason to 'copy from the encyclopedia'." (Stripling & Pitts, 1988, p. 117).

Emmy Lieser, a graduate school student, prepared a unit entitled, "Building Native American Houses Using the Super3." The Trash-N-Treasure note-taking technique was presented in Lieser's PowerPoint presentation. Second grade students were given instructions on "How To Take Notes Without Copying." The skill of note-taking was related to a pirate's treasure map. "A researcher must dig to find words that help answer the questions (treasure words). He or she must 'toss aside' unnecessary sentences, phrases, and words (trash words)" (Jansen, 2001, p. 41). To demonstrate this concept, the author suggested the use of an overhead projector and transparency of an encyclopedia article. Students should have a copy of the article in order to follow along and practice this technique (Jansen, 2001).

Kris Dewees (Dewees, 1987) investigated a process-oriented approach as compared to the traditional sources-based approach. Two average level fourth grade classes were tested on seven reference skill areas: table of contents, encyclopedia, card catalog, dictionary, table interpretation, index use, and map reading.

The group that was taught using the 'Pooh Step-by-Step Guide for Writing the Research Paper' was significantly higher on overall performance (and higher on each skill area tested) than the group taught using a traditional method (i. e., instruction on individual research skills as separate entities). (Deweese, 1987, p. 8). Results of the Dewees study indicated that a process-oriented approach can be more effective than an approach that focused on use of individual sources (Deweese, 1987).

In June, 1991, at the American Association of School Librarians Preconference, Eisenberg reported on his efforts to compare four process models of library and information skills instruction: Kuhlthau, Eisenberg and Berkowitz, Irving, and Pitts and Stripling. Eisenberg concluded that a common process model was evident. Each author presented the process with different terms, and used different levels of activities, however, all were in agreement on the overall scope and general categories of the process (Eisenberg & Brown, 1992).

"The phrase 'integrated approach' refers to teaching library and information skills in the context of subject area curriculum and classroom instruction" (Eisenberg, & Brown, 1992). Like the other themes mentioned earlier, the integration theme was not substantiated by documented research. Eisenberg and Berkowitz and others have written approaches to promote the integration of library media skills into the curriculum. This method is viewed as a crucial factor in effective library media programs.

Westford Public Schools in Westford, Massachusetts, taught information skills using the Big Six method for grades four through twelve and a modified version of the Big Six called the Super3 for kindergarten through second grade. This district instructed

their teachers to stress the Big Six Skills in the classroom in collaboration with the school library media teacher. The information literacy skills in Westford were also aligned with the national standards of the American Association of School Librarians (Information Literacy in the Westford Curriculum, 2005).

Technology Used to Teach Research Skills

When the use of worksheets was compared to the use of computer-assisted instruction (CAI) for additional drill and practice of library skills, no significant difference was found between the two methods. Student achievement actually appeared to be almost identical in both cases (Iacovou, 1987).

Most studies comparing instructional methodologies find little evidence pointing to one method as superior to another. Hardesty (1984), for example, in a paper presented at the 1984 ALA conference, stated that “there may be fewer differences among the various teaching methods than we commonly believe.” He also notes that “Ivor Davies, in his book *Competency Based Learning*, concluded after examining mountains of data and reviews of the literature that one key point stood out: There are no significant differences in terms of learning among the teaching methods available today. (Eisenberg & Brown, 1992, p. 103)

Technologies that support students’ research and collaboration skills include Internet search engines and online tools for evaluating Web-based information. In addition to text-based writing, technology encourages students to integrate visual and aural multimedia into their school projects. A variety of software programs allow students to insert images, sounds, and video. For students who have difficulty with writing, multimedia compositions offer an alternative means of self-expression and

provide support for development of reading and writing skills. Use of the Internet search engines can encourage students' research skills and enable them to find information on virtually any topic. Students may access online journals, magazines, newspapers, encyclopedias, and Web sites (Holum & Gahala, 2001).

Carol A. Sabol found in her study "Techniques Used by Elementary Library Media Specialists to Teach Authors and Illustrators," that respondents' most widely used methods for teaching authors and illustrators were older and more cost efficient than those using the recent developments in technology. Sabol concluded that no one used virtual chats or Webcam visits to teach authors and illustrators due to the technological equipment and procedures that either were not available or familiar to elementary media specialists (Sabol, 2005).

Elementary School Libraries and Student Achievement

Professor James Baughman of Simmons College in Massachusetts conducted a study of school libraries in 2000. The test scores indicated a direct correlation between the quality of school library programs and student achievement as measured by the state's standardized test, the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS). The findings of the Simmons Study showed that the highest achieving students attended schools with good libraries. Other results relevant to this study included the following:

- At each grade level, school library programs increased standardized test scores.
- At the elementary and middle school levels, students scored higher on the standardized tests when there was a library instruction program.

- At the elementary and high school levels, students who are served by a full time librarian had higher standardized test scores than those in schools without a full time librarian (Baughman, 2000).

Ken Haycock, at the time of this researcher's paper, Professor and Director, School of Library, Archival and Information Studies, University of British Columbia, declared in his paper presented to the International Association of School Librarianship annual conference in 1994, the importance of collaboration between the library media specialist and the classroom teacher for the effective development of student achievement. "Minimal gains in research and study skills can be achieved through instruction by the classroom teacher alone or by the library media specialist alone; effective instruction depends on the cooperative effort of both teacher and library media specialist" (Haycock, 1995, p. 227).

Collaboration: Involvement of Other Educators

In our society today, collaboration has become an accepted practice in most organizations. Within educational organizations, the formation of committees or teams has become a normal strategy in order to solve problems and make decisions (Small, 2002). According to Muronago and Harada (1999), successful collaboration is based on common goals, a shared vision, and an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect (Russell, 2002).

Information Power: Building Partnerships for Learning (1998) cited the increasing importance of collaboration to library programs and the librarian's role. "Effective collaboration with teachers," *Information Power* (1998) pointed out, "helps to create a vibrant and engaged community of learners, strengthens the whole school

program as well as the library media program, and develops support for the school library media program throughout the whole school ” (AASL & AECT, 1998, p. 51).

Several real-life examples of elementary librarian/teacher collaboration were found in the literature. A teacher/librarian at Fairley Elementary School in Hannibal, New York, Penny Winklebeck, described her collaboration project with the art teacher at the school. The school librarian read *The Keeping Quilt* by Patricia Pollaco to all of the second grade classes. She also brought in personally owned quilts to share. Within two weeks, quilts were designed by each individual class and hung in the hall between the two rooms. In addition, the art teacher created a bulletin board that featured pictures from the book, pictures of the librarian reading the book to the students, and of the classes working on the projects. This team of two teachers was also interested in including the music teachers in these collaborations (Small, 2002).

Another example of collaboration found in the literature was by Kathy Cadden, teacher/librarian at the Nathaniel Alexander Elementary School in Charlotte, North Carolina. Cadden used some information that she heard at the fourth grade team meeting as a catalyst for collaboration. Teachers were expressing their increasing frustration at trying to fit science into their full day of teaching, even with the hands-on science kits provided by the district. Cadden offered to set up a grade four science lab unit on simple machines in an empty classroom. The teacher/librarian explained the steps involved in this successful venture. Kits were previewed, lessons were chosen in order to fit the timeframe allowed, a bi-weekly schedule was set up for the six fourth grade classes, and the staff co-taught as many lessons as possible. As a result, students were more

enthusiastic about science and grateful parents have volunteered to assist with the lab (Small, 2002).

Emmy Lieser's graduate school project at Old Dominion University in Virginia, "Building Native American Houses Using the Super3: A Collaborative Unit" (2004) used the Super3 research skills for the unit. First, the teacher and the library media specialist showed the class two project examples. One project met all the goals and one was incomplete. Next, they reviewed all the project goals with the students. The students worked in groups to discuss questions and work on a know-what-learn chart. The classroom teacher and the library media specialist observed the student groups during this planning process. Phase two of the Super3 process was the "do" stage. Students brainstormed about where to locate the information and facts they need. Then the library media specialist and the teacher modeled trash-and-treasure note taking. Next students worked in pairs as one student read a sentence and the other one listened for treasure words. The purpose of this technique was to eliminate the "copy and paste" behavior. The final step was review, and this happened when the students self-assessed their projects. Students turned journals and projects into the library media specialist and teacher for assessment and comments.

These are all examples of successful teacher/librarian collaboration. However, other reports showed a lack of collaboration opportunities or unsuccessful attempts at collaboration. Wolcott (1996) showed a lack of evidence of librarian/teacher instructional partnerships in schools. Miller and Shontz (1993) found that teacher/librarians were "struggling to become teaching partners with teachers who don't want them" (Small, 2002).

There is a theory that this lack of collaboration is changing with the infusion of technology in schools. Undoubtedly, the increasing importance of information technologies in schools has increased the need for librarians and other educators to collaborate (Small, 2002). Successful collaborative partners such as teacher/librarians, classroom teachers, special area teachers (e. g., art and music), technology coordinators and administrators, require collaboration training during professional development sessions (Small, 2002).

Summary

Research skills instruction is important and should be a major function of every elementary school library media program. The mission statement in *Information Power* (1998) supports the teaching role provided by the school librarian/media specialist. It is stated as follows: “to ensure that students and staff are effective users of ideas and information” (AASL & AECT, 1998, p. 101).

Eisenberg & Brown (1992), summarized four beliefs about the instructional role of the library media program. They were as follows:

1. Instruction in library and information skills is a valuable and essential part of the school’s educational program.
2. Essential library and information skills encompass more than just location of and access to sources. The skills curriculum should emphasize general information problem-solving and research processes and the specific skills within these general processes (e. g. , selection, synthesis, and evaluation).
3. Library and information skills should not be taught in isolation. The skills program must be fully integrated with the school’s curriculum.

4. The use of innovative instructional methods and technologies can enhance the teaching of library and information skills. (Eisenberg & Brown, 1992, p. 109)

Haycock (1995) found that there was a positive relationship between the level of library media center service offered and student scholastic achievement. In schools with good library media centers and the services of a library media specialist, students performed significantly better on tests for basic research skills, outlining and note-taking, and the knowledge and use of reference materials, such as dictionaries and encyclopedias (Haycock, 1995).

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CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Overall Design and Justification

This study was comprised of applied research that included a mailed questionnaire to determine how elementary school library media specialists perceived the role of research skills in the school library curriculum. The methodology chosen for this study was a survey. This researcher selected a survey for several reasons. First, each participant completed the survey at his/her convenience. Respondents were more likely to participate with less infringement upon their time. When approached at an inconvenient time, respondents are more apt to refuse a request. Secondly, the survey provided structured responses so participants stayed on topic and did not comment in an unnecessary direction. Finally, participation was strictly anonymous. Although some individuals don't mind giving personal information, others prefer to remain anonymous (Powell & Connaway, 2004).

The study was conducted to identify which methods and resources were employed by Camden City elementary school library media specialists to instruct their fourth grade students in researching a topic for a PowerPoint presentation. This researcher decided to conduct this study to understand how elementary school library media specialists in the Camden City Public Schools conducted their research skills instruction for the fourth grade PowerPoint presentations during the 2004/2005 school year and which other, if any, school staff members participated in this district required project.

Statement of Purpose

This investigative study was conducted to explore the library information skills that elementary school library media specialists in the Camden City Public Schools taught to students in kindergarten through fourth grade. Another purpose of this study was to determine the elementary school library media specialists' perceptions of the collaboration that existed between the classroom teacher, computer teacher, technology teacher, and the school librarian/media specialist for one selected research project.

Research Questions

1. How important did elementary school library media specialists perceive research skills as useful components of the school library curriculum?
2. Which skills/topics did elementary school library media specialists utilize to teach research skills?
3. Which forms of technology, such as the Internet, were used by elementary school library media specialists to teach research skills?
4. Which other educators in the elementary school collaborated with the school library media specialist for the district required PowerPoint presentation in the 2004/2005 school year? What print research skills were these educators teaching?

Population and Sample

The population and sample were the same and consisted of all elementary school library media specialists in the Camden City Public Schools. This survey was non-randomly distributed and consisted of eleven closed questions and one open-ended question. The survey was distributed by interschool mail to seventeen school library media specialists in public elementary schools in the Camden City Public Schools located

in Camden, New Jersey. Camden, New Jersey encompasses nine square miles in southern New Jersey in Camden County. The elementary schools that were selected for the survey were comprised of students in grades pre-kindergarten and/or kindergarten through grades four or five and were of various socio-economic levels.

Variables

There were several variables in this study that explored the perceptions of elementary school library media specialists on the usefulness of teaching research skills and the methods used to teach research skills as components of the elementary school library curriculum. A major variable was the collaboration that existed between the elementary school library media specialist and other educators in the elementary school. Another variable was the methods that elementary school library media specialists employed in teaching research skills and which methods were perceived by the school library media specialist as useful. Other variables were the use/nonuse of technological sources in research skills instruction, fixed/flexible schedules, age of the students, and number of times per week that the students received library skills instruction. A list of the schools participating in this study is found in Appendix C.

Methods of Data Collection

A paper-based and typed questionnaire (see Appendix A) consisting of eleven closed questions and one open-ended question was utilized to collect the data for this study. Each elementary school library media specialist was asked to complete the survey and return it to the researcher through interschool mail in the self-addressed envelope that was provided with the survey. The surveys were distributed on Wednesday, January, 25, 2006, and were expected to arrive at each elementary school the next day, Thursday,

January 26, 2006. Since that Thursday was an inservice day for the entire school district, some school library media specialists were not at their regular schools. Therefore, they would not receive their mail until the next regular school day, Friday, January 27, 2006. The survey was to be returned by Friday, February 10, 2006. Each survey contained a specific identification number to indicate which surveys were returned. A second survey was sent to nonrespondents on Monday, February 13, 2006.

An introductory letter (see Appendix B) and qualitative survey (see Appendix A) were sent through interschool mail on the Board of Education delivery truck. Packets (introductory letter and survey) were sent to seventeen elementary school library media specialists who taught in elementary schools that serviced students in pre-kindergarten and/or kindergarten to grade five in the Camden City Public Schools.

Instruments Used

An introductory letter (see Appendix B) which briefly explained the rationale for this survey was mailed to elementary school library media specialists who taught in public elementary schools that serviced students in pre-kindergarten and/or kindergarten to grade five in the Camden City Public Schools. The introductory letter contained a statement of confidentiality and an explanation of the purpose of the study.

The first four questions of the survey provided background information for study variables. Information from questions one and two focused on the scheduled library periods. The presence or absence of a library clerk/instructional assistant (questions three, four, and five) was included to give the researcher an overall picture of the library program in each school. Questions six, seven, and twelve specifically addressed the research skills. These included the importance of teaching research skills as perceived by

the school librarian/media specialist, topics/skills taught by the school librarian/media specialist to instruct the students, and the research skills fourth grade students needed to learn in order to create PowerPoint presentations. Question eight inquired about the reference books used to teach the research skills. Technology used to teach research skills was addressed in question number nine. The tenth question included the participation or lack of participation of the school library media specialists with the fourth grade PowerPoint presentation instruction during the 2004/2005 school year. Question number twelve asked for general comments on print research skills the fourth grade students needed to learn for the PowerPoint presentations.

Reliability and Validity

The introductory letter and survey were pre-tested by Dr. Shontz, the instructor of the thesis class, ten students enrolled in the School and Public Librarianship thesis class at Rowan University, and by two selected elementary school library media specialists from a different school district. None of the ten students in the thesis class were part of the sample for the study. The elementary school library media specialists who pre-tested the survey were asked to complete the questionnaire and comment on one specific question. Based on the responses from the pre-test, all suggestions for change were reviewed for potential revisions.

The validity of the study was partially ensured because the survey questionnaires were mailed directly to each elementary school library media specialist. The results were assumed to be valid based on the responses of elementary school library media specialists who taught school library curricula in the elementary schools of the Camden City Public Schools.

References

Lanning, S., & Bryner, J. (2004) *Essential reference services for today's school media specialists*. Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited.

Powell, R. R., & Connaway, L. S. (2004). *Basic research methods for librarians* (4th ed.). Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited.

CHAPTER FOUR
ANALYSIS OF DATA

Procedures Used

Elementary school library media specialists in public elementary schools with grades PreK or K to grades four or five in Camden City Public Schools in Camden, New Jersey were asked to respond to a written questionnaire survey about their perceptions and methods used to teach library information skills. The school library media specialists were chosen because they were usually responsible for organizing and implementing activities that teach about research skills. The written survey was pre-tested by Dr. Marilyn L. Shontz who made one specific recommendation in the wording of the open-ended question to more thoroughly inquire about specific research skills the fourth grade students needed to learn for their district required PowerPoint topic presentations. Then, ten members of Rowan University's thesis class in the School and Public Librarianship Program completed a practice test of the survey. Only minor changes were made to the survey to allow for the inclusion of DVDs as a form of technology used to teach research skills and the wording on one question to include library assistants and clerks, not just assistants.

Response Rate

During the last week of January 2006, an introductory letter (see Appendix B) that briefly explained the rationale for this study, with a statement of confidentiality, and the

qualitative survey (see Appendix A) were mailed to seventeen school library media specialists. The letter was sent through interschool mail to school library media specialists in public elementary schools in the Camden City Public School District in southern New Jersey. By mid-February, ten respondents had returned their completed surveys to the researcher. A second letter was sent on February 13, 2006, along with the survey, to the nonrespondents. Two more completed surveys were returned by the end of February for a total of twelve completed surveys. All questionnaires returned were useable. The returned and useable rate was 71%. Data for this study were analyzed utilizing the Microsoft Excel computer program to determine the frequency distributions for each question on the survey. The Excel program was also utilized to create various pie charts and bar graphs to display the descriptive statistics of the data compiled.

Variables Studied

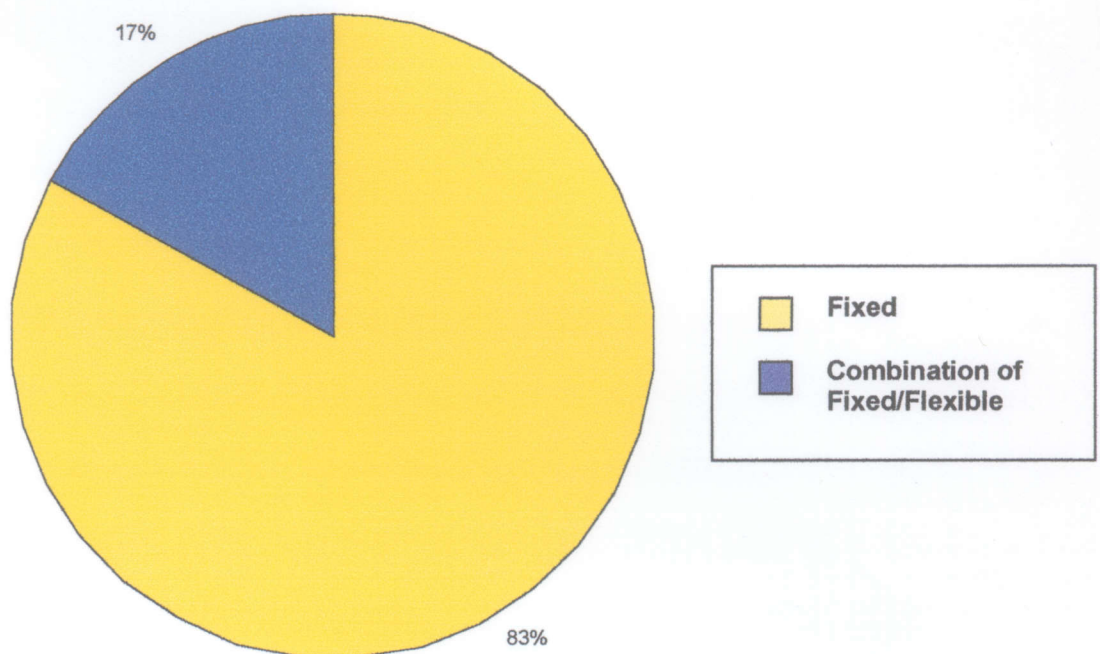
Several variables were examined in this study to explore the perceptions of elementary school library media specialists about the methods used to teach research skills and the importance of teaching research skills as part of the elementary school library curriculum. One important variable was the skills/topics used to teach research skills in the elementary school library program. Other variables were the methods that elementary school library media specialists employed in teaching research skills and which forms of technology were utilized to teach research skills. Additional variables were the school library media specialists' schedules—fixed or flexible, the number of times per week that the students received library skills instruction, and the presence or absence of a library assistant/clerk/instructional assistant during the library classes.

Presentation of Results

Data for this study were analyzed utilizing the Microsoft Excel computer program to determine the percentages for specific questions on the survey. Of the twelve surveys that were returned by elementary school library media specialists, 83% had a fixed schedule, and 17% had a combination of fixed and flexible. No one reported only a flexible schedule. Results are shown in Figure 1.

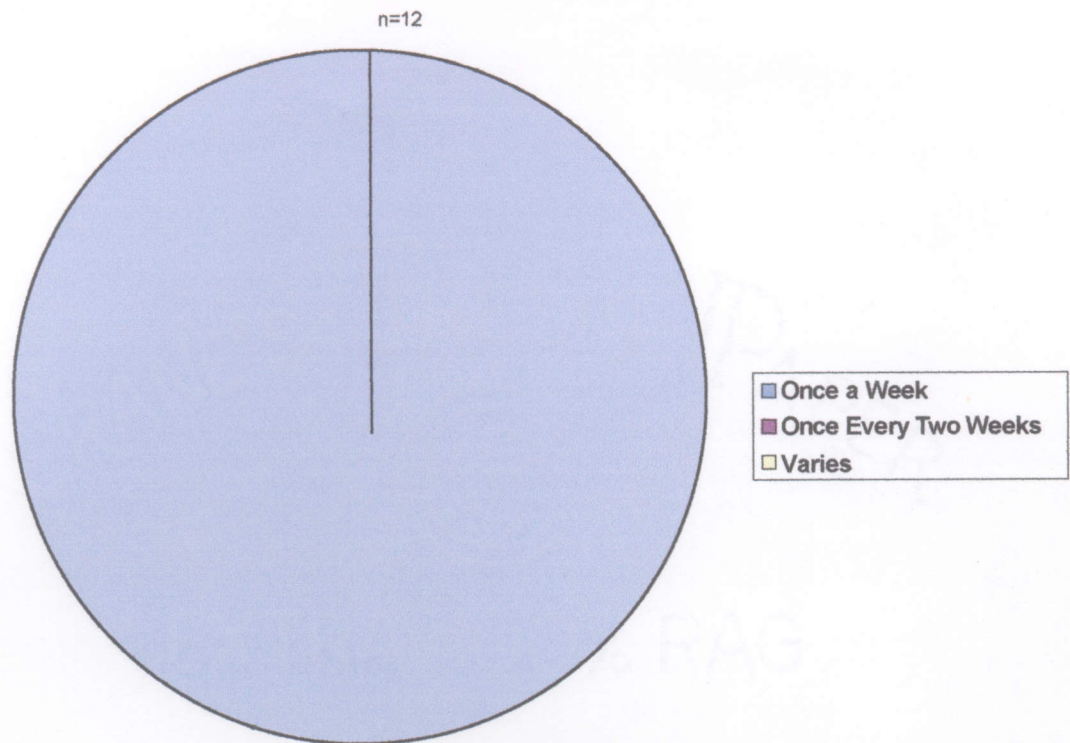
Figure 1 Type of Scheduled Library Periods

n=12



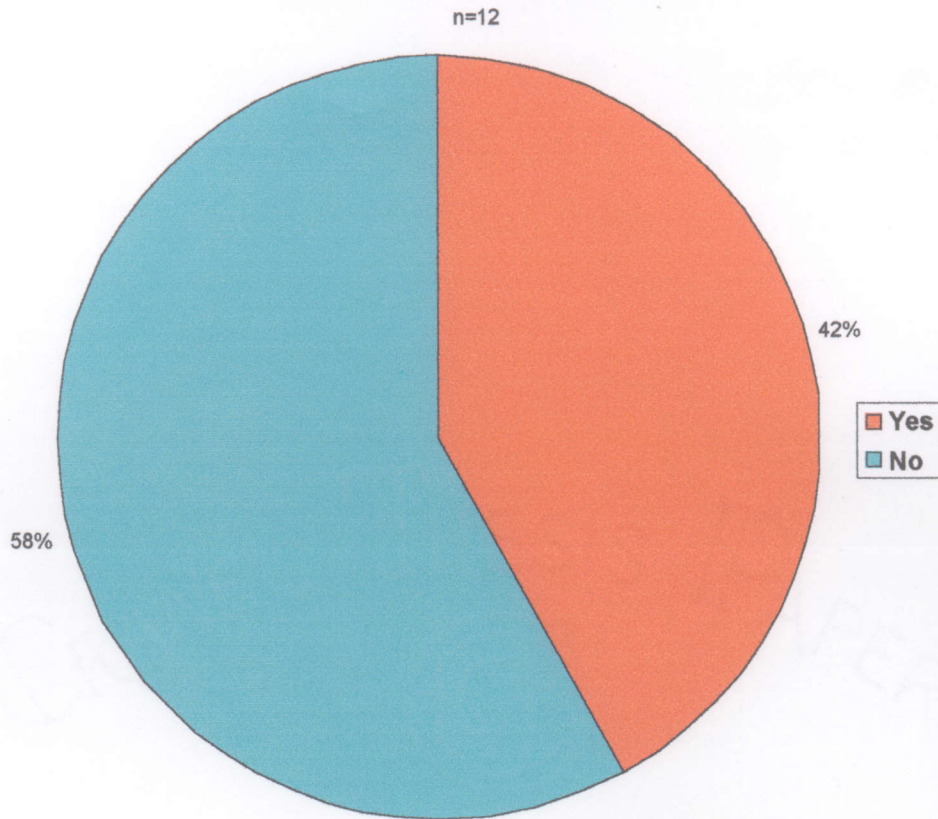
When responding about the frequency of scheduled library periods, 100% met with their students once a week. Results are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2 Frequency of Scheduled Library Periods



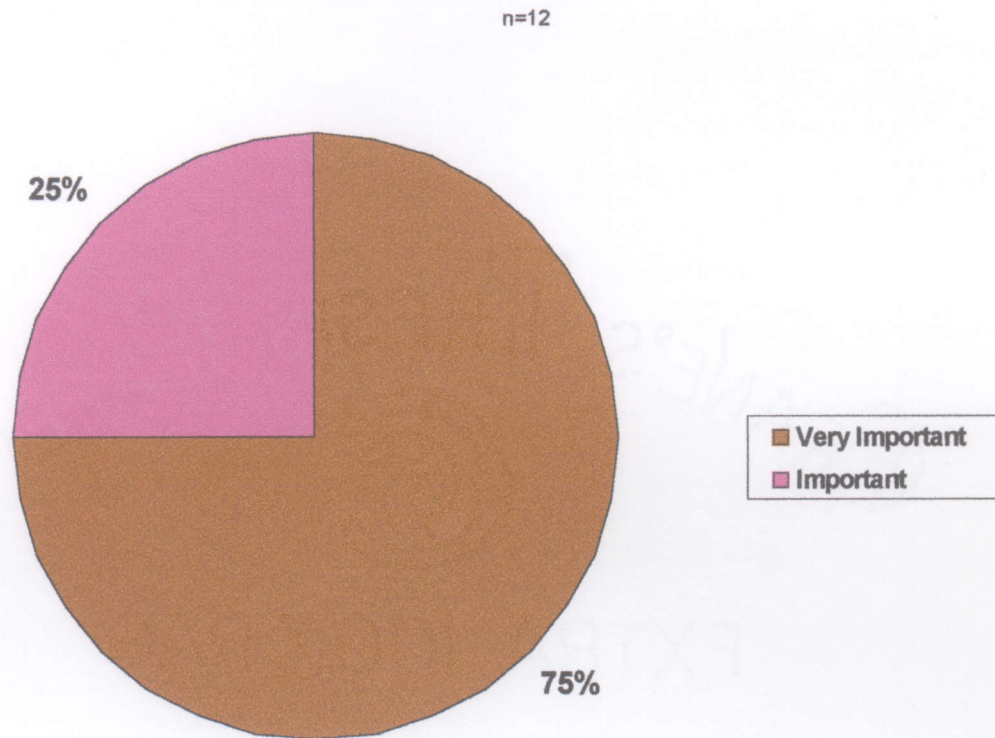
In response to the survey question about the assignment of a library assistant/clerk to help in the school library media center, 58% replied that they did not have help, and 42% did have help. Results are shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3 Library Assistant/Clerk Assigned to Help in the School Library Media Center



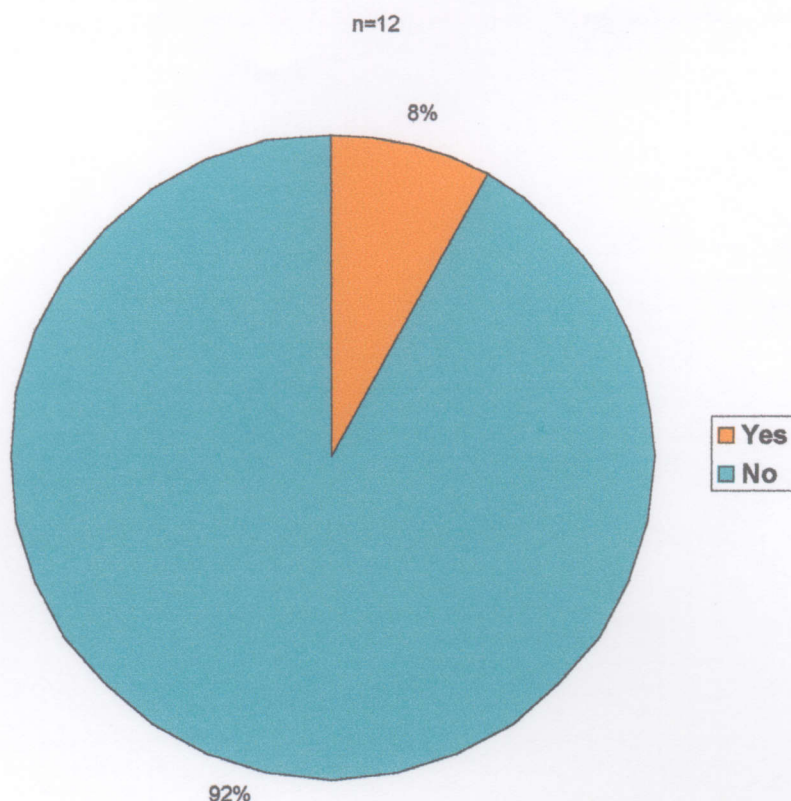
When asked about the importance of teaching research skills as part of the elementary school library curriculum, 82% of the respondents replied that they were very important, and 18% replied that they were important. No one responded that they were somewhat important or not important. Results are shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4 Importance of Teaching Research Skills as Part of the Elementary School Library Curriculum



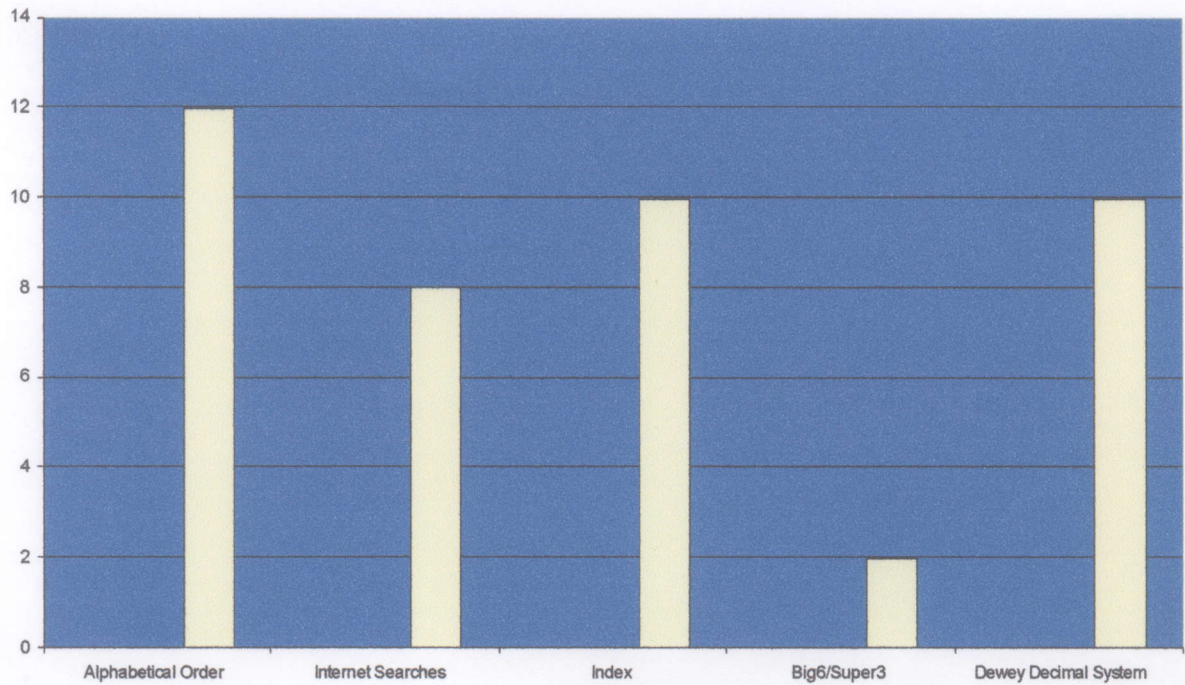
Of the twelve surveys that were returned, 92% of the respondents did not assist fourth grade students with PowerPoint presentations during the 2004/2005 school year. The percentage of elementary school library media specialists who did assist was 8%. Results are shown in Figure 5. The computer teacher and technology teacher were named as the only other educators who collaborated with the elementary school library media specialist for this one specific research project.

Figure 5 Elementary School Library Media Specialists in the CCSD Who Assisted with PowerPoint Presentations in 2004/2005



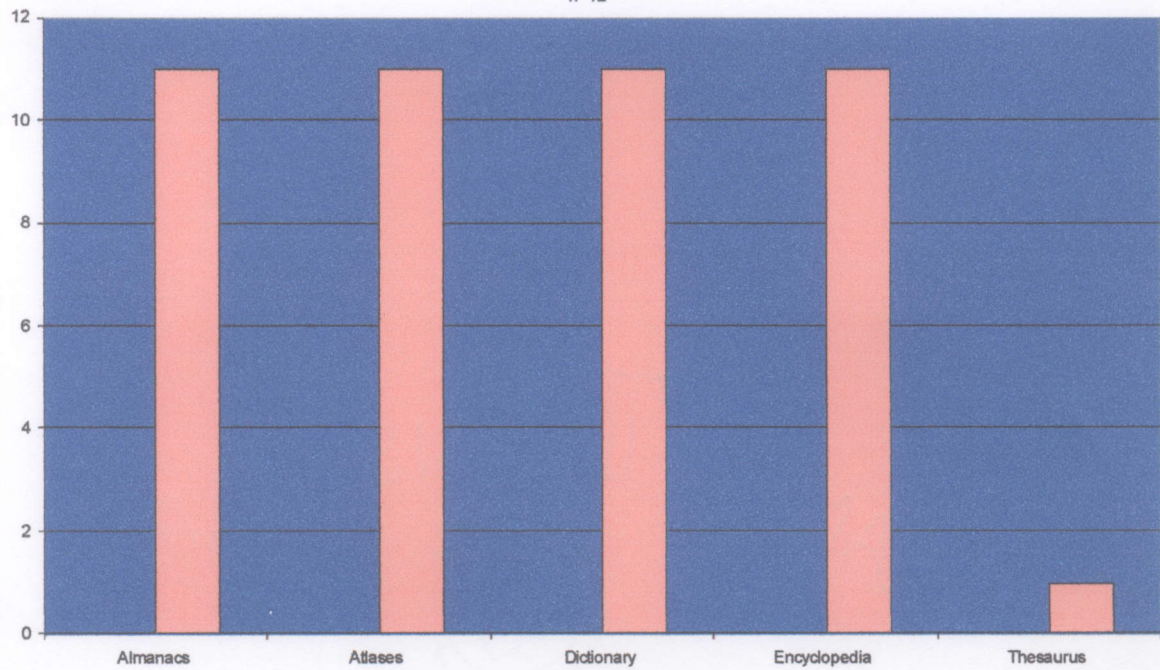
Results of the skills/topics used when teaching research skills in the elementary school library program were as follows: 12 of the respondents stated that they taught alphabetical order, 10 stated that they instructed students on how to use an index, 10 stated that they taught students how to use the Dewey Decimal System, 8 taught students use of the Internet, and 2 respondents utilized the Big6/Super3 Skills approach as part of their elementary school library program. No one reported using the Trash-N-Treasure note-taking skill. Results are shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6 Skills/Topics Used to Teach Research Skills in the Elementary School Library Program (n=12)



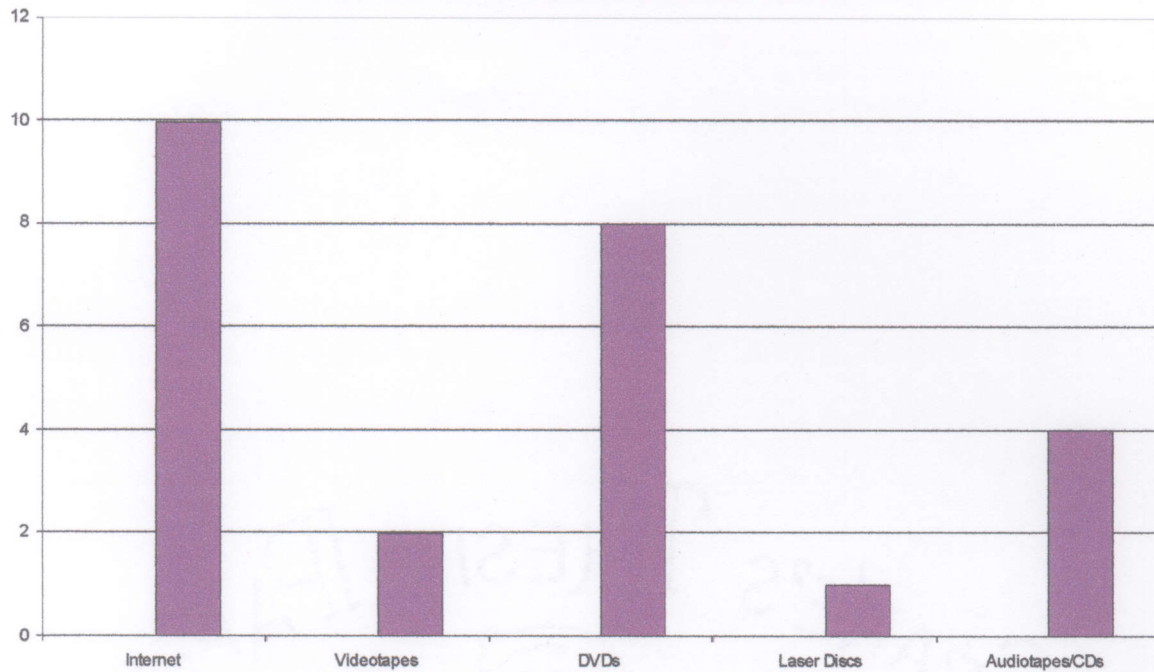
The most frequently used reference books used to teach research skills in the elementary school library media center were the almanac, atlas, dictionary, and encyclopedia. Eleven respondents chose each of the books listed above. One respondent filled in “thesaurus” on the line asking about “other” print reference books. Results are shown in Figure 7.

Figure 7 Print Reference Books Used to Teach Research Skills in the Elementary School Library (n=12)



The forms of technology used to teach research skills in the elementary school library media center were as follows: 10 of the respondents stated that they used the Internet, 8 stated that they used DVDs, 4 stated that they used audiotapes/CDs, 2 stated that they used videotapes, and 1 reported use of laser discs. Results are shown in Figure 8.

Figure 8 Forms of Technology Utilized to Teach Research Skills in the Elementary School Library (n=12)



Summary

Most of the respondents met with their students on a fixed schedule. All of the elementary school library media specialists held scheduled library classes for their students once every week. A majority of respondents did not have the help of the library assistant or library clerk. While teaching research skills was very important to the majority of the respondents, only one elementary school library media specialist helped with the fourth grade PowerPoint presentations.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary of the Study

This study was comprised of applied research, and was designed to explore the library information skills elementary school library media specialists taught to students in grades kindergarten through fourth grade in the Camden City Public Schools. This study was conducted to determine the school library media specialists' perceptions of the collaboration that existed between the classroom teacher, computer teacher, technology teacher, and the school library media specialist for one district required PowerPoint presentation assignment in 2005.

It was assumed that educators generally agreed that it was beneficial for students to research a topic, and to use a variety of reference materials, and that both print and electronic resources were beneficial for exploring a topic. Another assumption in this research study was that the elementary school library media specialists in the Camden City Public Schools responded to the written survey of eleven closed and one open-ended question accurately and honestly. Of the 17 elementary school library media specialists who received questionnaires, 12 responded, and their responses were analyzed using the Microsoft Excel computer program. Pie charts and bar graphs were created using the Excel computer program to determine the percentages for specific questions on the survey. The researcher categorized the school library media specialists' responses to the survey and drew conclusions.

Elementary School Library Schedule

The computer analysis of the statistics of the library research skills survey indicated that 83% of the elementary school library media specialists who responded to the survey had a fixed schedule, and 17% had a combination of a fixed and flexible schedule on a weekly basis. Of the respondents, 100% met with their students once a week. When questioned about the assignment of a library assistant/clerk to help in the elementary school library media center, 58% replied that they did not have help and 42% did have help.

Library Research Skills Taught in the Elementary School Library Curriculum

Interestingly, 82% of the respondents replied that teaching research skills as part of the elementary school library curriculum was very important, and 18% replied that they were somewhat important. Of the elementary school library media specialists who responded to the survey, 92% did not assist fourth grade students with PowerPoint presentations during the 2004/2005 school year. Elementary school library media specialists who did assist were 8%. One conclusion drawn from these results was that principals at the individual elementary schools informed the classroom teacher about this special PowerPoint project, but did not give specific instructions about who was responsible for assisting/training the students on how to do the research.

Skills/Topics Used to Teach Research Skills in the Elementary School Library Program

All 12 of the respondents to the survey reported that they taught alphabetical order, 10 stated that they instructed students on how to use an index, 10 taught students

how to use the Dewey Decimal System, 8 taught students how to use the Internet, and 2 respondents utilized the Big6/Super3 skills method. None of the school library media specialists used the Trash-N-Treasure note-taking skill instruction method.

Print Reference Books used to Teach Research Skills in the Elementary School Library

The respondents' most widely used reference books to teach research skills in the elementary school library media center resulted in a four-way tie. The almanac, atlas, dictionary, and encyclopedia were chosen by eleven of the twelve respondents. One respondent replied that the "thesaurus" was an additional print reference book used to teach research skills. The researcher expected the dictionary to be named by the majority of the elementary school library media specialists because of the supply provided by the district for the elementary school libraries. Perhaps the equal use of the almanac and atlas could be attributed to the Scholastic Book Fair purchases and rewards. Another possibility was that the library budget funds were used to buy reference books, including sets of encyclopedias for different reading levels.

Forms of Technology Utilized to Teach Research Skills in the Elementary School Library

The majority of the respondents used the Internet to teach research skills. The second most frequently used form of technology was DVDs. Audiotapes/CDs were selected by 4 of the 12 respondents, 2 stated that they used videotapes, and 1 used laser discs. The availability of computers in the school library media centers and knowledge of search skills may partially account for the Internet being chosen as the number one technology method to teach research skills in the elementary school library.

Significance of the Results

Elementary school library media specialists who responded to this research study agreed that it was very important to teach research skills as part of the elementary school library curriculum. One hundred percent of the respondents taught alphabetical order, but only sixteen percent taught the Big6/Super3 Skills method of research. Of the elementary school librarians who responded to the survey, eighty-three percent taught use of an index and the Dewey Decimal System. The Internet was the number one choice of technology used to teach research skills in the elementary school library. It was apparent that most of the district elementary school library media specialists had the research skills necessary to instruct students on how to use the Internet and also had the computers available for instruction.

Recommendations for Further Study

One recommendation resulting from this study is to develop a district school library curriculum guide to include specific skills to be taught by the elementary school library media specialists. In addition, it is recommended that there should be district sponsored workshops/in-services to train the elementary school library media specialists about the most recent research skill techniques, such as the Big6/Super3 Skills approach.

When a district required project is assigned, there should be a special workshop/in-service to train the elementary school library media specialists. In addition assignments should be given listing the specific duties of other staff members who will collaborate on the project. Since 92% of the respondents did not assist fourth grade students with the district required PowerPoint presentations, the district should communicate to the entire staff exactly who is responsible for training and supervising

the students for special projects of this type. All school staff members should be informed about a special district-required project in writing from the superintendent, a supervisor, or administrator, and the roles of everyone who will help the students to achieve their goal.

In order to equalize the quantity of available reference books in elementary school library media centers, the district should provide funds in the budget for purchases based on need and the number of students. Currently, site-based management is in effect, and budgets are prepared in each school. The Budget Committee is a group of staff members who control decisions on cuts and expenditures. It would be advantageous for the school library media specialist to become a member of the Budget Committee.

When a new library services supervisor is hired to replace the previous supervisor who retired, it is recommended that all district elementary school library media specialists be assigned an assistant/clerk to help with clerical responsibilities. Library assistants and library clerks are crucial to assist the elementary school librarian with library management. The individual school principals should assign permanent help in order to allow the elementary school library media specialist more time to concentrate on providing research skills instruction for students.

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APPENDIX A
QUESTIONNAIRE

**Survey on Library Information Skills Taught by Elementary
School Librarians/Media Specialists In K-4 Camden City Public Schools**

This survey is being administered as part of a master's degree research project. While your participation is voluntary and you are not required to answer any of the questions herein, your cooperation and participation are important to the success of the project and are sincerely appreciated. Please understand that all responses are **strictly confidential and no personal information is being requested.**

Which of the following best describes the type of scheduling for classes in your school library/media center? (Please circle **ONE**.)

Fixed schedule Flexible schedule Combination of fixed and flexible

How frequent are the scheduled periods for the library/media center?
(Please circle **ONE**.)

Once a week Once every two weeks Varies

Do you have a Library Assistant assigned to help you in the school library/media center?
(Please circle **ONE**.)

Yes No

If yes, how often is your Library Assistant/Clerk present during student classes?
(Please circle **ONE**.)

All Classes Part Time

Do Classroom Instructional Assistants stay with their class during the library period?
(Please circle **ALL THAT APPLY**.)

Yes No Some IAs Stay

How important do you believe it is to teach research skills as a part of the elementary school library curriculum? (Please circle **ONE**.)

Very important Important Somewhat Important Not important

Mrs. Michele G. Feldman
Dudley Elementary School
18 North 23rd Street
Box #101
Camden, NJ 08105
856-964-6316

7. Which skills/topics to teach research skills have you utilized in your school library program (Please circle **ALL THAT APPLY.**)

Alphabetical Order

Internet Searches

Use of an Index

Big6 Skills/Super3 (Eisenberg & Berkowitz)

Other _____

Dewey Decimal System

Trash-N-Treasure note-taking

8. Which print reference books do you use to teach research skills?
(Please circle **ALL THAT APPLY.**)

Almanac

Atlas

Dictionary

Encyclopedia

Other _____

Which forms of technology have you utilized to teach research skills?
(Please circle **ALL THAT APPLY.**)

Internet

Videotapes/DVDs

Listening to audiotapes/CDs

Other _____

Did you assist the fourth grade students and/or classroom teachers with the district required PowerPoint presentations in the 2004/2005 school year? Please circle **ONE.**)

Yes

No

Which other educators in your elementary school collaborated with the school librarian/media specialist for the district required fourth grade PowerPoint presentations in 2004/2005? (Please circle **ALL THAT APPLY.**)

Classroom Teacher

ESL Teacher

Reading Coach

None

Computer Teacher

Other Staff

Technology Teacher

What print research skills did the fourth grade students need to learn in order to do research for their district required PowerPoint presentations? (Please explain below.)

Thank you very much for your cooperation and participation!

Mrs. Michele G. Feldman
Dudley Elementary School
18 North 23rd Street
Box #101
Camden, NJ 08105
856-964-6316

APPENDIX B
COVER LETTER



January 25, 2006

Dear School Librarian/Media Specialist:

As part of the requirements to earn a master's degree in the School Librarianship program at Rowan University in Glassboro, New Jersey, I am in the process of writing a master's thesis under the direction of Dr. Marilyn L. Shontz. My research involves the methods that elementary school librarians/media specialists utilize to teach research skills to their library students.

Please respond to the attached 10-15 minute survey and return it to me in the enclosed, self-addressed envelope by February 10, 2006. Your support in this study will help me to identify which methods elementary school librarians/media specialists use to teach research skills. In addition, school librarians/media specialists' overall perceptions about the importance of research skills in the elementary school library curriculum will be identified. Another result will be to identify the collaboration that exists among the teachers, and other staff members in teaching the fourth grade PowerPoint presentation unit.

If you have any questions, please email me at mfeldman@camden.k12.nj.us or Dr. Shontz at shontz@rowan.edu. Enclosed you will find a special bookmark as a small symbol of my appreciation for your time and effort. A copy of the results will be distributed to all participants upon request. Thank you, in advance, for your cooperation in this study.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Michele G. Feldman
School Librarian
Dudley Elementary School
18 North 23rd Street
Box #101
Camden, NJ 08105
856-964-6316

APPENDIX C
LIST OF SCHOOLS

SCHOOL	ADDRESS	ZIP CODE
Henry L. Bonsall School	1575 Mt. Ephraim Avenue	08104-1696
Alfred Cramer School	2800 Mickle Street	08105-2295
Riletta Twyne Cream School	1875 Mulford Street	08104
Dr. Henry H. Davis School	3425 Cramer Street	08105
Forest Hill School	1625 Wildwood Avenue	08103-2848
Lanning Square School @ Broadway	501 S. Broadway	08103-1279
Lanning Square School @ Fetters	1020 South 3 rd Street	08103-1944
Francis X. McGraw School	3051 Fremont Street	08105
Rafael Cordero Molina School	601 Vine Street	08102-1896
Parkside School	1227 Kenwood Avenue	08103-2815
Harry C. Sharp School	928 N. 32 nd Street	08105-4299
Charles Sumner School	1600 South 8th Street	08104-1496
George Washington School	1033 Cambridge Street	08105-3930
John Greenleaf Whittier School	740 Chestnut Street	08103-2433
Dr. Ulysses S. Wiggins School	400 Mt. Vernon Street	08103-2030
Henry B. Wilson School	855 Woodland Avenue	08104
Yorkship School	1200 Collings Avenue	08104-3024

