13,000 Students Of Ohio Tell Their Story:
"Yeah, The School Library Rocks"

Dr Ross J Todd
School of Communication
Information and Library Studies
Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey
U.S.A.

Dr. Carol Kuhlthau
School of Communication
Information and Library Studies
Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey
U.S.A.

Ann E Tepe
INFOhio - Ohio's K-12 Network
Columbus
Ohio
U.S.A.

This paper reports on some of the findings of a large research project undertaken in 2002-2003 in Ohio, USA. The findings of this study are numerous, and this paper specifically focuses on some of the 10,316 stories told by 13,123 students in relation to reading. The findings present a multi-faceted picture of the school library's role in the fostering of reading literacy. The study raises some significant challenges for all school librarians, and provides an invitation to reflect on, critique and re-engineer services to ensure the library's role in reading literacy development is a powerful and visible one.

Overview and introduction

School libraries have a long tradition in fostering in students a love of reading, and the development of self-motivated and competent readers. This is clearly embedded in the policy discourses of many school libraries around the world, and asserted in a range of educational and political forums. The *IFLA / UNESCO School Library Manifesto* identifies as core school library services the "developing and sustaining in children the habit and enjoyment of reading and learning, and the use of libraries throughout their lives" and "offering opportunities for experiences in creating and using information for knowledge, understanding, imagination and enjoyment". The American Association of School Librarians asserts that school librarians play a role that "begins with promoting and reinforcing students' interests and abilities in reading, listening, and viewing" (AASL/AECT, 1998). It articulates a series of information literacy standards, including Standard 5: "The student who is an independent learner is information literate and appreciates literature and other creative expressions of information". One indicator of this standard is a "competent and self-motivated reader" (AASL/AECT, 1998, p.26). Such a focus is borne in a long tradition of research that has given emphasis to the school library's role in reading development.

Literature review

This research corpus comprises both large scale studies addressing the relationship of school libraries to student achievement in standardised reading sores and other learning dimensions, and smaller studies that show that active reading programmes encouraged by the school library can foster higher levels of reading, literacy development, comprehension, vocabulary development, and language skills. Collectively these studies convey a picture of a significant contribution that the school library and the role of the school librarian have in fostering reading engagement and enjoyment, and provide a basis for elucidating the construct of "help" that forms the focus of the study in relation to reading, "Student Learning Through Ohio School Libraries," which is reported here.

One of the most prominent international macro-studies that explores the link between reading literacy and school libraries is the 1990-91 reading literacy study undertaken by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievements. This study investigated reading literacy of 9 and 14-year-old students in many countries. In attempting to explain differences between high-scoring and low-scoring countries, it identified several contributing dimensions, including the presence of school libraries with a large quantity of books, frequency of book borrowing, access to a wide range of books at home, as well as access to books through public information agencies (Elley, p.xii-xiii; Gniewek, 1999, p.2). Using the data for 9 year olds in British Columbia from this study, Froese found that students who have classroom access to school libraries and access to many books at home achieve higher reading scores than those who do not have such access (Froese, 1997). Using the same study data for Slovenia, Novljan (1998) found that the mean reading test scores of students were higher in schools where a professional school librarian was employed, as well as well stocked libraries and the availability of books in the classroom.

Such findings have been supported by a number of state-wide studies undertaken by Lance and colleagues in the USA (Lance, 2001). These studies have sought to establish empirically the relationship of school library programmes to student achievement as measured by reading scores embedded in the reading portion of the state-wide standardised tests. Dimensions that make a positive impact on reading scores include: professionally trained school librarians, support of the principals and teachers, availability of support staff who can free the librarians from routine tasks to undertake their reading development programmes, and access to networked information technology services within and beyond the school library. Students whose school librarian plays an instructional role tend to achieve higher average test scores. Students at schools with better-funded school libraries also tend to achieve higher average reading scores.

There is considerable micro-research dating from the 1930s that explores how dimensions of reading are enhanced through the school library. Cleary (1939) reported that students in a school with no school library averaged 3.8 books read over a four-week period while students from a school with a library averaged 7.6 books. Gaver (1963) reported that students with access to school libraries read more than those who only had access to centralised book collections without librarians, and read more than children who only had access to classroom collections. Her findings showed a strong correlation between the size of the collection available and the amount the students reported reading. This finding is supported by Lowe (1984) who found that students in schools with libraries read and enjoy reading more than students in schools without centralised libraries. Thorne (1967) found that augmented library services, with attention to reading literacy programmes, resulted in greater gains in reading comprehension, with boys gaining most. According to Didier (1982), the

intervention by a professional school librarian increased use of newspapers and access to the library and achievement in reading by elementary (primary) school students. Rutter's study of high-achieving schools in London (1979) found that such schools invested substantial budget and effort to ensure libraries were open after school as well as during the day, a finding later supported by Alexander (1992).

In recent years, important reading research has been undertaken by Krashen (1985, 1988, 1989, 1993, 1995, 1997, 2001). Collectively these studies explicate further the contextual and instructional dimensions of reading development fostered by the school library. The evidence indicates that:

- students get a large portion of their reading materials from libraries;

- students read more when they have a quiet, comfortable place to read;

- free voluntary reading has a positive impact on reading comprehension, vocabulary, spelling ability, grammar usage and writing style;

- access to books and magazines predicts higher reading achievement;

- an ample supply of books is key to the fostering of independent and engaged readers, particularly ESL children; and

- students who read more typically have higher literacy development as well as overall higher student achievement.

In addition, Von Sprecken, Kim & Krashen, (1998) found that explicit attention from a librarian or other helper can get students interested in books and help them to discover a "home run" book.

Research by Allington (2002), Gottfried, Fleming & Gottfried (1998), McQuillan, (2001), and Pack (2000) provides further evidence that ample access to books and magazines is predictive of higher reading achievement. Such ample access fosters more borrowing of reading materials, and is particularly enhanced with the presence of a school librarian to guide the choice and to encourage motivation and enjoyment of reading. Indeed, collective evidence suggests that the number of books per student in a school library is a significant predictor of reading achievement. In addition, students who read more also have more books available at home (Morrow, 1983; Neuman 1986; Greaney & Hegarty, 1987). Extensive reviews by Lonsdale (2003) and Haycock (2003) conclude that well stocked libraries, managed by a qualified school librarian who actively promotes literacy and coordinating resources provide the essential infrastructure for developing reading literacy.

Ohio school libraries and reading interests

The research study "Student Learning through Ohio School Libraries" was undertaken from October, 2002-December, 2003, and funded by the State Library of Ohio through a Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grant from the federal Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) to the Ohio Educational Library Media Association (OELMA). With an increasing focus on standards-based education, accountability, performance excellence and school improvement, this study sought to identify more specifically how students benefit from school libraries through elaborating conceptions of "help" and providing a measure of these helps as perceived by students. On the basis of this insight, the study sought to provide recommendations for professional practice, educational policy

development, and tools for school librarians to chart how their school libraries impact learning.

Research methodology

Thirty-nine schools across Ohio participated in this study, and were selected on the basis of providing an "effective school library programme". The criteria for selection centred on meeting guidelines for effective school libraries based on building-level presence of credentialed staff, curriculum-centredness, adequate, appropriate and diverse resources, information technology infrastructure for accessing and using information in diverse media and formats, information literacy instruction and reading enrichment programs. An International Experts Panel comprising distinguished leaders in school librarianship around the world validated these criteria. Following a nominations process across Ohio public schools, an Ohio Experts Panel - leaders from the school library and educational community of Ohio - made the sample selection.

Student data were collected through the "Impacts on Learning Survey", made available online for students from Grade 3 to Grade 12 to identify, from their perspective, how the library has "helped" them in their learning. The survey consisted of 48 statements of "helps" derived from the literature and grouped into 7 conceptual categories (Blocks). The study also provided an open-ended, critical incident question to enable students to articulate specific instances of "helps" and their outcomes, in their own voice. This free writing question asked: Now, remember one time when the school library really helped you. Write about the help that you got, and what you were able to do because of it. This question provided opportunity for students to give witness, if possible, in their own way about the relationship between the school library and student achievement, as well as serving to identify perceptions of help and its outcomes not identified in the 48 statements. This report focuses on student data in relation to reading interests. All quotations from students are verbatim.

A full report of the study is available at the OELMA website, available at http://www.oelma.org/studentlearning/default.asp.

The seven conceptual categories (blocks) were:

- How helpful the school library is with getting information you need.

- How helpful the school library is with using the information to complete your school work.

- How helpful the school library is with your school work in general.

- How helpful the school library is with using computers in the library, at school, and at home.

- How helpful the school library is to you with your general reading interests.

- How helpful the school library is to you when you are not at school.

- General school aspects - these relate to Academic Achievement.

For each statement in the survey, students were asked to reflect on the statement and click the box that matched best how much they thought the school library has helped them.

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The guidelines overleaf were provided in the survey to guide students in working out their response:

☺ ☺ ☺ ☺ =	most helpful	(you think you got a great amount of help)
☺ ☺ ☺ =	quite helpful	(you think you got a good amount of help)
☺ ☺ =	some help	(the help you got was OK, so so)
☺ =	a little help	(you think you got just a bit of help)
If you do not know an answer, or if something does not apply to you, click the box "Does not apply".		

Student Demographics

The findings are based on a data set of 13,123 valid student responses from 39 public schools across Ohio (elementary, middle and high schools), including 10,316 valid statements in response to the critical incidence question. 6,294 boys (48% of sample) and 6,702 girls (51.1% of sample) participated in the study. The ages ranged from 7 to 20 years, with an average age of 14.18 years. The students were primarily white (78.5%), with smaller groups of African-Americans (5.5%) and of mixed race (4.1%). 62% of the students came from schools with a Report Card Performance Category of "Excellent", 22.9% from "Effective" schools; 12.8% from "Continuous Improvement" schools, and 2.3% from "Academic Watch" schools. 80.9% of the students came from urban / suburban districts, 9.8% came from rural areas, 7% from small cities, and 2.3% from large cities.

Findings

Only 73 students out of 13,123 indicated that none of the 48 statements applied to them. This is 0.56% of the total sample. In other words, 99.44% of the sample (13,050 students) indicated that the school library and its services, including roles of school librarians, have helped them in some way, regardless of how much, with their learning in and out of school as it relates to the 48 statements. 25.54% of the sample (3,352 students) said that the library has helped them, regardless of how much, with their learning on all 48 statements. This would indicate that the school library plays a major and obvious role in helping students with their learning in and out of school.

Five of the 48 statements presented to the students focused on dimensions of "how helpful the school library is to you" with students' general reading interests (Block 5). Table 1 identifies these statements, and the percentage distribution of responses, followed by a brief discussion of the findings in relation to each of these.

Table 1: Reading interests: Perceptions of help

5. How helpful the school library is to you with your general reading interests.	Most helpful	Quite helpful	Some help	A little help	Does not apply	Mean
51. The school library has helped me find stories I like	29.3	19.4	17.2	18.7	15.5	2.28
52. The school library has helped me read more	20.9	17.0	17.2	24.3	20.6	1.93
53. The school library has helped me get better at reading	18.2	15.2	15.8	25.2	25.6	1.75
54. The school library has helped me enjoy reading more	20.9	14.0	16.3	25.5	23.3	1.84
55. The school library has helped me be a better writer	15.5	16.9	17.9	24.7	25.1	1.73
OVERALL	21	16.5	16.9	23.7	22	1.907

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The school library has helped me find stories I like

The findings show that the school library helps students find stories they like to read. Almost 30% of the sample indicating that the school library is most helpful in this regard, with 84.5% of the sample indicating that the school library has helped them in some way, regardless of how much, with finding stories they like to read. This would indicate that the school library plays a key role in helping students with their reading enjoyment, and is an important vehicle for supporting wider reading interests. Students' comments witness this quantitative response:

261   I had read all of the books by my favorite authors, so I typed random words into the library catalog and found some new authors that I liked.

1345   The school library helped me when I wanted to find a good book to read. I am interested in fantasy stories and a lot of times when I am looking for a book they help me to find ones that I like.

1414   I needed a book to read because I finished all the ones I had at home. When I asked the librarian, she showed me a good book in the genre I had asked about, so I'm into it now and really like them.

2650   I had to find a science-fiction book for English class, and I found an author I had never heard of, but I really like now. It helped me find new authors and I was able to do a very unique and interesting book report.

3276   The school library has also helped me find more books that I enjoy, to read other than reading something I don't like. I've found a good variety in the books that they have.

3368   I needed to know if there were any good books that I could read for fun so I went to Mrs. XXX [the librarian] for help. She gave me the book The Midwife *and I read the back and it sounded good so I decided to check it out and when I got home I started to read it and when I finished it I liked it so that's why I think the library is helpful.*

6301   I have never really used the sources of the school library and I hardly ever go to it. I use the public or university library. However, the school library does have lots of good stories, particularly the recent ones you see in the bookshops, and that usually gets me into fiction I want to read.

6933   I like to read any of the new fiction that comes in, especially the history stories. The librarian knows about that and gets the latest books for me and always lets me know when some has arrived.

Students value the personal touch - when school librarians make an effort to learn of their individual reading preferences and to match interests with the collection, and when they bring to the student's attention the latest fiction available on the market.

The school library has helped me read more

The findings show that the school library helps students read more. Almost 21% of the sample indicated that the school library is most helpful in this regard, with 79.4% of the sample indicating that the school library has helped them read more, regardless of how much. Students' comments witness this quantitative response:

243 I found a book of an author, Nicholas Sparks. I enjoyed it so much. After reading this book, I got all the other books he wrote and read them all.

460 I came to the school library and actually checked out interesting books. I was surprised that my school library had good books to read. This is the first year, I've checked out books and got into reading more.

591 When the author came in and talked about reading, I got interested in his stories and read his books when they come out.

1352 One time I immediately needed a book report book that would keep my interest and be the product of a good essay. Without hesitation, the librarian recommended the book For Mike. The book was one of the best I have ever read and helped me write a book report filled with facts. I've even borrowed similar books.

1619 One time when I was looking for a good book that I could read for daily silent sustained reading, I asked a librarian on books that I liked to read. I asked her what authors did she like. She gave me a great author Tolkien and I continue to read his books today.

1752 When I couldn't find a cool book that I would be interested in, the librarian helped me find a science fiction book. I now read a lot more science fiction and my mommy is proud! (She gets into this reading thing.)

2981 The library helped me when I was bored and really needed a good book to read. I had been going to the public library every once in a while, but really needed something everyday. I came down to the library and found lots of good new books. From that day on I kept coming down to the library. It made me want to read all of the new books in the library. I made a booklist and in a few short weeks I had read every one of the books on my list. Coming down to the library made me more aware of the good books available at the library and made me wish I had visited the library more often and at the beginning of the year. Also, I was given the opportunity to become a library aide. This made me very excited and anxious to be involved with the library.

3252 "When I had to pick out a book and read it, it helped me understand what some things meant. And how it was long before I was alive. It got me interested in different books and it gave me a new favorite book, called The Chinese Cinderella.

5145 Researching my invention project I got an A. That got me a bit curious about inventions and I got into some of the science fiction with the help of the librarian. Every time she sees me she tells me of the latest book to read and that is cool. I have my own personal bookstore adviser!!!!!

The school library appears to provide some role in encouraging students to read more. Students' comments suggest some of the dynamics of fostering this: knowledge of students' reading interests on the part of the school librarian, availability of a range of reading books to motivate students to keep reading, follow-up dialogue with students, and helping students see that reading is fun.

The school library has helped me get better at reading

The findings show that the school library helps students get better at reading, although this dimension was overall the weakest one in terms of perception of help. 18.2% of the sample indicated that the school library is most helpful in this regard, with 74.4% of the sample indicating that the school library has helped them get better at reading, regardless of how much. Students' comments witness this quantitative response:

600 I was a bad horrible reader the library & the librarian and helpers made that happen for my report. I thought it would never happen but it did. Now I read all kinds of books and I even read chapter books. I got a second report done & I were so amazed. it was a miracle. I thank you for helping me!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

601 The library helped me when I did not like to read and did not like to look stuff up. It helped me by showing me that reading was fun. Sometime I still don't like to read still but I remember that day at the library and I will keep reading. I love the library and hope you do to because it can really help you when you need to look something up or you need help with reading.

602 The School Library has helped me with everything. My friends and I learn so much in the library. I never knew reading could be fun! Also, the librarians are so nice. They've helped me with so much like finding books, how to use a almanac, a dictionary, and how to read the spines of a book. I thank the library for teaching me more things about reading. When I first came to XX I never liked reading, but because of the XX Library I love reading! Thanks again!

3222 The school library has many popular fiction books. For free reading time almost every day in class the library has helped me select enjoyable books to read. It has heightened my vocabulary with the more challenging books.

5133 I used to not read very well and after I used the library for research and information about homework I was reading more and more from the information and that had helped me become a better reader! now I can read a lot better then I was in the beginning of the school year and understand better in class! I would not be here without the library.

6943 My great love is EVERY sport. You might say I am obsessed about them. But that clever librarian got me into reading sports stories, and even some biographies about great sportsmen. You don't realise it I reckon, but the more you read the better you get at it. She knew that but I guess the library has helped me realise that for myself

9494 I really disliked reading. And I would never complete reading assignments. We also had to have a silent reading book too. My school library helped me find a series that I enjoy reading by Nancy Drew and now I can never put them down"

This is a complex question, and one that was supported comparatively weakly by the students, with a mean score of 1.75, the lowest in the question set. None the less, students' comments indicate some ways in which the library has helped them get better at reading: by

seeing that reading is fun and enjoyable, improving vocabulary, and the reading intervention of the school librarian.

The school library has helped me enjoy reading more

The school library, in fostering a love of reading and connecting students to books they enjoy reading appears to contribute to students enjoying reading more. 76.7% of the students said that the library helped them enjoy reading more, regardless of the level of help. As shown in their comments below, the students' suggest that a major mechanism is the personal intervention of the school librarian linking student interest with appropriate literature.

617 The school library help me with everything. My reading interest and before I never read books before but now I read and its fun.

651 When the author came in to the library and talked about reading I got into his books - they are sooooooooo good and can't wait for the next one.

1727 One time I had to do a book report and I didn't know what book to read. Then I asked a librarian and she asked me what types of book I liked to read. I told her I liked to read mystery books so she got me one. This was a great book! It helped me get a better grade because I enjoyed the book and really got into it and have liked others too.

2345 I had to read seven books for the English Festival, but I couldn't recognise some of the themes in the stories. When I asked the librarian for help she showed me what you have to do in order to recognize themes better. I used that knowledge to do better at the English Festival and get more enjoyment out of reading by understanding what is in front of me.

2371 I had a report do on any book I want to get. I was looking every where for a book. I even took 2 of them out started to read them didn't like. So finally ask for help and she picked the best book after talking to me. I was so interested in the book I went out and bought it. I got a wonderful grade on my report. library is wonderful.

5533 ...But I started reading the books here and I learned that reading was fun I began to enjoy it. The first book that I read here was given to me by a librarian. That librarian opened many doors for me and reading. It has enabled me to read faster, write better, enjoy books and write my own books (short stories).

6666 I'm from a family of um lets see I child and mostly my parents never gave me the time and place to make me enjoy to read and the librarian helped me get to read more and I really really enjoy to read now, thank you, you make every kid feel better about reading.

The school library has helped me be a better writer

74.9% of the students said that the school library helped them with their writing. This help appears to be strongest when there is explicit and structured provision made for the development of writing skills - the teaching of information analysis and synthesis as part of

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information literacy initiatives, and library-based events in collaboration with classroom teachers which focus on development of writing skills.

785 I love to read. The library introduced me to a new series of books. It was a series of unfortunate events. After I read those, in my writing I wasn't afraid to extend beyond the limits and write creative, farfetched stories.

945 Once recent time that I can think of that the school library has helped me was when I needed to find my science vocabulary terms and write them properly. It also helped me when I needed to find a world encyclopaedia of trade embargo's of world war 2 for my Social Studies class.

1154 When we were doing a report they taught to me write more clearly and I got better grades in writing.

4084 The school library really helped me out when I needed to learn different formats of writing essays. The school library helped me to find examples online of different types of writing as an example for future essays I would write.

4809 Every week, I read about a dozen 100 page books. My librarian at school helped me find some interesting books and now I get awesome grades from reading so much. My proficiency scores were higher than 96% in verbal expression, reading, and writing. my reading helps me thanks to my library at school.

6215 I needed to do a lot of research and get a lot of help for my senior thesis project this year. I got a lot of help from the library and the writing intervention workshop. I was able to make my project a success because writing clearly and logically is very hard, and the good resources and writing techniques helped.

Some interesting patterns emerge in this data. When compared with the mean scores of the other conceptual categories (blocks) in the survey, reading scores overall ranked low. These are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Each "Helps" Block

BLOCK	NUMBER	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	RANK OF MEAN FROM HIGHEST TO LOWEST
1	13123	2.535	.895	1 (getting information)
2	13123	2.251	.971	3 (using information)
3	13123	2.070	.999	4 (knowledge)
4	13123	2.529	1.042	2 (computers)
5	13123	1.907	1.242	6 (reading)
6	13123	1.772	1.100	7 (independent learning)
7	13123	1.966	1.179	5 (achievement)

The ranked mean scores for each of the different conceptual categories (blocks) indicates that the effective school library helps most in terms of providing access to information resources necessary for students to complete their research assignments and projects successfully, and through the role of information technology in providing access to both print and digital collections to help them with their specific curriculum tasks. The overall reading mean score was ranked the second lowest, with the independent learning

block ranked the lowest. While students' comments indicated that the school library had helped them with reading in many ways, they saw the school library more helpful in terms of the curriculum resource, technical and instructional help to enable them to complete their immediate class needs. Ranked considerably higher than the reading scores were helps provided in relation to understanding how to do research effectively. Understanding how to identify key ideas, analysing, synthesising and evaluating information, testing their own ideas, developing personal conclusions are all fundamental to students constructing their own understanding of a topic. Of course, all of these require high levels of reading literacy, but to the students library interventions targeted directly to meeting curriculum content goals were seen to be more important than activities targeted to fostering reading interests. It may be that students do not see the primary role of the school library as supporting their leisure activities or personal pursuits, whereas they do clearly see the support it gives in terms of information for their curriculum needs.   There was some indication in the middle and high school students' comments that they are so busy with completing research imposed on them for their curriculum requirements that they actually have little time to engage in more pleasurable reading pursuits. Some students commented that the public library was the primary source for leisure reading materials, and that the school library's primary resource role related to curriculum content.

The reading helps scores were highest in the elementary (primary) schools, and declined as students progressed through schooling. This is shown in Figure 1:
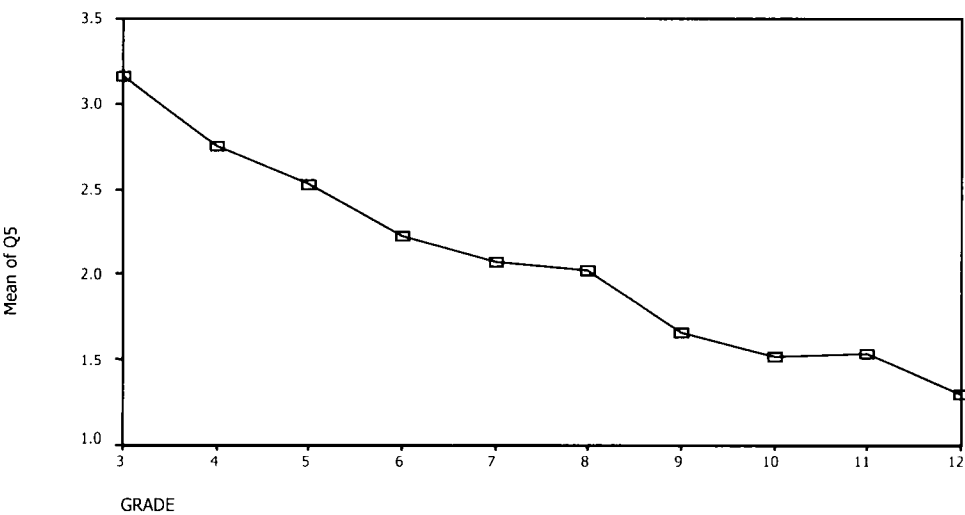

Figure 1: Mean Reading Score by Grade

According to the analysis of variance, students in different grades score helps in general reading interests (Block 5) in significantly different ways. The scores of students in grade 3 are significantly higher than those of students in other grades. Students in grade 4 and 5 show little difference, but their scores are significantly higher than those of students from grades 6 to 12, but lower than grade 3. Students in grade 6 show little difference to those in grade 7, but their scores are significantly higher than those from grade 8 to 12, and lower than grade 3, 4, 5. The scores of students in grade 12 are significantly lower than students in other grades. Elementary (primary) school libraries with school librarians actively engaged in reading literacy initiatives appear to have an important impact on children's enjoyment of and interest in reading for pleasure. This certainly represents an important aspect of the argument for the professional employment of school librarians in elementary schools, resourced

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appropriately and adequately to foster a strong reading culture. But what about the high school? Is it that students do know how to read, do enjoy reading, but have significant other needs for help that demand their attention?

In relation to test of group differences in terms of gender, the study showed that there was a significant difference between boys and girls on the overall reading scores. Girls consider school libraries more helpful in their general reading interests than do boys. Data are shown in Table 3:

Table 3: Gender Differences

GENDER	N	Mean	Standard. Deviation
Boys	6294	1.8763	1.2324
Girls	6702	1.9346	1.2511

[t-test for Equality of Means: t=-2.678; Sig. (2-tailed)=.007; Mean Difference =-5.8353E-02]

Gender differences in relation to school library use is not a new idea. The larger question remains: how do school libraries continue to develop more effectively as inclusive communities, where different groups of students - different on a multiplicity of variables - find the help they seek in response to their unique needs. How can this be achieved more effectively within the constraints of limited staffing and budget needs? Typically, the argument is that this cannot be done, because of staffing and budgetary constraints, instead of seeking more effective solutions within these often stonewall boundaries.

The study showed that there were significant differences based on ethnic group. The data are shown in Table 4 and Table 5:

Table 4: Ethnic Group Differences

Ethnic Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
African-American	719	2.0462	1.2428
Asian	385	1.9049	1.2516
Hispanic	181	1.9083	1.2558
Mixed Race	539	2.0538	1.3049
Native American	90	1.7800	1.2481
White	10306	1.8938	1.2295
Other	370	1.7903	1.3268
Total	12590	1.9061	1.2385

Table 5: ANOVA: Ethnic Groups

READING INTERESTS	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	33.820	6	5.637	3.679	.001
Within Groups	19277.06	12583	1.532		
Total	19310.88	12589			

For Reading Interests the scores of African-Americans are significantly higher than Whites and students in "Other" group. This suggests that the school library affords opportunities for African American students to develop their reading interest. In the context of the USA government "No Child Left Behind" Legislation, this is an important finding. Again, the question is posed: how do school libraries further foster the development of an inclusive community of learners, of readers, of self-determining individuals?

Reflection

The findings of the Student Learning through Ohio School Libraries, in relation to reading interests, tend to support the established findings. The quantitative and qualitative data, from the perspective of a very large sample of students, seems to indicate that effective school libraries do play a role in reading literacy development, an enjoyment of reading and an active engagement in reading for many students. However, there is considerable room for improvement. When these findings are positioned against the range and extent of "helps" perceived by the students, several key questions emerge.

- While elementary (primary) school libraries provide higher levels of perceived helpfulness in terms of reading interests, this is not so in the high schools. Does this matter?

- Is the investment in reading literacy in the higher grades worth the effort in terms of perceived cost benefits?

- Is reading literacy an important dimension of the service of high school libraries?

- Should high school libraries focus on curriculum initiatives and leave the reading literacy initiatives to the public libraries and the bookshops?

- How can school librarians be better prepared to foster inclusive reading literacy development?

It is hoped that these questions will be discussed at the Dublin conference.

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Biographical note

Dr Ross Todd is Associate Professor and Director, Center for International Scholarship in School Libraries, in the School of Communication, Information and Library Studies at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey. Dr Carol Kuhlthau is Professor and Director of the Center for International Scholarship in School Libraries, in the School of Communication, Information and Library Studies at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey. (www.cissl.scils.rutgers.edu). Ann Tepe is Special Projects Consultant for INFOhio, the K-12 network for Ohio schools, and was Project Manager for the study.