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# The Lilead Survey: A National Study of District-Level Library Supervisors: Roles, Responsibilities, Challenges, and Professional Development Needs

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## **The Lilead Survey: A National Study of District-Level Library Supervisors: Roles, Responsibilities, Challenges, and Professional Development Needs**

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### **Abstract**

*The school district library supervisor plays a pivotal role in supporting, advising, and providing professional development to building-level librarians; advocating for the program; providing leadership; and representing school library programs to stakeholders in the school system and the larger community. To gain a better understanding of supervisors' roles, responsibilities,*

demographics, and challenges, and to establish baseline data upon which further research can be built, the Lilead Project was initiated in 2011 at the University of Maryland with funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services. In 2012 the project team conducted the Lilead Survey, a survey of supervisors nationwide. In this paper, the second of two reports on the results of the survey, we present findings related to the responsibilities and tasks assigned to the position, professional development needs of supervisors and staff, and the range of stakeholder groups with which supervisors work.

## Introduction

Researchers in the school library field have paid little attention to the system-level administrator responsible for managing school library programs and services in all schools in a district. Regardless of whether the individual in this position is called “supervisor,” “director,” “coordinator,” or any other title, this is the person in the district who supports and enhances the instructional program by establishing and communicating the vision, mission, policy, and procedures for school library programs. In addition, superintendents and other district-level administrators, principals, parents, and the community at large consider this person to be the authority within a school district on matters related to school library services. The term “supervisor” will be used to identify the position throughout this paper.

A research team at the University of Maryland began to address this gap in school library research by conducting a national survey as part of the multi-year, multi-faceted Lilead Project (rhymes with *Iliad*). The overarching goals of the Lilead Project are to:

1. Collect and analyze baseline information through a national workforce study regarding the demographics, job titles, staffing patterns, educational background, professional development needs, responsibilities, and challenges of individuals responsible for library and information services in the largest school districts in the United States.
2. Disseminate information collected through the national workforce study to a broad professional audience of stakeholders, including national, state, and regional teachers’ and administrators’ associations, and other policymaking groups.
3. Through a freely available website and interactive online community, encourage communication and collaboration among district supervisors, library and information science educators and researchers, and others committed to improving library and information services for young people.

With funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) (Grant #RE-04-11-0050), the project team conducted the Lilead Survey twice, first in 2012 and again in 2014. Presented in this paper are findings from the first survey in 2012 related to the supervisor’s responsibilities and tasks, and to supervisors’ professional development needs and challenges. Other findings from the 2012 survey related to other aspects of the supervisor position can be found in *The Lilead Survey: A National Study of District-Level Library Supervisors: The Position, Office, and Characteristics of the Supervisor* (Weeks et al. 2016).

While the primary purpose of the Lilead Survey was to clarify and enhance understanding of the supervisor position, the Lilead team believes that the data can serve as a springboard for further research about and work with supervisors in the future. Indeed, the findings from the survey

about the professional development needs of supervisors led directly to the creation of the Lilead Fellows Program, described later in this paper, demonstrating that Lilead Survey data are of immediate interest and use for what they reveal about supervisors today and of continuing value for research and education in the future.

## Overview of the Literature

### Introduction

Emphasis given to the supervisor's position in the literature has ebbed and flowed in a direct relationship to the importance that national standards for school library programs and services have placed on the position. Two distinct literatures are reviewed here. The first section of the literature review relates to writings about the roles and functions of the school district supervisor of library services and is itself presented in two parts. In the first part, national standards for school library programs are reviewed for statements related to the district supervisory position. That section is followed by a review of research literature related to the supervisory role and function. The second type of literature that is reviewed relates to professional development. The latter section focuses on the need for professional development in school librarianship and the limited literature currently available about professional development in the school library field.

### Supervisor's Roles and Functions

#### National Standards

No mention of a supervisory position was included in either of the first two national standards documents relating to school libraries: *Standard Library Organization and Equipment for Secondary Schools of Different Sizes* (National Education Association and North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, 1920) or *Elementary School Library Standards* (National Education Association and American Library Association, 1925).

In *School Libraries for Today and Tomorrow: Functions and Standards*, guidelines described a central supervisory position that would coordinate activities among individual schools and collaborate with other district staff to improve the instructional program of the district (Douglas, 1945, 33). The writers of *Standards for School Library Programs* again called for a system-level supervisor and set forth thirty-nine tasks appropriate to the position (American Association of School Librarians 1960, 43–45). This long list of responsibilities addressed the supervisor's working relationships with higher-level administrators, peers in the school district bureaucracy, building-level librarians, and external constituencies.

The 1969 document, *Standards for School Media Programs*, focused on creating "unified programs" in which the library and audiovisual programs and services within the school were combined or at least coordinated (American Library Association and National Education Association, 1969, 52–53). Although not as detailed as the 1960 document's description of the supervisor's responsibilities, the 1969 guidelines recommended that the director of the system school library program provide a wide range of services to building-level media specialists (school librarians), including offering in-service programs, formulating selection policies for materials, supervising the centralized processing of materials, and serving as a consultant to architects in designing new facilities.

The 1975 publication *Media Programs: District and School*, a combined effort of the American Library Association (ALA) and the Association for Educational Communications and Technology (AECT), described in considerable detail the supervisor's position as a member of the school district leadership team and as director of school library services.

The high point of recognition and support of the district supervisor in national school library standards came in 1988 with *Information Power: Guidelines for School Library Media Programs*, which stated: "All school systems must employ a district library media director to provide leadership and direction to the overall library media program" (ALA and AECT 1988, 102).

Standards published in 1998 by ALA and AECT and guidelines published in 2009 by the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) contained little or nothing about the supervisor. In 1994 AASL published a position statement on the importance of the district supervisor and updated this statement in 2012, but the omission of a clear statement about the role and value of the supervisor in national standards in recent years may have contributed to the lack of research about school library supervisors and similar lack of scholarly attention to the position.

## Research Studies

The first national study of supervisors in the United States was conducted in the Manpower Project, as it was informally called. This researchers in this project studied leadership in academic, public, special, and school libraries. (The landmark project under discussion here should not be confused with the School Library Manpower Project, which was conducted during approximately the same time period, funded by the Knapp Foundation, and focused only on building-level school librarians.) Selected findings from the Mary Lee Bundy and Paul Wasserman (1970) survey can be compared to topics discussed in this paper: (1) supervisors were professionally active beyond the specific demands of their supervisory position; (2) supervisors identified as their most important tasks those related to transitioning from the traditional school library concept to the new instructional materials center model; and (3) supervisors did not believe that they could act effectively as change agents in their school districts.

Cynthia Coulter (1990) studied supervisors' participation in the five functional areas delineated in the 1988 national standards: administration, communications, consultation, coordination, and leadership. She found that supervisors were most heavily engaged in tasks in the areas of consultation and leadership. Donald Andwood (1984) and Stephanie Nelson (1988) both found that supervisors did not believe that they could affect change in their school districts, supporting the earlier finding by Bundy and Wasserman (1970). Lois Perry McCulley (1989) uncovered significant differences between the supervisors' actual engagement in tasks related to curriculum and instruction, public relations, and administration and related areas, and the levels of engagement the supervisors considered desirable.

Several studies have compared perceptions of the supervisor position held by others with perceptions held by supervisors themselves and with the actual conditions of the position. Ruth Becker Newcomb (1968) studied the perceptions of the supervisor's supervisor. Janet Sue Sullivan (1977) studied the perceptions of building-level principals. Myra Faye Macon (1977) focused on the perceptions of building-level school librarians. Frederick William Held (1986)

focused on perceptions of educators in the field of librarianship. In each of these cases, research found that perceptions of the supervisor position held by others differed from both perceptions held by supervisors themselves and the practice of the supervisor. Roger Franklin Krentz (1986) found that a strong informational program conducted by the state may have contributed to a broader shared understanding of the role of the district supervisor.

The age of the research literature about supervisors is obvious from this overview. The most recent study cited was reported in 1990, while the earliest report was published in 1968. The fact that these reports are at least twenty-six years old raises the question of direct applicability of previous findings in today's educational environment.

## Professional Development for Supervisors

Professional development is definitely an issue within school librarianship that is in need of further investigation. Thomas R. Guskey has asserted that “four or five years of undergraduate preparation, regardless of the quality, will never be sufficient to prepare educators for careers in a field as dynamic as education. The changes we seek can be accomplished only through continuous, ongoing, job-embedded, high-quality professional development” (2000, 275). Although Guskey spoke mainly in reference to teachers, this statement can also be applied to school library professionals. Even though school librarians' preparation most often comes with two years of graduate work, not undergraduate studies as in the case of classroom teachers, the need for ongoing professional development Guskey identified also applies to school librarianship. As shown through the standards and reports previously mentioned, the roles and responsibilities of those in charge of school library services at the district level are numerous and diverse. Ann Carlson Weeks et al. (2016) revealed that, although supervisors have many years of experience in librarianship and/or teaching, they have little, if any, instruction on what it means to be a school administrator.

Professional development is a way to continually develop the skills and knowledge needed to perform the duties required for a specific job, especially those in “a field as dynamic as education” (Guskey 2000, 275). The purpose of professional development is not only to enable those who receive it to do their jobs better, but to equip educators with needed skills and knowledge so they are able to help students succeed in learning at high levels (Archibald et al. 2011; Guskey 2000, 2002, 2003; DeMonte 2013; Yoon et al. 2007; Garet et al. 2001; Guskey and Yoon 2009; Mizell 2010). Providing professional development for educators at all levels is important because the decisions made at the district level have direct implications at the building level, and have positive or negative impacts on student learning.

Little information about professional development for school librarians and school library personnel has appeared in recent literature. The available literature focuses heavily on how using Web 2.0 tools can greatly benefit school library professionals who are highly isolated in their schools and districts (Branom 2012; Perez 2012; Cooke 2012; Cox 2015; Harlan 2009; Kelly and Werthmuller 2013; Laning, Lavallée-Welch, and Smith, 2005; Moreillon 2015; Trinkle 2009). For example, Catherine Trinkle (2009), Judi Moreillon (2015) and Charlie Kelly and Kelly Werthmuller (2013) described how Twitter can be used as a professional learning network and provide needed support for school librarians.

Though researchers have made efforts to look at professional development in school librarianship, the work of district library supervisors and their need for professional development

has not been explored. One goal of the Lilead Survey was to take a closer look at the needs of supervisors regarding professional development.

## Research Design

### Survey Goals

The goals of the Lilead Survey were to collect baseline data about the following facets of the supervisor and the supervisor position:

- Position profiles (e.g., position title, primary responsibilities, percentage of time spent on supervision of school library programs, and on other responsibilities, size of staff, placement in district structure, reporting relationships, etc.)
- Knowledge and skills required for the position (e.g., career path, formal education, certification requirements, professional development needs of supervisors and staff, etc.)
- Greatest challenges and needs (e.g., personnel shortages, recent changes in certification requirements, recent changes in the support provided to building-level programs, etc.)
- Demographic data (e.g., age, gender, ethnicity, education, training, other professional experience, length of time in the position, etc.)

### Survey Instrument

The survey instrument was developed in several stages. The research team created an initial survey using previous and current standards for school libraries, position statements from associations and organizations, and previous surveys conducted with supervisors and library administrators. The initial survey was reviewed by an advisory group of expert researchers and practitioners in school libraries. After making changes based on the advisory group's suggestions, a pilot study was conducted with thirty recently retired district supervisors and currently employed supervisors who would not be part of the final study's survey population. Of the thirty participants, eighteen responded to the pilot survey. In addition to completing the survey, pilot respondents had the opportunity to edit and provide comments on the relevance, wording, and formatting of questions in the survey. The research team made additional edits to the survey based on responses from the pilot study.

In its final form, the web-based instrument included fifty-eight closed- and open-ended questions, many with multiple parts, distributed among five sections. This paper reports data collected primarily from Sections 2 and 3.

*Section 2. Your Tasks and Responsibilities* included questions that asked the supervisors to rate the importance of specific tasks as they related to their positions. The questionnaire included forty-six tasks that had been selected and vetted by the research team, advisory board, and participants in the pilot survey. Tasks were grouped into eight topical areas to aid in survey design and ease of response. The eight topical areas were leadership, personnel, collection development, teaching and learning, technology, facilities, finances, and professional organizations. As an example, questions in the financial area of responsibility asked about budgeting for district-level programs and services, budgeting and raising funds for building-level



libraries, preparing grant applications, and negotiating contracts with vendors. The other seven areas of responsibility were broken down into distinct tasks in a similar manner.

In addition to the importance of tasks, Section 2 included questions on the level of responsibility that supervisors had for some tasks. Supervisors were asked about their responsibility in seven tasks related to personnel, selection and evaluation, professional development, and technology support. Supervisors were asked if they were *responsible* for a task, if they played an *advisory role* for the task, or if the supervisor was *not responsible* for the task. These seven tasks were selected over others in Section 2 because previous standards and position statements indicated supervisors should be responsible for such tasks, but the literature and other surveys indicated that supervisors may not actually have responsibility for those tasks.

Questions in *Section 3. How You Spend Your Time* asked about the frequency with which the supervisor engaged in tasks related to finance, personnel, collection development, technology, teaching, leadership, and professional development. These categories were identical to those in *Section 2: Your Tasks and Responsibilities*. The tasks included in Section 3 were pulled from Section 2. However, not all forty-six tasks from Section 2 were used in Section 3, as asking supervisors about how much time they spent on some tasks was not applicable. For example, in the topic area of leadership, a task in Section 2 asked participants about the level of importance in their position of “developing a vision and mission for the library program.” Such a task did not translate to the format of questions in Section 3 about the amount of time supervisors spend on such tasks; Section 3 provided only close-ended options of daily, weekly, monthly, etc. In Section 3 supervisors were asked about the amount of time they spent on twenty-one different tasks. Section 3 also included a question about the supervisor’s professional development needs.

## Survey Population

District library supervisors in school districts across the country with student populations of more than 25,000 comprised the survey population; 280 districts in forty states and the District of Columbia qualified for the survey by size. In addition to districts that qualified by size, the largest school district in each of the ten states not represented among the 280 districts was added, bringing the final number of potentially participating districts to 290.

## Data Collection

The web-based survey was conducted during a five-week period in fall 2012. Supervisors in the 290 districts were invited by email to participate in the study. Of the 290 school districts identified, thirteen did not have a supervisor for school libraries at the district level. Three other districts had a supervisor, but contact information could not be located before the close of the survey. One supervisor could not get approval from her school district to participate in the study. For these reasons, the final number of eligible supervisors contacted for the survey was 273. The final response rate was 61 percent or 166 participants out of a total of 273 eligible supervisors. More details about the survey can be found in Weeks et al. (2016).

# Findings

## Introduction

In this section we report findings from the Lilead Survey related to the responsibilities and roles associated with the supervisory position, the importance of tasks performed by the supervisor, the frequency with which supervisors perform selected tasks, and the professional development needs of supervisors. The *n* for all tables in this section is 166 unless noted otherwise.

Aspects of the supervisor's position established by data from other sections of the Lilead Survey and reported earlier in Weeks et al. (2016) provide context for consideration of the scope and types of responsibilities assigned to the supervisor position. According to survey results:

- Almost all supervisors (94.6 percent) were full-time members of the district staff.
- A small number of supervisors (8.4 percent) also had building-level responsibilities.
- Half of district library services offices had professional staff in addition to the supervisor; most frequently there were one to four additional professional staff members.
- Approximately three-quarters of district library services offices had support staff; most frequently there were one to four support staff members.
- Ten percent of district offices had no additional staff members—professional or support—other than the supervisor.
- A large group (38.6 percent) of supervisors had assigned responsibilities not directly related to library services in areas such as education technology, professional development, instructional materials and textbooks, and curriculum and instruction. Supervisors who had assigned responsibilities not related to library services spent 41 percent or less than half their time on school library services.

For more information about the demographics, office, education, and previous experience of supervisors, see Weeks et al. (2016).

## Roles, Responsibilities, and Tasks

### Introduction

As previously described, a list of forty-six tasks that supervisors might perform was developed in consultation with an advisory board of library science educators and former supervisors, and tested in a pilot survey. Tasks were grouped under eight broad areas: leadership, personnel, collection development, teaching and learning, technology, facilities, finances, and professional organizations. This list of tasks was used to collect data about the roles and responsibilities of the supervisor and the supervisor's perception of the importance of the tasks.

### What Supervisors Do

Survey data were analyzed to determine the tasks for which supervisors are responsible. The results of this analysis are shown in table 1, which shows tasks listed in descending order by the

number of respondents who indicated that they were responsible for the task. For example, according to survey results, 100 percent of survey participants were responsible for advocating for library programs, offering professional development for building-level librarians, and meeting with building-level librarians. Fewer than 50 percent of participants indicated that they were responsible for evaluating building-level librarians.

Thirty-nine of the forty-six tasks were the responsibility of three-quarters or more of survey participants. We can conclude from these findings that these thirty-nine tasks are very likely to be part of a supervisor's portfolio of duties in school districts with populations of more than 25,000 students. Later in this paper we will use these tasks to construct a functional definition of the supervisor position.

Table 1. Tasks performed by supervisors.

Tasks	Number Responsible for Task	Percent Responsible for Task
<b>Tasks Performed by 75 to 100% of Respondents</b>		
Advocating for library programs	166	100.0
Offering professional development for building-level librarians	166	100.0
Meeting with building-level librarians	166	100.0
Advising building-level librarians	165	99.4
Developing a vision and mission for the library program	164	98.8
Participating in state professional organizations	164	98.8
Participating in national professional organizations	164	98.8
Developing library policies	163	98.2
Participating in local professional organizations	163	98.2
Handling book challenges and censorship issues	162	97.6
Developing library procedures	162	97.6
Meeting with other district-level administrators	162	97.6
Integrating AASL standards into the curriculum	159	95.8

<b>Tasks</b>	<b>Number Responsible for Task</b>	<b>Percent Responsible for Task</b>
Consulting with principals	158	95.2
Presenting sessions at professional meetings outside the district	157	94.6
Integrating technology standards into the curriculum	156	94.0
Integrating local and state content standards into the curriculum	153	92.2
Budgeting: district level	152	91.6
Advising principals regarding personnel issues	149	89.8
Integrating national content standards into the curriculum	147	88.6
Providing technology support to building-level library staff	145	87.3
Managing library automation systems	144	86.7
Planning new library facilities and/or renovations	144	86.7
Presenting action or scientifically based research	142	85.5
Negotiating contracts with vendors	141	84.9
Managing database subscriptions	141	84.9
Developing opening-day collections	141	84.9
Organizing special events (summer reading programs, author visits)	141	84.9
Providing technology training to building-level personnel	141	84.9
Developing technology plans	139	83.7
Preparing grant applications	138	83.1

<b>Tasks</b>	<b>Number Responsible for Task</b>	<b>Percent Responsible for Task</b>
Consulting with architects and project managers	137	82.5
Selecting and evaluating materials	136	81.9
Conducting action or scientifically based research	136	81.9
Writing curriculum	135	81.3
Developing technology policies	133	80.1
Moving library collections	133	80.1
Selecting furnishings for new facilities and/or renovations	132	79.5
Purchasing software	130	78.3

#### **Tasks Performed by Fewer than 75% of Respondents**

Purchasing hardware	118	71.1
Hiring staff at the district level	114	68.7
Budgeting: building level	103	62.0
Closing libraries	102	61.4
Hiring staff at the building level	94	56.6
Raising funds for building-level libraries	87	52.4
Evaluating building-level librarians	82	49.4

### **What Supervisors Say Is Important**

Survey participants were asked to rate the importance to their position of the forty-six tasks using four levels of importance with the stipulation that they were to rate the importance of a task *only*

if the task was applicable to their own position. Opinions about the importance of tasks were not solicited from respondents for whom the task did not apply.

An indicator of the importance of each task was calculated as the mean of responses using a scale in which a response of “Extremely Important” was given the value 4; a response of “Important” was given the value 3; “Somewhat Important” was given the value 2; and “Not Important” was given the value 1. The results are shown in table 2 in descending order of importance beginning with ten tasks rated “Extremely Important” and ending with four tasks rated “Somewhat Important.”

The ten tasks that were rated at 3.5 to 4.0 in importance are higher-level administrative responsibilities: setting direction and policy for the school library program, advocating for library programs, handling challenges and censorship issues, supporting building-level staff and their professional growth, and managing the district office and certain system-wide services. These tasks may be the participants’ highest priorities.

The next two groups of tasks, those rated “Important” to “Extremely Important” (3.0 to 3.4) and “Important” (2.5 to 2.9), are difficult to characterize because of the large number and variety of tasks in the groups. The tasks range from the higher-level task of integrating national content standards into the curriculum to lower-level operational tasks, such as planning new library facilities and/or renovations. The tasks in these groups also range from tasks at the district level, such as meeting with other district-level administrators to tasks at the building level, such as moving library collections. Tasks in this group affect individuals within the school system such as building-level staff and district-level staff, individuals outside the school system such as vendors, architects and builders, and peers in professional associations. While the variety of tasks makes it difficult to summarize the group, the variety also clearly indicates the diverse nature of the responsibilities of survey participants.

Table 2. Importance of supervisors’ tasks.

Task	Importance <i>(4 = Extremely Important, 1 = Not Important)</i>
<b>Tasks Rated 3.5 to 4.0 or Extremely Important</b>	
Offering professional development for building-level librarians	3.8
Advocating for library programs	3.8
Meeting with building-level librarians	3.8
Advising building-level librarians	3.8
Developing a vision and mission for the library program	3.7
Managing library automation systems	3.6

Task	Importance <i>(4 = Extremely Important, 1 = Not Important)</i>
Budgeting: district level	3.5
Handling book challenges and censorship issues	3.5
Developing library policies	3.5
Managing database subscriptions	3.5
<b>Tasks Rated 3.0 to 3.4 or Important to Extremely Important</b>	
Developing library procedures	3.4
Meeting with other district-level administrators	3.4
Integrating local and state content standards into the curriculum	3.4
Integrating national content standards into the curriculum	3.4
Hiring staff at the district level	3.3
Planning new library facilities and/or renovations	3.3
Participating in state professional organizations	3.3
Negotiating contracts with vendors	3.3
Providing technology support to building-level library staff	3.3
Consulting with principals	3.3
Providing technology training to building-level personnel	3.2
Consulting with architects and project managers	3.2
Advising principals regarding personnel issues	3.2
Developing opening-day collections	3.2
Integrating technology standards into the curriculum	3.2
Integrating AASL standards into the curriculum	3.2
Participating in local professional organizations	3.1

<b>Task</b>	<b>Importance</b> <i>(4 = Extremely Important, 1 = Not Important)</i>
Moving library collections	3.1
Writing curriculum	3.0
Selecting and evaluating materials	3.0
Closing libraries	3.0
<b>Tasks Rated 2.5 to 3.0 or Important</b>	
Selecting furnishings for new library facilities and/or renovations	2.9
Developing technology plans	2.9
Hiring staff at the building level	2.9
Budgeting: building level	2.9
Developing technology policies	2.8
Participating in national professional organizations	2.8
Evaluating building-level librarians	2.8
Purchasing software	2.7
Organizing special events (summer reading programs, author visits)	2.6
Purchasing hardware	2.6
Conducting action or scientifically based research	2.5
<b>Tasks Rated Less than 2.5 or Somewhat Important</b>	
Presenting sessions at professional meetings outside the district	2.4
Preparing grant applications	2.4
Presenting action or scientifically based research	2.3
Raising funds for building-level libraries	2.3



## Other Tasks Performed by the Supervisor

Respondents were asked open-ended questions about other library-related tasks that were important to their position as supervisor but were not included in the list of forty-six tasks included in the survey. The long list of responses to this question was analyzed using thematic coding, and tasks were placed within the eight areas of responsibility used in the survey. The results are shown in table 3 along with the number of times the task was mentioned by survey participants. A number of responses to this question mentioned a task that had been asked about in previous questions.

Table 3. Other library-related tasks.

Area of Responsibility	Task	Number of References
Leadership	Public-academic library liaison	12
	Public outreach	8
	Administrative meetings (local, state, and national)	8
	Other leadership tasks	7
Collection Development	e-books and e-readers	6
	Cataloging	4
	Other collection development tasks	13
Personnel	Advising and evaluating	8
	Professional development	8
Teaching and Learning	Curriculum	7
	Special events and activities	3
	Other teaching and learning tasks	4
Technology	Webmaster	4
	Library automation	3
	Support and training	3
Finances	Budgets	3
	Fund-raising	2
Facilities (no details given)		1
Other	Non-library administration	17

The open-ended responses added rich details to our understanding of participants' positions. Quite a few respondents represented the school system to external organizations. One individual noted responsibility for "building partnerships with the public library, the business community and faith-based organizations." Another respondent "served on the board of trustees for the local public library at the behest of the school board." Several others reported that they created and

managed collaborations with public libraries, academic libraries, PTA councils, and/or community literacy organizations.

Several survey participants were responsible for system-wide special projects, such as fund-raising, media festivals, and the district professional library and/or instructional media lab. One was the district archivist; another managed the district’s speakers’ bureau. Tasks related to curriculum were mentioned many times, as were responsibilities related to textbooks. Participants served as webmaster for library and district websites, and one individual reported staffing the district information technology help desk.

**Frequency of Selected Tasks**

The frequency with which supervisors perform certain tasks is an important indicator of how supervisors spend their time. The survey asked how frequently the respondent engaged in twenty-one tasks selected from the full list of forty-six tasks. The compiled results for the selected tasks are shown in table 4. The frequency for each task is the mode of responses, the value that appeared most often in responses from participants. The mode response for raising funds for building-level libraries and for evaluating building-level librarians, two of the tasks included in the twenty-one, was “Not applicable in my position.” Therefore, these two tasks were not included in table 4.

Table 4. Frequency of selected tasks.

Frequency	Task
<b>Daily</b>	Advising building-level librarians Managing library automation systems Advocating for library programs
<b>At least once a week</b>	Meeting with other district-level administrators Providing technology support to building-level library staff
<b>At least once a month</b>	Offering professional development for building-level librarians Meeting with building-level librarians Attending local professional development activities Providing technology training for building-level personnel
<b>At least quarterly</b>	Working with the public library
<b>At least annually</b>	Attending state professional development activities Attending national professional development activities
<b>Only as needed</b>	Handling book challenges and censorship issues Preparing grant applications Conducting action or scientifically based research Consulting with principals Organizing special programs Selecting and evaluating materials

The daily constants for participants were advising building-level librarians, managing library automation systems, and advocating for library programs. On a weekly basis, many supervisors

have meetings with other district-level administrators and provide technology support to building-level library staff. Participants presented or attended professional development events at least monthly.

## **Supervisors and Professional Development**

### **Introduction**

In addition to collecting information about supervisors' responsibilities, the survey also asked an open-ended question about supervisors' need for professional development to enable them to carry out their responsibilities more effectively. Responses to this question were overwhelming in number, variety, and complexity. The subsections below identify areas of need arranged by topics.

### **Leadership**

Leadership was one of the two most frequently mentioned professional development areas of need, mentioned forty-one times. Advocacy and programming were major sub-themes within this category. Some respondents wished for assistance in identifying types of data that could be collected about effectiveness of library programs and how these data could be used to support advocacy for programs. Navigating the politics and understanding the decision-making process in large school districts was identified as a skill set respondents would like to develop. Leadership needs in planning and programming were expressed by comments such as "How [do I] prevent short-term fixes that have long-term negative consequences?"

Other respondents wished for information about how to move their school library programs to a "service model that sees libraries as 'information centers,' not just places to house books and audiovisual materials." One supervisor expressed the desire for help in connecting the school library program to national events such as Teen Read Week. An overarching expression of a need related to leadership was stated as follows: "[I need assistance in] initiating, supporting, and sustaining change in the library media program to impact school reform."

Other leadership-related professional development needs focused on management skills, such as budgeting, project management, data collection and analysis, networking, and, as one respondent put it so well, "managing people to [enable them to] do their best."

### **Teaching and Learning**

Teaching and learning was the other major theme among needs for professional development; this theme was mentioned forty-one times. Within this area, the most frequently mentioned needs were related to aligning library programs to the Common Core State Standards or helping building-level librarians play leadership roles in developing inquiry-based learning opportunities for students. Supervisors responding to the survey wished for assistance in integrating digital literacy standards into the curriculum, helping classroom teachers transition to 21st-century research models, and developing objectives for student learning.

## Personnel

Professional development needs regarding advising, training, and motivating personnel were identified by twenty-eight survey participants. For example, they mentioned that they could use assistance in evaluating building-level school librarians within district evaluation systems, in helping school librarians gain new skills to more effectively meet teaching and learning needs within their buildings, and in motivating personnel to accept or, ideally, embrace change.

## Collection Development

Twenty-two respondents mentioned professional development needs in the area of collection development. All these needs were related to digital materials; no respondents mentioned collection development of print materials. One participant summed up collection-development needs in this way: “Because of the forever-changing and advancing nature of technology, I would always like additional professional development in digital devices, digital content, digital management, etc.”

## Technology

Technology integration was mentioned eighteen times. Survey respondents wished for assistance in answering these questions: “Which technology tools are most relevant to our work as librarians (knowing that [the tools are] continually changing)?” “[What are] 21st-century trends for library program delivery?” “[How can I have] a better chance to see what evolving technologies will be adopted by the district so that policy, procedures, and library applicability may be determined?”

## Other Topics

Professional development needs in financial management ranged from grant writing skills and grants management to budgeting, fund-raising, and contract negotiation. Several respondents mentioned the need for training in designing school libraries for the 21st-century. Participants expressed needs related to participating in the larger profession when they wished for more opportunities to attend national conferences, regionally based training sessions, and sessions related directly to library services. Technology, standards integration, and 21st-century learning emerged as themes expressed in relationship to other themes and to each other.

The survey results demonstrated how numerous and complex the participants’ professional development needs were. Some needs were related to skills—facilities design, grant writing, and grant management. Others related to and reflected deeper or broader understandings of school library services:

- What should library services in the 21st-century school look like?
- What is blended learning or the flipped classroom, and how can school libraries support these new models of teaching and learning?
- How can we introduce and manage change in the school district?
- How can we build recognition of the school library program and its value in the school district and larger community?

## Professional Development and Community

A desire for a professional community appeared to be deeply embedded in the previously described expressed needs for professional development. One respondent described the state of professional development for school library supervisors in this way:

I need more professional development with my peers, so that we can share our experiences and learn from each other. At the regional level, there are no librarians leading the professional development sessions; it has been relegated to English language arts curriculum.

Another wrote:

I would love to hear from other library content chairpersons about how they have handled problems that they have come upon.

## Discussion

### Roles and Responsibilities

#### Importance and Priorities

The data reported in detail above describe a wide range of roles and responsibilities for the supervisor and numerous priorities among the many tasks that the supervisor performs. The data also provides a glimpse into how supervisors spend their time. In the findings part of this paper, we examined what supervisors do and their perceptions of the importance of what they do. In this section we will compare tasks that supervisors perform and tasks that they consider to be important.

The most obvious comparison is to examine the correspondence between the thirty-nine tasks performed by most or all supervisors, as shown in table 1, and the thirty-one most important tasks (those rated “Extremely Important” or “Extremely Important to Important”) shown in table 2. This comparison revealed that thirty of the tasks performed by most or all supervisors were accorded the highest importance ratings. Five responsibilities were at the top of both lists; they are tasks performed by all or practically all supervisors and are considered to be extremely important. These important responsibilities that almost all supervisors have are: advocating for library programs, offering professional development for building-level librarians, meeting with building-level librarians, advising building-level librarians, and developing a vision and mission for the library program.

The converse analysis of the importance of tasks not as likely to be performed by the supervisor is also interesting. Two of the seven tasks identified as less likely to be part of the supervisor’s set of responsibilities (see table 1) were rated high in importance by participants who perform the tasks. These tasks are: hiring staff at the district level and closing libraries. This finding indicates that supervisors who do hire staff at the district level or close libraries consider these tasks to be of major importance.

## Functional Definition of the Supervisor Position

Findings from the Lilead Survey provide a foundation for an empirically based functional definition of the school library supervisor position. Based upon an analysis of data provided by Lilead Survey respondents, members of the Lilead Team drafted a functional definition of a school library supervisor. That functional definition is below.

The library supervisor is the individual at the district level with responsibilities in leading school library programs and personnel, developing collections, supporting teaching and learning, overseeing library facilities, providing technology for access and management of information resources, managing library budgets and finance, and participating in professional organizations. The supervisor exercises these responsibilities through specific tasks within each area:

- **Leadership**—Advocates for library programs, develops a vision and mission for the library program, develops library policies and procedures, meets with other district-level administrators, consults with principals, and conducts action or scientifically based research.
- **Personnel**—Offers professional development for building-level librarians, meets with and advises building-level librarians, advises principals regarding personnel issues.
- **Collection development**—Handles book challenges and censorship issues, manages database subscriptions, develops opening-day collections, and selects and evaluates materials.
- **Teaching and learning**—Integrates standards into the curriculum, including AASL standards, technology standards, state and local standards, and national standards; organizes special events; and writes curriculum.
- **Facilities**—Plans new library facilities and renovations, consults with architects and project managers, moves library collections, and selects furnishings for new facilities and renovations.
- **Technology**—Manages library automation systems, provides technology training and support to building-level personnel, develops technology plans and policies, and purchases software.
- **Finance**—Budgets for district-level library programs, negotiates contracts with vendors, and prepares grant applications.
- **Professional organizations**—Participates in professional organizations at all levels, presents sessions at professional meetings outside the district, and presents the results of action or scientifically based research.

The most important responsibilities, according to supervisors, are:

- Developing the knowledge and skills of building-level library staff through formal professional development events and informal mentoring and advising.
- Determining the future direction of the district's library program expressed in its mission and vision and implemented through policies, procedures, and budget.

- Advocating for and representing the library program.
- Managing systems on behalf of both the building and district levels.

The supervisor can expect to advise building-level librarians, manage library automation systems, and advocate for library programs every day. Other frequent activities include meeting with other district-level administrators and providing technology support to build-level library staff.

## Professional Development and Supervisors

### Needs Identified

In response to the question about their need for professional development and support, more than one hundred survey participants responded with myriad topics and suggestions, often described in detail and with justifications. Many submissions mentioned more than one topic, and many were pleas for help. The survey question concerning professional development needs opened a floodgate, and the responses illuminated challenges that the supervisors face and their desires to improve their job performance.

In describing opportunities they see as necessary for their own professional development, supervisors highlighted specific instances of need in leadership and administration, teaching and learning, working with and supervising personnel, developing digital collections, integrating technology, and a number of other topics. While some of these professional development needs may be addressed by opportunities available to building-level school librarians, other needs were specific to the administrative level of expertise needed by the district library supervisor. In Weeks et al. (2016), it was reported that many supervisors did not have administrative experience prior to becoming a district-level supervisor. Although 72.9 percent of supervisors had previous experience as a classroom teacher and 58.4 percent had experience as a school librarian, only 13.9 percent had administrative experience at the district level and 11.5 percent at the building level.

Supervisors' responses to the question about their professional development needs as supervisors can reasonably be interpreted to indicate that supervisors are not getting the preparation or continuing education they need as district-level administrators.

### Response to Supervisors' PD Needs: Lilead Fellows Program

In response to these present and pressing professional development needs detailed by the respondents to the Lilead Survey, the Lilead Project team at the University of Maryland's iSchool applied for and received funding from IMLS in 2014 to create the Lilead Fellows Program: an intensive, long-term professional development program for school district library supervisors.

In January 2015 twenty-five supervisors from seventeen states across the country began their eighteen-month journey together to tackle issues and challenges regarding school library programs in each of their districts. They met at the first Lilead Fellows in-person meeting held in Chicago, Illinois, before the start of the January 2015 ALA Midwinter Meeting. Over the following year and a half, participants met twice more in person and numerous times virtually to learn new skills, talk about the progress they were making in their districts, share their challenges

and struggles in attempting change, and receive valuable feedback from their peers and small-group mentors.

The goals of the Fellows Program are to meet the professional development needs that were revealed through the Lilead Survey and to create “a network of activists—school library supervisors who work together and with others to bring about change in schools, communities, and the profession” (Lilead Project n.d.). This work is done by empowering, enabling, and equipping supervisors to be courageous leaders and thoughtful risk-takers in their districts.

The culminating meeting of the first cohort of Lilead Fellows was held prior to the 2016 ALA Annual Conference in Orlando, Florida. At this meeting the Lilead Fellows reported on the lessons they learned throughout the program and the changes they have seen in their districts as a result of their participation in this professional learning experience. In evaluating the program, one Fellow wrote:

The Lilead program brought supervisors together to support our work, help me build advocacy for library programs, and improve my impact on teaching and learning. My Lilead experience has been life-changing. It has afforded me the opportunity to deeply assess the school library program as well as my effectiveness within my school organization. The Lilead project has empowered me to take the risks and implement the measures necessary to move the school library program to another level; one that supports continuous librarian and teacher improvement in instruction through the power of co-teaching that elevates student achievement. Through the program, I have been able to directly and purposefully impact the culture of teaching and learning throughout the district.

Another Fellow commented:

Although [I] didn't hit my original goal, I do feel like we have made progress [in our district]. Our professional development is more focused and includes leadership development—which all librarians need to advocate for their students. We have put the focus on instruction— which impacts student achievement.

### **Need for Additional Professional Development Opportunities**

The first cohort of Lilead Fellows directly influenced the work of twenty-five supervisors, and indirectly affected other supervisors through the presentation and publication efforts of participating Fellows. However, responses to the Lilead Survey indicate that many more supervisors are still in dire need of professional development opportunities specifically tailored to the needs of district-level library administrators. Opportunities at regional, state, and national conferences and through various organizations and institutions offering pre-service and continuing education for educators and school librarians could provide such professional development for supervisors.

For supervisors to properly carry out the numerous tasks and responsibilities identified throughout the Lilead Survey, this professional development is crucial for their own growth, for the growth of the school library profession, and for library programs' greater impact on schools, districts, and communities in which the supervisors work.



Because of supervisors' critical need for professional development and the success of the first Lilead Fellows Program, further funding from IMLS was awarded to enable the Project Team to field a second cohort of twenty-five Lilead Fellows and to create a new program, the Lilead Leaders: a professional development program for any school library professionals (building-level or district-level) interested in leading transformational change in their buildings or districts. Members of the Lilead Team hope that this continuation and expansion of the Lilead Project will meet a critical professional development need by enabling a greater number of supervisors and other school library leaders to work together to address issues and challenges their individual schools and districts face.

## Supervisor and Stakeholders

In this paper we have examined what supervisors do, their perception of the importance of the tasks they perform, how often they perform certain tasks, and their needs for professional development. Another perspective on the supervisor's position can be gained by examining the constituent groups and stakeholders with whom the supervisor interacts. Based on the roles and responsibilities of the supervisor as identified in the survey responses, numerous individuals and groups do or could benefit from the supervisor's advice and actions.

The work of supervisors can coordinate with and impact a district's or community's priorities in education through work with superintendents and other high-level administrators, building-level library staff, other district-level administrators, the profession at large, and the ultimate beneficiaries of all supervisors' work: students.

Higher-level system administrators (superintendents and their immediate staff and the supervisor's immediate superior) and decision-makers (school boards and other policy-making bodies) are supervisors' primary constituent groups. They interact with the supervisor and benefit directly from the supervisor's advocacy efforts on behalf of school library programs and services. These groups also directly benefit from the supervisor's work in establishing a framework of mission, vision, policies, and procedures for district library programs and services.

Another primary constituent or client group of the supervisor is comprised of building-level library staff. As survey respondents indicated, interactions with building-level staff, which occur frequently, are extremely important to the supervisor's role, as is planning and implementing professional development programs for building-level staff. Building-level staff also benefit from the supervisor's management of library automation systems, databases, and the selection and evaluation process. Several respondents mentioned that they have a special responsibility to building-level librarians who do not have specialized education in school library services.

Other district-level administrators are also a constituent group. Interactions between the supervisor and the supervisor's district-level peers touch areas of mutual concern. Curriculum development and review is, perhaps, the most prominent of these areas. The supervisor brings a commitment to integrating content standards, information literacy standards, and technology standards into the curriculum delivered to the students of the district.

The profession at large is also a constituent group. Supervisors' participation in local, state, and national professional organizations as members and leaders strengthens the knowledge base of the profession, and also keeps the supervisor current on the state of school librarianship.

Other constituent individuals or groups can also be identified: principals for whom the supervisor acts as consultant, vendors with whom the supervisor interacts to obtain goods and services, and architects and builders with whom the supervisor works in facilities improvements.

Students are the ultimate constituent group for supervisors. The good of the students must motivate and guide the entire body of the supervisor's work. However, it appears that supervisors and students are unlikely to interact directly. Supervisors interact with other constituents for the benefit of students, and decisions that the supervisor makes affect students eventually. However, very few of the tasks that were asked about in the survey or that respondents reported on their own involved direct interaction with students.

The list of groups who benefit from the supervisor's efforts is not meant to be exhaustive, but rather to stimulate thinking about the network of individuals and groups who influence and are influenced by the supervisor. A clear image of the critical position that the supervisor occupies in the district's educational enterprise emerges from looking at the supervisor's position from the perspectives of these various stakeholders. The supervisor's position has as its ultimate goal service to the most important constituent group of all, the students. However, this service to students is most often provided through interaction with many others in the school district and broader community.

## Concluding Remarks

The publication of this paper completes the reporting of results of the 2012 Lilead Survey conducted among district supervisors of school library programs and services, although other special-topic papers and a paper comparing the results from the 2012 and 2014 surveys are in development. The information presented in this and other papers about the 2012 Lilead Survey describe many aspects of the supervisor position: who the incumbents are, how they came to the supervisor position, their preparation for the supervisor position, their roles and responsibilities, how they spend their time, the challenges they face, and their needs for professional development to enhance their effectiveness in the supervisor position.

Much more can be learned from the Lilead data as it stands and much more can be explored using the data and findings as a springboard to further research and action. For more information about the Lilead Project, visit <<http://lileadproject.org>>.

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