ABSTRACT OF CAPSTONE

Nancy A. Chiara

The Graduate School
Morehead State University
April 22, 2014
TRANSFORMING A HIGH SCHOOL MEDIA CENTER INTO A LIBRARY LEARNING COMMONS

Abstract of capstone

A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the Requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in the College of Education At Morehead State University

By
Nancy A. Chiara
Louisville, Kentucky

Committee Chair: David Barnett, Professor
Morehead, Kentucky

April 22, 2014

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ABSTRACT OF CAPSTONE

TRANSFORMING A HIGH SCHOOL MEDIA CENTER INTO A LIBRARY LEARNING COMMONS

This study outlines a planned action based research project focused on studying the transformation of an urban high school media center to a learning commons model. This study includes a descriptive account as well as the impact of steps taken to match the media center to the needs of the 21st century learner. The research focuses on shifting policies from traditional practices to those that better serve the needs of the students and staff. This study used a combination of qualitative and quantitative data to determine if changing specific library media center policies and procedures would result in higher rates of circulation and increase positive attitudes toward the library media center. The shift in policies and procedures were based on the library learning commons model with special attention given to accessibility and learning climate. Special attention was given to interactive, Web 2.0 technologies including Springshare’s Libguides, a popular software application common in academic libraries.

KEYWORDS: Learning commons, media center, LibGuides, 21st century learner, focus group
TRANSFORMING A HIGH SCHOOL MEDIA CENTER
INTO A LIBRARY LEARNING COMMONS

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DEDICATION

To my husband, Mick –

Without you, none of this would have been possible.

To my sons Nicholas and Alex -

Thank you understanding when I was busy and for

just being such wonderful young men.
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This capstone would not be possible without the help and guidance of many people.
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Chapter 1

Background of the Study

In the United States, the school library can be traced back to the late nineteenth century and changed little until the mid-20th century (Woolls, 1999). These early libraries were collections of books and other print materials. The publication of a set of guidelines and policies was key in initiating the changes that have resulted in the current school media center model. In 1988, the American Association of School Librarians published *Information Power: Guidelines for School Library Media Programs*. The updated version, *Information Power: Building Partnerships for Learning* was published in 1998. The most recent publication *Empowering Learners: Guidelines for School Library Media Programs* and *Standards for the 21st Century Learner in Action* were both published in 2009. These publications are a set of policies, standards and indicators and can be used to track the changes in the role of school librarians and libraries. Following the guidelines outlined in *Information Power*, the school media center evolved from a collection of almost entirely print based material to a more diverse collection of media sources including video, audio and computer applications. Furthermore, the type of sources available is continually changing with advances in technology and user accessibility. With the addition of word processing stations, various forms of audio/visual sources, and electronically stored data, the user still needed to be in the library in order to access the materials and information because most of the resources were not accessible from outside the library. However, the development of the Internet
removed this physical necessity by allowing users to access information from locations outside the brick and mortar library (Lorenzen, 2001).

Menefee (2009) suggested that school libraries face new challenges with staffing and budgeting while the area that has received little attention is assessing library programs and the resources available in libraries. For instance, academic and school libraries are viewed by administrators differently than subject area departments because of the lack of measurable data associated with libraries (Lakos, 2007). Additionally, Jones and Zambone (2008) pointed out that while it is possible to generate reports on circulation and computer use, it may be difficult to show a relationship between library use and achievement. However, there are numerous studies (Lance, Welborn, & Hamilton-Pennell, 1993; Lance, Rodney & Hamilton-Pennell, 2000; Lance, Rodney & Hamilton-Pennell, 2000; Lance, Rodney & Hamilton-Pennell, 2001; Baughman, 2000; Smith, 2001; Williams & Wavell, 2001; Rodney, Lance & Hamilton-Pennell, 2002; Lance, Rodney & Hamilton-Pennell, 2002; Baxter & Smalley, 2003; Francis, Lance, & Lietzau, 2010; Lance & Hofschire, 2011 & 2012) conducted initially in Colorado, that show schools with certified media specialists score better on standardized achievement tests in reading compared with students in schools without an endorsed librarian. While these studies did not focus specifically on the learning commons model, there are characteristics in common between the successful library programs and the learning commons model such as collaboration and accessibility.
In addition, there are related studies that point out the connection between exposure to print materials and academic success (Cho & Krashen, 2002; Cunningham and Stanovich, 1991, 2003; Fresch, 1995; Kasten & Wilfong, 2005; Krashen, 2004; Krashen & McQuillan, 2007; Ravich & Finn, 1987; West & Stanovich, 1991; Stanovich & Cunningham, 1993). More specifically, Koechlin, Zwaan, and Loertscher (2008) identify ways a learning commons can be used to increase student achievement through improved reading skills and as an intervention strategy with struggling students.

Technical advances have changed the method and model of library design and programming with a more community and inclusive structure called the library learning commons (Loertscher & Koechlin, 2012). The learning commons is a comfortable space, with continual access (via technology, not necessarily accessing the physical space) where assistance is offered from not only adults but also fellow students. The learning commons is a place to voice opinions and interact with peers in a variety of learning opportunities (Loertscher, Koechlin & Zwaan, 2008). The main component of the learning commons is collaboration. Martin, Westmoreland and Branyon (2011) point out the necessity of collaboration between teachers, the teacher librarian, and the students. Moreover, technology is at the foundation of the learning commons allowing students to work in an environment that is comfortable and relevant to them. Because the learning commons concept is learner-centered in nature, Harland (2011) suggested that many of the practices would be completely counter to current school and library policies. Waskow (2011) stated that the learning
commons concept does not completely reinvent the role of the school library but redefines the role with a focus on collaboration rather than individual, quiet research or study. The learning commons adds to the functionality of the traditional library without removing the basic materials such as books and magazines. The combination of this collaborative environment in the library space fostered by the learning commons model and the information literacy instruction facilitated by the media specialist answers the question: why do we need a school library if we have access to so much information through the internet? This transformation may require “weeding” or removing obsolete items from the printed collection and organizing the materials to facilitate the patrons’ needs rather than adhere to strict library management guidelines that may make complete sense to the librarian but no one else.

A school library media center’s purpose is to enhance student learning and support the teachers and students (Menefee, 2009). With the current fiscal environment, it is more imperative than ever that school media centers adapt to the needs of individual schools and their population or face the possibility of closure or limited resources. Currently, school media centers are traditionally staffed with only one certified media specialist and possibly one library clerk (ALA, 2009). This isolated nature, being the only staff member in a particular position, can make it difficult for others in the organization to fully understand the librarian’s role. Opening the lines of communication between the library staff and the other stakeholders helps to remove the barriers often associated with the library (Loertscher
The learning commons structure invites classroom activities into the library space and requires classroom teacher-librarian collaboration (Cicchetti, 2010). This naturally increases communication between library staff and teachers and also acts as a method for reducing the barriers between the classroom and the library.

Additionally, those who staff media centers should also consider making equipment available to students to encourage inquiry and self-directed learning. For example, school libraries may only allow staff members access to video recording devices and audio players. Harland (2011) suggests that the learning commons concept rejects this policy and makes space for students to create multimedia projects, putting the equipment into the hands of students. Also, adjusting the hours of a school media center should be considered depending on the needs of the population (Characteristics of Highly Effective, 2013). Providing more ideas for collaboration, Ritzo, Nam, and Bruce (2009) suggest forming relationships with public and university libraries and information centers can enhance all organizations by focusing on a common outcome. This progressive philosophy places schools and their media centers at the nexus of community-centered education as this collaborative spirit is extended beyond the individual school into the community.

Schiffman (1987) states that the nature of library management databases and electronic collections offers the school media specialist a unique opportunity to take the lead on developing interactive, engaging lessons based on legitimate and research based instructional design theories and models. Because information literacy skills are integrated throughout the National Common Core State Standards (2010), the
school media specialist should collaborate with content area teachers in order to develop relevant and appropriate lessons. One tool designed to support this concept of collaboration and accessibility is the LibGuides software by Springshare. LibGuides is an interactive software application that provides an interface tool which appeals to the 21st century learner. This software is designed in-house so it is possible to develop a unique resource specific to the needs of the individual organization. LibGuides provide a platform for guiding students in the research process while supporting constructivist project-based activities.

**Statement of the Problem**

Because the current school media center model has seen little change over the past century other than the addition of computer stations taking the place of typewriters, the media center is still used mostly for quiet research with little opportunity for collaboration or group activities. Students are often prohibited from using many of the recording devices and videos in many media centers. While these practices may have met the needs of the student body in the past, it can be argued that student use of the library today is hindered by practices that have not evolved along with the students’ needs. For these reasons, the learning commons model may be a better model for 21st century learners.

As the researcher is both a teacher and librarian, the conceptual framework for the research project is based on guidelines and policies specific to both fields. The American Library Association’s (2009) *Empowering Learners: Guidelines for School Library Media Programs* and the Kentucky Department of Education (2012) *Library
Media Characteristics of Highly Effective Teaching and Learning provide the basis for the four areas of focus at the center of the study:

1. Learning climate is inclusive, welcoming, and encourages participation.
2. Reflection and assessment is continual; always intended to meet the ever changing needs of the students and staff.
3. Instructional strategies and activities are relevant, rigorous, and appropriate for 21st century learner.
4. The media center staff is knowledgeable and approachable, delivering a variety of services based on the needs of the media center patron.

While the media center was providing services to the students and staff, one should always be looking for ways to improve the program based on reflection and assessment. The researcher selected areas for improvement such as the physical layout in the media center, the hours opening for student access, and adjustments in the circulation policy as initial areas for study. A foundational goal of this capstone was to transform the media center into a fully functional learning center in which students, teachers, and administrators view the media center as a critical component of helping ensure student learning and support the school’s mission of ensuring that “all students become responsible citizens who are college or career ready when they graduate” (Mission Statement, 2012).

Purpose of the Study

Based on the amount of reported research available (Loertscher, 2010; Harland, 2011; Waskow, 2011), it would appear that the movement toward a learning
commons model is limited to only a small number of school media centers nation-wide. Colleges and universities appear to be early adopters to this model with K12 schools moving at a much slower pace. This study documents the impact of the shift to a learning commons model in an urban, Title I high school with a student population of approximately 1,000 students. This high school is a part of Jefferson County Public Schools which includes over 100,000 students and over 20 high schools.

Research Questions

The research in this study was designed to explore student library usage and possible adjustments to the current library environment that can alter student library usage. A variety of measurements were used to gather data on:

- Will altering several library policies, procedures, and the physical arrangement of the library result changes in the frequency of library visits and the number of items in circulation?
  - Change in hours
  - Adjust circulation rules such as how many items may be checked out and what credentials are required
  - Alter the physical library layout

Definition of Terms

*College and Career Readiness Standards* are the national teaching standards designed to ensure that students graduating from high school are prepared to enter
credit bearing entry courses in two or four year college programs or enter the workforce.

*Common Core State Standards* are a set of high-quality academic standards in mathematics and English language arts/literacy (ELA) created to ensure that all students graduate from high school with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in college, career, and life which were voluntarily adopted by forty-five states, the District of Columbia, four territories, and the Department of Defense Education Activity (National Governors Association, 2014).

*Information Literacy* describes a set of skills needed to find, retrieve, analyze, and use information (American Association of School Librarians, 2009).

*Learning Commons* is a library model that is learner-centered; collaborative and inquiry learning based (Harland, 2011).

*LibGuides* was the first commercial service hosting library subject guides. The software is based on 2.0 features intended to facilitate the integration of social networking sites (Yang, 2009).

*Web 2.0.* is a term used to refer to software and applications that are interactive including multimedia, social networking, and collaborative in nature (Yang, 2009).
Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to one school taking part in the research project; therefore, it may not be useful to attempt to generalize the results of this study to other schools. This was practitioner research intended to gather information about a variety of practices and environmental issues in order to find the optimum set of practices and policies that result in an increase of student use of the media center and also improve the general attitude toward the media center. Bias concerns were addressed through the triangulation of multiple data collection including both qualitative and quantitative data and observations of objective organization members including district employees and school administrators. The transformation from traditional library to learning commons involves altering not only the activities and behaviors allowed or encouraged in the library but also altering the space and equipment available for patron use. The latter was difficult to address considering budget issues, the age of the building, and other logistic concerns.

An additional limitation relates to the level of cooperation with the content area teachers and the support of the school administration. Because of the busy work schedule and demands on teachers’ time, it was difficult to involve many classroom teachers in the research process. As an initial step in the research process, there proved to be ample areas for study that did not require teacher input. As collaboration is a vital area for school media specialists (Beyond Proficiency, 2010), this will be a key component in any further research.
An additional limitation to the study involved the student focus group. In order to schedule the focus group during the school day, it was necessary to use the school book club members as the focus group. This may bias the responses to the facilitator’s questions and may not provide a complete picture of the students’ views regarding the library media center. The focus group results were considered only a starting place and the school wide survey was used to evaluate the attitudes of the school population.

**Significance of the Study**

The role of the library media center is shifting as technology changes library sources and the behaviors of the potential patrons (Hart, 2005). It is not only important to offer a variety of sources in a variety of formats to library patrons, but also adapt to the changes in user behavior. Based on the American Library Association’s description of 21st century learners, information seekers and library patrons are expecting a more interactive experience (ALA, 2009). While there are several studies focusing on the use of LibGuides in academic libraries for university level patrons (Dickson & Holley, 2010; Gonzalez & Westbrook, 2010; Griffin & Lewis, 2011; Li, 2013; Little, Fallon, Dauenhauer, Balzano, & Halquist, 2010; Redden, 2010; Smith, 2008), there is very little research on this subject at the high school level. As the number of K12 schools using this software increases, perhaps it is important to begin the dialogue by discussing the best way to implement this tool. Although research at the university level may provide some areas for comparison and a foundation for the process, it is difficult to use the research results from these
studies since the K12 population has unique needs and requirements that may not be completely addressed in the current research.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

This research followed Schmuck’s (1997) step-by-step process for the Proactive Action Based research model which is a cyclical model following six steps:

1. Try a new practice.
2. Incorporate hopes and concerns.
3. Collect data.
4. Check what the data mean.
5. Reflect on alternate ways to behave.
6. Try another practice (p. 31).

Each step in this research followed this model for various library practices including hours of operation, numbers of items allowed per patron, and using the media center space for lunch time clubs.

Figure 1 is a graphic representation of the Proactive Action Based process and illustrates the cyclical pattern embedded in the process.
The learning commons concept is a movement that shifts libraries from the quiet, study hall where individuals worked alone and in silence to an environment that accommodates the personality and needs of the current student (Bentheim, 2010; Cicchetti, 2010; Diggs & Loertscher, 2009; Harland, 2011; Hart, 2005; Koechlin, Zwaan & Loertscher, 2008; Loertscher & Koechlin, 2011, 2012; Waskow, 2011; White, 2011). A learning commons space requires some physical adjustments to the space as well as a shift in attitudes for all concerned. Students need space for collaboration and access to computers, cameras, print and electronic sources, and areas for building products that reflect their work; therefore, library staff must
relinquish some level of control on the space. This is not to imply that rules and procedures are eliminated; only that students are put in the position to guide their learning and that the environment is student-centered rather than teacher-centered.

The concept of the learning commons model has evolved over time as the needs of library patrons has altered because of advances in technology and a change in the behaviors and attitudes of 21st century patrons. Dr. Thomas Hart, former professor at Florida State University, was among those who recognized this shift. Hart (2005) identifies a foundational issue he considers too often ignored by library professionals. This issue is the concept of “curb appeal” typically used in the real estate field. Hart (2005) considers this “an essential element for a quality library media center” (p. 16). The argument is made that in order to attract visitors to the media center the space should be made to feel comfortable and relaxing. This was an area of focus for the research project.

In 2007, Erikson and Markuson describe the library media center of the future in depth. Included in the text are guidelines for theft prevention, electrical and heating and air conditioning requirements as well as space requirements for different zones in the media center devoted to specific activities. This is a space designed to access a variety of technologies and equipment and also a comfortable, inviting space for students to meet, socialize and work.

In a similar article, Dr. Daniel Callison (2007) provides a rubric for places of learning design. While not specific to library media centers, the rubric includes the media center as a central hub of learning activities. The rubric provides a guide for
assessing the types of learning opportunities students were offered during the study. Neither Hart, Erikson and Markuson, nor Callison use the term “learning commons” but both refer to the library as a place with access to technology designed for inquiry learning and collaboration. Both articles also discuss ways to increase the number of visitors to a library media center which is a central focus of this research project.

Bentheim (2010) provides a description of the transformation process of a library media center in a public elementary school serving a high-poverty population. The first step in the process included listening, researching, and planning. A collection analysis was performed in order to identify what items were circulating. Even though the students were identified as very transient, the decision was made not to limit book checkouts. A flexible schedule including before and after school access was instituted. This transformation did not require renovation of the facility or expensive equipment but was more of a shift in the instructional model and library procedures with some attention given to weeding the collection and making the physical space as appealing as possible. This provided additional information in creating the template for the transformation research project.

Cichetti (2010) describes the three-year transformation of the Concord-Carlisle Regional High School library. This library was built in 1975 and served a school with approximately 1,300 students in a district outside of Boston, Massachusetts. The initial steps included altering the job descriptions of the library employees providing positions for a school library media specialist and three full-time assistants assigned as student services specialist, accounts specialist, and media
production specialist. This was followed by rearranging the space which covered three floors. Consideration was given to creating student work spaces and an atmosphere that was inviting and pleasant. Although there was not a budget for this transformation, they added more computer access as the equipment was made available to the school. Each subsequent year, more equipment has been added to include a large LCD screen, an interactive whiteboard, and a laptop cart. The key to this transformation was the community involvement. This not only provided funding but also encouraged the school administration to make policy changes regarding filtering and social networking access. The shift in the library initiated a shift in the academic programs at the school by encouraging more teachers to align their instruction with standards from the American Association of School Librarians and the Massachusetts State and School Library Associations.

Waskow (2011) describes the process of transforming an elementary library into a learning commons. This process was completed in three phases. The initial phase included steps similar to those in other studies such as collection analysis, rearranging the physical space to provide optimal flow and access, and redecorating to create a comfortable and appealing environment. The second phase consisted mostly of reflecting and evaluating on what was working and what was not working before making more changes. The third phase included more technology integration including new desktop work stations and a recording studio. Ongoing activities include educating the school staff and students with the learning commons amenities and resources. While the patrons of this media center may be young, steps taken and
many of the changes made are appropriate for any library setting. Increasing access to technology and creating an inviting space are not age-specific adjustments. The physical changes in the library included adding more Internet drops and moving the shelves to provide easier access. Some policy changes included allowing students to check out more books and allowing students to check out devices that may have only been available to teachers, such as cameras. Adding a recording studio for student use is also an important component to this transformation.

White (2011) provides an alternative description of a school media center transformed into a learning commons by focusing on the library media specialist rather than the media center itself. This text is especially interesting because the author points out the need for the library media specialist to transform their thinking and expertise to better serve in a learning commons environment. The article author describes six “signposts” that guide the media specialists’ reflection beginning with a foundation on American Association of School Librarian (AASL) National Standards, Common Core Standards, the International Society of Technology in Education (ISTE) NETS Standards and the P21 Standards. This is an important connection for public school media librarians to make. White (2011) suggests reading books and taking part in professional development in order to stay current with both classroom teaching and library concerns. As with the other research, it is suggested to make the necessary physical changes to make the space more inviting and accommodating to the 21st century learner. This included arranging a space for collaboration and providing access to technology. Other key points are the importance of building
relationships with teachers, staying connected with the community and continually working on improving and adjusting the library media program to fit the ever-changing needs of the students. This author considers the virtual library as well as the brick and mortar space and ways to adapt both. Perez (2011) suggests focusing on using the learning commons as a tool for educator professional development.

Marcoux (2011) describes a completely different transformation experience. The Marysville Getchell Campus opened in 2010 and serves a student population of 1,600. The school was designed as four small schools in separate buildings with shared common buildings including a learning commons. This arrangement rather forces the issue of a library learning commons and required the school media specialist to adjust. The library space was built with flexibility in mind with innovations such as moveable shelves and connectivity throughout the school.

Another media center built based on the learning commons model rather than transformed in to one is described by Martin, Westmoreland and Branyon (2011). The Glen Allen High School in Henrico, Virginia, was designed to be a 21st space providing an experience that is a cross between a Barnes and Noble store and an exercise facility. It was important to provide access to information and provide personal attention. The library was equipped with a variety of devices, a counter serving coffee and hot chocolate, and an area with several stationary bicycles for patrons to use. Both of these situations are very specific and may not be possible replicate in other schools. These schools served high performing students in affluent areas with a supportive district and administration. While these examples are beyond
the scope of this research project, the concepts and practices described were still based on collaboration and communication and may provide ideas for future adjustments to the library media program.

The most prolific author on the subject of library learning commons is Dr. David V. Loertscher. Dr. Loertscher is a professor at San Jose State University and, either as sole author or co-author, is responsible for over 100 books and articles published since 1967. In 2008, Loertscher, Koechlin and Zwaan co-authored the text, *The new learning commons: Where learners win!* This text outlines the rational for a learning commons model and the characteristics of an evidence based structured learning commons. In addition to the books and articles, Loertscher has also presented at numerous conferences and facilitated many workshops. Recent publications (Loertscher & Koechlin, 2012; Loertscher, 2012; Koechlin, Luhtala, & Loertscher, 2011; Loertscher & Koechlin, 2011; Loertscher, 2010; Loertscher & Marcoux, 2009; Diggs & Loertscher, 2009; Koechlin, Zwaan, & Loertscher, 2008; Loertscher, 2008) describe the library learning commons concept in depth. Many of the articles are in serial format providing a continual conversation over time. The overall emphasis in these reports focuses on the need to change to meet the needs of the 21st century learner. Technology and flexibility are key components. Loertscher (2008) uses the term “Google generation” to identify todays’ learners and points out students are familiar with technology and online applications. In 2011, Loertscher and Koechlin describe the concept of a Personal Learning Environment (PLE) and how this concept fits with the learning commons model. The authors point out that
because of the vast amount of information available, it is now necessary for individuals to develop their own learning. This concept requires students to learn to evaluate what they find online and to use the tools with which they feel comfortable. This may include allowing students to Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) and access the district network in order to use those devices at school. The teacher librarian is seen as the coach or facilitator in this model. A related article by the same authors was published in 2011 and describes how the learning commons can be used to facilitate “knowledge building.” This process is also an individualized process allows all learners to achieve mastery because each learner follows only the steps needed rather than follow a set list of steps. Learning is naturally differentiated as each learner follows their own path. The teachers and teacher librarians act as facilitators and guides through the process.

One case study of particular interest chronicles the transformation from library to learning commons (Diggs & Loertscher, 2008). This commentary follows the shift in the Chelmsford High School Library in Massachusetts. The Chelmsford High School was built in 1971 and was considered state-of-the-art at the time. The library was called the Instructional Media Center and it included one large space with several smaller rooms. Tall book shelves were installed that did little to allow for natural light. The general atmosphere was dull and unattractive. The first step in transforming the space was to bring in technology with the addition of 40 desktop work stations. This resulted in more teachers bringing their classes to the library to work on projects using the computers. In order to achieve a higher level of
collaboration with the teachers, the media specialist began to serve refreshments to the school staff before school one morning a week. Students were added to the morning refreshments which encouraged students to visit the library. This in turn resulted in higher circulation numbers and a greater sense of community among the staff and students. Later changes included adjusting the physical environment through renovations and updating furniture. As the media center changed to the learning commons, attitudes and behaviors changed as well with collaboration and communication as a foundation. Chelmsford High School is similar in age and design of the research subject library. This case study provided valuable insight into the possibilities of transforming a high school library into a library learning commons.

The remainder of the research includes descriptions of very specific instructional strategies and a limited number of research studies regarding the learning commons. Knodt (2009) provides a very brief picture of the types of activities that take place in a learning commons rather how to create a one. For example, the activities are student-centered, constructivist and project-based. This aligns with the Characteristics of Highly Effective Teaching and Learning in the Library and the AASL 21st Century Standards. Mitchell and Potvin-Schafer (2012) describe a somewhat different situation from the previous publications by following the development of an experiential lab and learning commons in a public K8 school. This situation immerses the library into the instructional model to a much greater extent than the other situations described. This Canadian school already was collaborative and community minded, so it was a relatively simple process to take the
concept to the next step. The staff already relied on the librarian for input and support. The new Edgewood Experiential Lab and Learning Commons included an art studio, technology lab, science room, and gallery. These facilities connect to the learning commons which has zones for student collaboration, interactive white board, and areas for instruction. It is interesting to note that while information literacy instruction is mentioned, there is no reference to library books or students reading other read-a-louds which implies whole class reading. It is not possible to tell from the description if the library is completely virtual or if there is a print section.

Rather than focusing on the library or librarian, Linton (2012) takes a different approach to the learning commons idea by providing a framework for librarians and classroom teachers. The acronym TPACK represents Technical Pedagogical Content Knowledge which outlines a method to encourage collaboration. This framework illustrates the balance between technical or technology skills, pedagogical skills, and content knowledge. Both the teacher and the teacher librarian should bring these skills although the skills may not be equal. Each role may have different levels or depth of understanding, but places the educators on equal footing. Weiner and Weiner (2010) presents yet another look at the learning commons model by reporting the results of a student survey conducted as part of the planning process leading to a library renovation. This was the only publication describing a scholarly research study on the learning commons.

There is some general research on the changing structure of libraries (e.g., Agosto & Hughes-Hassell, 2005; Diggs & Loertscher, 2009; Gorman, 2003; Harland,
2011; Hart, 2005 & 2006; Laguardia, 2011; Menefee, 2009; Prensky, 2010; Troll, 2002; Woodward, 2005). These changes were initiated for the most part by the development of technological devices and the World Wide Web. Mobile devices allow the user to access information wherever and whenever the need arises. If libraries intend on staying relevant, the institution must adapt to the changing needs and wishes of the patrons (Barnhart & Pierce, 2011). All library and information professionals need to stay as current as possible with technology and the school library media specialist has the added requirements of those as a certified teacher. The teacher-librarian has the task of guiding students through the mire of Internet sources, a variety of platforms, digital citizenships and ethical use of materials. Several studies and research projects have focused on the online searching behaviors of the 21st century secondary student (Agosto and Hughes-Hassell, 2005; Fidel et al., 1999; Kuhlthau, 1989; Kuiper, Volman, & Terwel, 2008; Scott & O'Sullivan, 2005; Todd, 2003; Weiler, 2004). While these studies and reports approach the subject from a variety of perspectives, the point of agreement is that while students may have technology skills related to operating the devices, students lack the searching and evaluation skills to perform effective research. Consequently, students frequently plagiarize and rely on sources of questionable credibility. In order to successfully provide instruction that addresses these issues, it is necessary to provide the appropriate environment and present the instruction in a manner most appropriate for the population.
In 2009, the American Library Association (ALA) published both

*Empowering Learners: Guidelines for School Media Programs* and *Standards for the 21st Century Learner in Action*. These publications, authored by the American Association of School Librarians, outline the standards, benchmarks, and indicators detailing what students should be able to do and know. These standards are aligned with the National Common Core Standards (*Learning Standards & Common Core State Standards Crosswalk, 2010*) and require skills embedded in research and the ethical use of information and technology. The issue of information literacy instruction has been researched and studied extensively by Kuhlthau (1981, 1985, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1991, 1997, 2004, 2010). This research argues that guided inquiry and project-based lessons and activities are the most effective methods to structure instruction. Eisenberg and Berkowitz (1992, 2000) support this view and developed the concept of the Big6 research method; a widely recognized method for organizing and performing research. Learning research skills as part of project-based activity demonstrates the usefulness of the skill which might not be obvious if taught in isolation. This concept follows the constructivist views and provides an opportunity to scaffold learning (Robinson, Molenda, & Rezabek, 2008). Additionally, Dresang (2013), Abbas and Agosto (2013), and Kaplowitz (2012) discuss the need for information literacy instruction to shift to a more learner-centered teaching method. Farmer (2011) authored a text of particular interest focusing on instructional design as it pertains to librarians and information professionals. This is relevant to this research because attention is given to assessing the needs of the learners and it connects
instructional design directly to the information professional rather than requiring the information professional to try to adapt a more general text on instructional design to the library environment.

Jones and Zambone (2008) outlined six elements of the school library that they claim can positively impact the at-risk student. These elements follow the precepts of the learning commons by opening lines of communication and activities that are meaningful to the student and providing access to students and teachers, which is key to an effective library program. The integration of Web 2.0 technologies increases the engaging quality of online instruction, although one must be careful before implementing learning management systems. Cavazos-Kottke (2005) also makes a connection between self-selected reading and engaging reluctant readers. This report focused specifically on disengaged male readers and the positive impact of offering choice in reading materials. Kasten and Wilfong (2005) also studied self-selected reading with secondary school students and followed a Book Bistro model. The relaxing atmosphere and increase level of choice increased the student involvement and level of enjoyment. Paulson (2006) studied self-selected reading at the university level as an approach to developmental reading instruction. This study pointed out that underperforming students were often required to drill and read out of context rather than allowed to read authentic texts of their own choosing. This reportedly led to less reading and more “skill-and-drill instruction” which was argued to contribute to the unfavorable attitude toward reading by underperforming students.
There have recently been a number of studies designed to illustrate how the learning commons model can center on a specific tool, application or population. For instance, Martin and Westmoreland (2011) centered on information literacy. Schwelik and Fredericka (2011) describe an interesting innovation of the learning commons concept as the online information network: INFOhio develops a virtual commons. INFOhio is the K12 subscription database available to students and staff at schools in Ohio. Using the learning commons model, a group of educators met and brainstormed ways to adjust INFOhio to better fit the needs of the 21st century patron. The group used volunteers and an open source content management system. Volunteers developed tutorials and the site was made more collaborative by adding discussion forums and other social networking applications.

Sargeant and Nevin (2008) use the learning commons model as an environment for increasing engagement with students that may have become disengaged with education and school in general. This is an area of particular interest to a school experiencing low test scores and high dropout rates. What takes place in Nevin’s library media center was unplanned and serendipitous. Sargeant is the school success coach and does not initially have an office. Nevin, the school media specialist, offers a storage room in the library as a temporary office until another area is available. The unexpected result of this situation is the added student traffic to the library media center. Students were visiting the library media center by necessity on their way to the success coach’s office. Students who would not otherwise visit the library media center begin to make connections with the media specialist and began
taking advantage of the reading material in the library media center. Sargeant and Nevin began to collaborate, plan activities, and use the media center for classes in order to capitalize on this symbiotic relationship. The writer continues to identify technology and computer access as another important tool to attracting disengaged students. Hosting Manga book lunch time parties and other social activities were suggested as methods for enticing students to the media center. The population described in this case study matches the population in the research project. The research project incorporated some of the suggested activities such as scheduling extra-curricular classes in the media center to increase the student traffic into the media center.

Bradburn (1999) suggested two categories of measures, library use and availability. Library use measures how often the materials and resources in the library were used. Availability refers to the amount of resources available and also the availability of the media specialist to assist students and staff. For example, how much time does the media specialist spend working on projects outside of the media center? How many requests for resources are unmet because of lack of resources or materials? Bradburn organized several formulas addressing the various areas typically studied by library media personnel. These formulas may be used to quantify areas of a library media program and demonstrate the types of duties performed by the library media specialist and the amount of access students and staff have to the library collection.
One technology tool that was explored during the research project was the software application, LibGuides. The intent was to increase accessibility and engagement through technology. LibGuides is a system developed by librarians for libraries as a tool for enhancing the libraries’ accessibility and the library professional’s ability to present instruction and collaborate. The use of subject guides can be a method for providing a tool for connecting students with the library media resources. Hintz et al. (2010) offer some research outcomes that provide some guidance in developing student-friendly subject guides. LibGuides are the next step subject guides providing not only a list of useful sites and tutorials but also video clips, slideshows, Rich Site Summary feeds or more recently Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feeds that offer subscribers automatic updates from a variety of sites, games, and a variety of other tools (Yang, 2009). Gonzalez and Westbrock (2010) conducted an initial study establishing a working set of best practices relating to LibGuides, but this is limited to the academic library setting. K12 schools are beginning to use LibGuides; therefore, it is necessary to begin to develop a set of best practices tailored to the school media center or learning commons since it is not possible to simply adopt the practices of an academic library. The patrons at the university level demonstrate different behaviors as these patrons have a higher level of independence and expertise. University patrons also have different information needs such as more in-depth data and may be working only online. This translates to the academic librarian having a slightly different role with different responsibilities.
Chapter 3: Methodology

This is an action research project conducted at the researcher’s home school, specifically the library media center. Action research is a commonly used method of research in an educational setting (Dana, 2013; Holly, Arhar, Kasten, 2009; Mertler, 2012; Mills, 2014; Patterson, Santa, Short, & Smith, 1993; Sagor, 2000). This project is based on the understanding that:

Action research is a type of research that has its primary goal to improve practice...There is no attempt on the part of the action researcher to maintain an illusion of objectivity or to remain value-neutral. Rather, an action researcher’s job is to bring to light assumptions, beliefs, and actions; to examine them; and bring their actions into closer alignment with their values and aspirations (Holly, Arhar & Kasten, 2009, pg. 28).

The goal of the research project was to identify current strengths and weaknesses in the library program in the high school at which the research was conducted. Information gathered from this action research informed decisions that the library and school staff used to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the media program. Data were collected using student surveys and focus groups. The surveys and questions from the surveys are taken from the text, Power Tools: Forms and Presentations, published by the American Library Association.

It is necessary to outline the policies and procedures in place before any changes were instituted. The following policies, which were adjusted and studied, included:
1. Hours 7:30-2:30 - Students were allowed to visit without a pass from 7:30-7:40 & 2:20-2:30. The remaining hours reflect the formal school day and students are in scheduled classes during this time. Students visiting individually during the school day must have written permission from their classroom teacher. Students may also be visiting with the entire class with their teacher as a collaborative activity with the media specialist.

Changes to this policy were opening at 7:15 for students with a morning pass. These passes were made by the media center staff and allowed the student to move to the library before the usual 7:30 bell. (Students are required to stay in either the main lobby or cafeteria upon arrival until the 7:30 bell. This is a security issue.) Open lunch was instituted to allow students to spend their lunch time in the library. Students can either come directly to the library at the beginning of the lunch period or go to the cafeteria and sign-out after eating. There are color coded passes for each lunch period which students can use in the hallway. Again, security concerns preclude any free movement about the school unsupervised or without a pass.

Students are not supposed to eat in the library because of the carpet and computers. However, students are allowed to eat snacks in the seating area near the front door.

After school hours were also added as part of the school-wide Extended School Year program. This program was initiated simultaneously with the beginning of the study. The media specialist stays until 5pm Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday. Initially, the media center was only open on Mondays, but in response to student requests,
additional days were added. In order to calculate the number of students visiting the library, a sign-in sheet was used.

2. Circulation – Students are permitted to check out no more than 2 items for 2 weeks. Items may be renewed for additional time but must be physically in the library to be renewed. Students are not allowed to check out an item if they have an overdue item even if the item limit has not been reached.

Changes to these policies allowed students to check-out items without an ID.

Students who were regular patrons visiting at least weekly were allowed additional items beyond the 2 item limit. Items were renewed without the student bringing the item to the media center.

3. Materials available for circulation – Students are only permitted to check out books. Only staff and faculty members are permitted to check out audio-visual materials and equipment.

The only change to this policy was to allow flip cameras and certain movies for student check-out.

The following Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the layout of the media center before and after rearranging. The initial set-up blocked off one complete corner for a teacher work space which was rarely used. Both the library media specialist and the library clerk worked mainly at the circulation desk by the entrance door. This made it difficult for the media specialist to supervise students as the line of sight was blocked by interior walls. The area for large groups was directly in the middle of the room which made it difficult for multiple classes to visit the media center simultaneously.
The close proximity to the individual work stations made it difficult for students to work without distractions when surrounded by students moving about browsing for books or working at a desktop.

The new arrangement moved the media specialist to the center of the media center which facilitates easy supervision of students. The class area is off in one corner where there is ample room and enough separation for students to work without distractions and noise. It was possible to shift the class area because the media center has 2 laptop carts with 15 computers in each. The school is set-up for wireless internet service throughout and the printer is networked for all the computer stations, desktop and laptop, in the media center. Although the additional door is accessible, students are not allowed to enter through the classroom area door because of security concerns. Classes visiting the library with their teacher may use this access point if it

Figure 1. Library layout before changes
is more convenient than the main entrance in the lounge area. The area near the entrance is a lounge area for students to relax and talk quietly. All English classes were scheduled media center visits for a brief overview of the new policies and to give the students a chance to look around and familiarize themselves with the new arrangements. Students indicated their approval of the new arrangement in informal circumstances such as conversation with the library staff. The survey and focus group also indicated their approval of the new arrangement.

![Figure 3. Library layout after changes](image)

A record of classes scheduled to visit the library was documented with a brief description of the activity. In order to measure individual student use and attitudes, an initial student survey was conducted early in the school year. The surveys included demographic data as well as attitudinal responses using a Likert scale. Changes to the circulation policies and the physical environment were made based on
student input via the focus group, responses on the initial survey, and researcher observations. A second survey was conducted after changes had been implemented and any change was identified and measured using a variety of statistical measurements.

Media center administration is naturally divided into smaller activities centered on library management and student management. This cyclical research method (Schmuck, 1997) was selected as it aligns easily with the types of activities and practices which are typical to a high school media center. The Kentucky Department of Education specifically details the importance of teacher reflection and learning climate among other characteristics of highly effective teaching and learning. The focus of the teacher reflection was on what could be done, given the current physical limitations of the school media center and the current budget, to increase student usage and increase positive attitudes regarding the media center. The teacher reflection process was an informal process of observing, discussing, and acting on ideas and suggestions constantly adjusting and refining. Additional methods used to record and document the research process.

Survey Description

The researcher used the Doss High School Student Survey (Appendix A) adapted from a survey published by the ALA (1998). This survey was designed as a tool for the school media specialist looking for ways to improve their instruction and learning environment. The goal of the survey was to attempt to identify which groups of students are visiting the library and which groups of students are not. Two school
wide surveys were conducted as a pretest-posttest. The surveys were based on an American Library Association publication and included 20 questions containing demographics, self-reported frequencies of typical library behaviors and several questions on opinions and attitudes. The opinion questions were presented using a 4-point Likert type format ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree and opened-ended responses. An even number of possible responses was used to force respondents to select an Agree or Disagree rather than selecting a neutral response. The surveys were anonymous and the data were not paired. It was not possible to gather the data electronically as there were not enough computers for everyone to complete the survey at one time. Administering the survey over a number of days or periods would have caused too much disruption to the school day and learning environment. Both surveys were conducted by 65 classroom teachers in their rooms. The initial survey was administered to all students in attendance at school on the Friday, September 6, 2013 during the Advisory class period from 8:48-9:23 and included 694 submitted surveys. The results of the initial survey were used to drive further study following the Proactive Action Research model as the researcher adapted the program to address those students who may not be visiting the media center. The second survey was conducted on January 30, 2014 by classroom teachers during an intervention/enrichment period from 9:51-10:31 and included 726 submitted surveys. Responses from all surveys were coded (including missing data) and analyzed by the researcher using *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences* (SPSS). The results of the two surveys were compared to measure the level of change and the
corresponding effectiveness of the program adjustments. Descriptive statistics including gender, age, and race were tabulated and reported. Because the data collected from the survey was categorical, nominal, and ordinal in nature non-parametric tests (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2003) such as the Mann Whitney U test, the Kruskal-Wallis H, and Chi-square test and were used to analyze the data and measure the significance of the findings. A significance level of 0.05 was used.

**Student focus groups**

The purpose of this research is to improve the media center at a specific school. It therefore seemed appropriate to gather information from the students who attend the school. Part of the process was to assess student satisfaction and allow the students to have a voice in developing new practices. The proactive-action research process was a continual cycle of trying new ideas and evaluating the outcome through observation, student feedback, circulation data and the frequency of student visits. Student input offered those new ideas. The focus group process used was based on methods specific to libraries and described in several research journals (Hughes-Hassel & Bishop, 2004; Shoaf, 2003; Wilson-Matusky, 2006). The focus group was a cross section of the student population, but participants were all members of the school library book club. The book club meets during school during an enrichment/intervention period. Students needing additional assistance in a given content area are pulled for individual assistance. The students who are not pulled stay for an extended time in their regularly scheduled class and take part in some
enrichment activity. The book club is allowed to pull students from the enrichment group. Students from the freshman and sophomore classes meet on Tuesdays and students from the junior and senior classes meet on Thursdays. Each group consists of between 25 and 30 students. This large number inhibits the possibility of reading a specific book and discussing as is typical to many book club formats. This book club focuses more on individual reading, technology and educational field trips. For example, the members have access to laptop computers and are encouraged to create lists of suggested titles for purchase. The students are encouraged to use meeting times to write poems or prose for inclusion in the literary magazine (a book club publication). The book club also took part in field trips to the Actor’s Theater of Louisville to see productions of *Dracula* and *A Christmas Carol*. These activities encourage students to take part in the book club that might not be interested in a more traditional book club.

While not randomly selected, the students represented all grades, ethnic groups, genders, and academic achievement. The selection process used purposive and convenience sampling methods. Because this group already meets regularly during the school day, there was no requirement to pull other students out of classes or include individuals that are not willing to participate in a meaningful, productive manner. Because the objective of this study was to improve the library media center program, the focus group was comprised of students who are familiar with the library media center and its staff (Wilson-Matusky, 2006). Additionally, because of the relationship between the researcher and the members of the book club, an outside
facilitator was used for some of the focus group meetings. The inclusion of an outside interviewer was intended to provide an objective report of the focus groups’ attitudes and opinions (Hughes-Hassell & Bishop, 2004).

The individual selected for this role is an experienced school media specialist who holds a position at the district level working with school media specialists from all schools. The district librarian was selected as the focus group facilitator because of her experience with students, experience with leading group discussions, and familiarity with the student population. On December 5, 2013, the facilitator met with a group of sophomore book club members. The regular media specialist, the researcher for this project, was not present for this meeting. This allowed the students to speak more freely. The meeting lasted approximately 30 minutes. Students were asked for opinions from a set list. The meeting was recorded but no names were used in order to encourage participants to speak freely. A meeting was conducted on December 12, 2013 with the junior and senior class participants. The focus group discussed improving the library programs and the collection (Appendix B – Focus Group Questions). The focus group meetings were recorded and later transcribed (Appendix C). While using individuals already interested in the school media center and reading activities may provide a limited set of responses to the focus discussion questions, the resulting data was sufficient to provide the researcher with an initial list of areas to address. It should be noted that not every member of the book club was an avid reader. The focus group was included in the selection and purchase of library materials and ideas generated by the focus group were included in the research
process. Specifically, the focus group provided input to the library staff on ways to attract more students to the library and how to improve the layout of the library.

**Out-measures data collection**

Circulation data were gathered for the last three school years, months August through January, using the media center’s library management software, Library World. This data was compared to identify any changes in circulation during the period of the study. This database allows for a variety of reporting tools such as circulation data by day, month, year; top patrons, top items circulating and number of searches performed. It was possible to identify which materials were circulating the most and when were time ranges of the highest-lowest circulation. Additionally, data was organized and assessed based on Frances Bryant Bradburn’s (1999) guidance. These included:

- Number of classes per day using media center (CMC) equals the number of class visits (CV) divided by the number of days (D) in the sample or CMC=CV/D.
- Number of classes per day using media center (CMC) equals the number of classes per day (CD) divided by the number of periods (P) in the school day or CMC=DC/P.
- Number of students per day using media center (SMC) is an average based on sign in sheet
The researcher also followed reflexive practices and documented a personal narrative including steps taken and observable outcomes. A variety of researchers (Alevesson & Sköldberg, 2000; Hopkins, 2002; Lyons & LaBoskey, 2002; Radnor, 2001; Schostak, 2002) described the reflexive process of research and outline various steps that can be taken to address the concern of maintaining validity. The reflective process is also a key component of teaching and learning from the perspective of the educator (Kentucky Teaching Standards, 2012; CHETL, 2012). Teachers are expected to continually assess their students and the practices and instructional strategies used in the classroom always seeking improvement. Although the process may appear informal, documented program improvements and successes measured through continual assessment guide the teacher to the optimal course of action.

Internal validity was addressed by gathering data from multiple sources. This triangulation of data was designed to limit internal validity concerns. For instance, the focus group was asked to offer opinions on favorite titles and genres. Circulation data were gathered to compare most frequently checked-out items to see if this supported the focus group opinions. The survey responses and results were compared with the library sign-in sheet to determine if the number of students visiting the library matched the actual number. The data included subjective, qualitative information. The students know the researcher and that relationship may have affected their responses on the survey questions. This was a preliminary study carried out by an individual researcher. Because of the nature of action research, generalizability cannot be assumed.
Chapter 4: Findings

Review of the Methodology

As previously stated, the purpose of the study was to evaluate student library usage and explore the impact of adjustments to policies and procedures. To complete this task, a variety of measurement tools were used to gather data, such as student surveys, a student focus group, and an analysis of circulation and library usage data. The student survey was used to gather opinions, attitudes and self-reported library usage data. The focus group was used to generate ideas for possible areas for improving the library program and also to provide an additional source of student feedback beyond the student survey. All students (excluding those in self-contained classrooms for functional mentally disabled students and those in In-school Suspension) present were given the student survey. The focus group included students currently members of the school book club, grades 10-12. The library usage data was gathered using sign-in sheets and data generated through the library management software.

Answering the Research Question

The intent of this study was to answer the research question, “Will altering several library policies, procedures and the physical environment of the library result in changes in the number of library visits and circulation?” The data were disaggregated to see if there were any differences between ethnic groups, gender, and age groups. In order to answer these questions, a student survey based on one suggested by the American Library Association was conducted before and after
changes in the library program were made. Some minor adjustments were made to some of the questions such as adding more choices under the race category and asking specifically about online databases available in the school library rather than generic research questions. The plan was to survey the students early in the 2013-2014 school year to gather baseline data about library usage and attitudes, spend the next 3 months instituting a number changes in the library policies and procedures then resurveying to measure any changes in responses. The focus group was used to generate ideas for possible changes in addition to any changes selected by the researcher and library authority. These changes were made with the approval of the school administration. In addition to measuring changes in attitude and library usage, the survey was also used to identify any demographic category that may be under represented. The goal was to provide a library media program that meets the needs of all students, regardless of race, gender, grade or age and where all students feel comfortable.

**Overview of the Findings**

The school in which the study took place is a Title I school with 79% of the students eligible for free/reduced lunch. The total enrollment for the school during 2013-2014 school year was 1029 with 58.1% males and 41.9% females. The racial make-up of the school was reported by the district as 47.9% black, 39.7% white and 12.4% other. The first student survey labeled Group 1 was conducted in September 2013 before any library changes and included 694 respondents. The second survey,
or Group 2, was conducted in January 2014 after the library changes and included 723 respondents. The majority of respondents on both surveys were male with 386 (55.6%) on Survey 1 and 407 (56.1%) on Survey 2. Figure 4 provides an illustration on the genders of the respondents on both surveys.

**Figure 4. Comparing Gender of Respondents**

The ethnicity of the respondents on Survey 1 included 247 (35.6%) White, 296 (42.7%) Black/African American, 58 (8.4%) Hispanic/Latino, 25 (3.6%) Asian, 9 (1.3%) Native American, and 51 (7.3%) Other. The respondents on Survey 2
identified themselves as 267 (38.6%) White, 266 (36.6%) Black/African American/Black, 47 (6.5%) Hispanic/Latino, 30 (4.1%) Asian, 9 (1.2%) Native American, 44 (6.1%) Other, and 59 (8.1%) as Multi-racial. The multi-racial category was added to the second survey because some students selected more than one racial category on the initial survey. Figure 5 provides a graphic representation of the ethnic groups represented in the surveys.

![Figure 5. Comparing Ethnicity of Respondents](image-url)
The grade distribution of the respondents on each survey included 212 (30.5%) freshmen, 177 (25.5%) sophomores, 192 (27.7%) juniors, and 113 (16.3%) seniors on Survey 1. There were 213 (29.3%) freshman, 196 (27.0%) sophomores, 183 (25.2%) juniors and 131 (18.0%) seniors responding on Survey 2. The following Figure 6 provides a comparison of the grade levels of the students on both surveys.

**Figure 6. Comparing Grade of Respondents**

The ages of the respondents on the surveys ranged from 14 to 20 years with 165 (23.8%) 14-year-olds, 185 (26.7%) 15-year-olds, 179 (25.8%) 16-year-olds, 126
(18.2%) 17-year-olds, 34 (4.9%) 18-year-olds and 4 (0.6%) 19-year-olds on Survey 1. This shifted to 104 (14.3%) 14-year-olds, 183 (25.2%) 15-year-olds, 181 (24.9%) 16-year-olds, 171 (23.6%) 17-year-olds, 69 (9.5%) 18-year-olds, 12 (1.7%) 19-year-olds and 4 (.06%) 20-year-olds. The 20-year-old category was added to the second survey. Figure 7 provides an illustration of the ages of the students on both surveys.

![Chart illustrating age distribution of respondents](chart.png)

**Figure 7.** Comparing Age of Respondents

The Chi-square test was used to measure the responses on the question “How often do you go to the high school library? The possible responses were ordinal which
required a non-parametric test. The frequency of students visiting the school library increased and the change was statistically significant at the 0.05 level with \( \chi^2 = 67.203^a, \ p \leq 0.01 \). Figure 8 illustrates the responses of the “How often do you go to the school library?” question from both surveys.

![Figure 8. Comparing Frequency of Visits](image)

Questions #6-7 and #9-#16 were analyzed using the Mann-Whitney U test as this is appropriate for ordinal data from two groups such as a pretest posttest (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2003; Leedy & Ormond, 2013).
Table 1 provides the statistical outcomes of the test with the value of $p=0.00$ which meets the level for statistical significance of $p \leq 0.05$ so the change between the two groups was significant.

Table 1

*Question 6: How often do you find what you are looking for?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
<th>Sum of Ranks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Survey 1</td>
<td>676</td>
<td>632.48</td>
<td>427558.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey 2</td>
<td>713</td>
<td>754.27</td>
<td>537797.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1389</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *Grouping Variable. Using the Mann-Whitney $U$, $Z = -5.887$ and $p = 0.000$*

Figure 9 illustrates the difference into the two groups and shows the individual distribution of the mean and the standard deviation of the data. The mean for the group increased from 2.08 with Survey 1 to 2.42 with Survey 2 responses. The curved line illustrates the normal expected distribution given
Table 2 provides the statistical outcomes of the test with the value of $p=0.00$ which meets the level for statistical significance of $p \leq 0.05$ so the change between the two groups was significant.

Table 2

**Question 7. How often do you ask the school library staff for help?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
<th>Sum of Ranks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Survey 1</td>
<td>674</td>
<td>650.07</td>
<td>438149.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey 2</td>
<td>715</td>
<td>737.35</td>
<td>527205.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1389</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. aGrouping Variable. Using the Mann-Whitney U, $Z = -4.464$ and $p = 0.000$

Figure 10 illustrates the difference into the two groups and shows the individual responses showing the “1” response of “never” on the scale decreased
while the “2, 3 and 4” responses which indicate a level of frequency increased. The mean for the group increased from 1.62 with Survey 1 to 1.85 with Survey 2.

Figure 10. Comparing Responses Question #7

Table 3 provides the raw data and percentages for the responses on when students visit the library. This data was included to provide further information on student behavior with regards to visiting the school media center.

Table 3

Question 8. When do you go to the school library? (Check all that apply.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groupa</th>
<th>Survey 1</th>
<th>Survey 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before School</td>
<td>85 (11.7%)</td>
<td>57 (8.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With a Class</td>
<td>404 (55.6%)</td>
<td>242 (34.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During lunch on my own</td>
<td>136 (19.6%)</td>
<td>235 (32.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During school on my own</td>
<td>118 (17.0%)</td>
<td>185 (25.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After school</td>
<td>112 (16.1%)</td>
<td>58 (8.0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4 provides the statistical outcomes of the test with the value of \( p = 0.00 \) which meets the level for statistical significance of \( p \leq 0.05 \) so the change between the two groups was significant.

Table 4

*Question 9. I feel comfortable finding materials in the library. (Likert-like item)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group (^a)</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
<th>Sum of Ranks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Survey 1</td>
<td>661</td>
<td>636.13</td>
<td>420479.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey 2</td>
<td>710</td>
<td>732.43</td>
<td>520026.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1371</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. \(^a\)Grouping Variable. Using the Mann-Whitney U, \( Z = -4.685 \) and \( p = 0.000 \)

Figure 11 illustrates the difference into the two groups and shows the individual responses indicating the “1 and 2” responses on the “never” end the scale decreased while the “3 and 4” responses on the “frequent” end of the scale increased.

The mean for the group increased from 2.62 with Survey 1 to 2.89 with Survey 2.
Figure 11. Comparing Responses Question #9

Table 5 provides the statistical outcomes of the test with the value of $p=0.00$ which meets the level for statistical significance of $p \leq 0.05$ so the change between the two groups was significant.

Table 5

Question 10. I feel the library staff is very helpful and friendly.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group$^a$</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
<th>Sum of Ranks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Survey 1</td>
<td>655</td>
<td>620.83</td>
<td>406646.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey 2</td>
<td>708</td>
<td>738.59</td>
<td>522920.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1363</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. $^a$Grouping Variable. Using the Mann-Whitney U, $Z = -5.824$ and $p = 0.000$

Figure 12 illustrates the difference into the two groups and shows the individual responses indicating the “1 and 2” responses on the “never” end the scale
decreased while the “3 and 4” responses on the “frequent” end of the scale increased.

The mean for the group increased from 2.83 with Survey 1 to 3.15 with Survey 2.

*Figure 12. Comparing Responses Question #10*

Table 6 provides the statistical outcomes of the test with the value of p=0.011 which meets the level for statistical significance of $p \leq 0.05$ so the change between the two groups was significant.

**Table 6**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 11. I feel comfortable asking for help.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. aGrouping Variable. Using the Mann-Whitney U, $Z = -2.554$ and $p = 0.011$
Figure 13 illustrates the difference into the two groups and shows the individual responses indicating the “1 and 2” responses on the “never” end the scale decreased while the “3 and 4” responses on the “frequent” end of the scale increased.

The mean for the group increased from 2.96 with Survey 1 to 3.10 with Survey 2.

Figure 13. Comparing Responses Question #11

Table 7 provides the statistical outcomes of the test with the value of p=0.00 which meets the level for statistical significance of p ≤ 0.05 so the change between the two groups was significant.
Table 7

*Question 12. I feel the library is a welcoming and friendly place.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group*</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
<th>Sum of Ranks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Survey 1</td>
<td>660</td>
<td>641.78</td>
<td>423573.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey 2</td>
<td>707</td>
<td>723.42</td>
<td>511455.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1367</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *Grouping Variable. Using the Mann-Whitney U, Z = -4.062 and p = 0.000

Figure 14 illustrates the difference into the two groups and shows the individual responses indicating the “1 and 2” responses on the “never” end the scale decreased while the “3 and 4” responses on the “frequent” end of the scale increased. The mean for the group increased from 2.95 with Survey 1 to 3.18 with Survey 2.

*Figure 14. Comparing Responses Question #12*
Table 8 provides the statistical outcomes of the test with the value of p=0.008 which meets the level for statistical significance of p ≤ 0.05 so the change between the two groups was significant.

Table 8

*Question 13. I feel confident about using electronic databases.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
<th>Sum of Ranks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Survey 1</td>
<td>656</td>
<td>653.40</td>
<td>428632.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey 2</td>
<td>706</td>
<td>707.61</td>
<td>499571.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1362</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *Grouping Variable. Using the Mann-Whitney U, Z = -2.642 and p = 0.008

Figure 15 illustrates the difference into the two groups and shows the individual responses indicating the responses shifted slightly. The mean for the group increased from 2.66 with Survey 1 to 2.82 with Survey 2.

*Figure 15. Comparing Responses Question #13*
Table 9 provides the statistical outcomes of the test with the value of $p=0.207$ which does not meet the level for statistical significance of $p \leq 0.05$ so the change between the two groups was not significant.

Table 9

**Question 14. I feel confident about finding online information.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group(^a)</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
<th>Sum of Ranks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Survey 1</td>
<td>649</td>
<td>690.45</td>
<td>448100.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey 2</td>
<td>705</td>
<td>665.58</td>
<td>469234.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1354</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. \(^a\)Grouping Variable. Using the Mann-Whitney U, $Z = -1.261$ and $p = 0.207$

Figure 16 illustrates the difference into the two groups and shows the individual responses indicating very little shift between the groups with the mean decreasing from 3.23 with Survey 1 to 3.17 with Survey 2.

*Figure 16. Comparing Responses Question #14*
Table 10 provides the statistical outcomes of the test with the value of $p=0.00$ which meets the level for statistical significance of $p \leq 0.05$ so the change between the two groups was significant.

Table 10

**Question 15. I feel the library rules and policies are fair.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groupa</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
<th>Sum of Ranks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Survey 1</td>
<td>644</td>
<td>627.92</td>
<td>404380.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey 2</td>
<td>705</td>
<td>718.01</td>
<td>506194.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1349</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. aGrouping Variable. Using the Mann-Whitney U, $Z = -4.472$ and $p = 0.000$

Figure 17 illustrates the difference into the two groups and shows the individual responses indicating the “1 and 2” responses on the “never” end the scale decreased while the “3 and 4” responses on the “frequent” end of the scale increased. The mean for the group increased from 2.86 with Survey 1 to 3.09 with Survey 2.

*Figure 17. Comparing Responses Question #15*
Table 11 includes raw data and percentages of student responses of survey question 16. *Please check all the reasons you visit the school library. (Check all that apply.)*

Table 11

*Reasons for Visiting the Library*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Survey 1</th>
<th>Survey 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Find materials for school assignments</td>
<td>281 (40.5%)</td>
<td>332 (45.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find materials for own pleasure</td>
<td>169 (24.4%)</td>
<td>246 (33.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do homework</td>
<td>171 (24.6%)</td>
<td>198 (27.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet friends</td>
<td>131 (18.9%)</td>
<td>183 (25.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialize before school starts</td>
<td>41 (5.9%)</td>
<td>91 (12.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study or do homework after school</td>
<td>90 (13.0%)</td>
<td>124 (17.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use computers</td>
<td>261 (37.6%)</td>
<td>342 (47.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepare multimedia presentations</td>
<td>102 (14.7%)</td>
<td>143 (19.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read magazines</td>
<td>58 (8.4%)</td>
<td>78 (10.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>118 (17.0%)</td>
<td>95 (13.1%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 12 includes the raw data and percentages of the responses for question 17. How often do you visit the public library? This information was included to provide anecdotal information of student behaviors and public library use.

Table 12

*How often do you visit the public library?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Survey 1</th>
<th>Survey 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>402 (57.9%)</td>
<td>374 (51.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twice a year</td>
<td>149 (21.5%)</td>
<td>149 (20.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a month</td>
<td>85 (12.2%)</td>
<td>99 (13.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a week</td>
<td>24 (3.5%)</td>
<td>38 (5.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three times a week</td>
<td>8 (1.2%)</td>
<td>21 (2.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>12 (1.7%)</td>
<td>16 (2.2%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13 includes the raw data and percentages of the responses on the open-ended question “What’s the best thing about the library?” This information was included to provide additional student responses for comparison with other measurement methods.
Table 13

*Responses from Question #18*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What's the best thing about the library?</th>
<th>Survey 1</th>
<th>Survey 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I don't know/nothing /blank responses</td>
<td>219 (31.5%)</td>
<td>239 (33.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books</td>
<td>199 (28.6%)</td>
<td>199 (27.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer</td>
<td>109 (15.7%)</td>
<td>44 (6.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet friends</td>
<td>27 (3.8%)</td>
<td>23 (3.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quiet and peaceful/comfortable</td>
<td>89 (12.8%)</td>
<td>58 (8.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>36 (5.1%)</td>
<td>19 (2.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The library staff/friendliness/</td>
<td>9 (1.2%)</td>
<td>83 (11.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization/cleanliness</td>
<td>5 (0.7%)</td>
<td>40 (5.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No late fees</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>3 (0.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessibility/hours open/</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>15 (2.0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Focus Group Data**

The focus group sessions provided meaningful input to the researcher. The new layout of the library media center was decided through collaboration with the members of the focus group. The focus group members also provided the manual labor to move the book shelves and furniture. The additional hours were also a suggestion from members of the focus group. The book club members are instrumental in offering suggestions for materials for purchase. The increase in
graphic novels in the collection is a direct response to their requests and the graphic novels circulate more often than the traditional print books. This may be because the nature of graphic novels makes for a faster read.

The focus group sessions with the younger students did not offer as much data as the session with the older students. The younger students tended to answer only direct questions and did not elaborate on their answers. The older students did not have this issue. If anything, there was a tendency for a limited number of students to monopolize the discussion and also to get somewhat off track with examples and stories. This is the nature of discussions with students and as a whole, the discussion offered some points and areas for further thought.

The most glaring issue the focus group discussions identified was the dilemma of the optimal library media center atmosphere. Especially during the session with the older students, there were two different views of student perceptions and preferences. There were those who prefer the quiet contemplative setting while there were others who enjoyed the more active, somewhat noisier social setting. This divergence in views led to clearly defined zones in the library media center in the hopes of at least somewhat accommodating both groups’ wishes.

During a discussion of research resources and writing papers, a student ventured into a slightly different area. Although the comments were not exactly on topic, he raised some interesting points on how he felt about the library. The main point presented was the constant feeling of pressure about school and the education
process. He stated a desire for the library to be a sanctuary where he could relax and work in peace. This sentiment was repeated by other members of the focus group.

**Circulation data**

The following Table 14 includes circulation data by month for the period under study. The increase in October 2013 corresponds with the implementation of morning hours and increasing the number of items allowed for check-out. The following months continue the trend of higher circulation except for December 2013. During this month, school was canceled two days and because of inclement weather. The circulation rate was calculated as based on data from Library World library management software. The number of items circulating from 8/20/2012-2/17/2013 was 2666. The number of students enrolled during that time period was 913.

Following Bradburn’s method of calculating the circulation rate, the number of items was divided by the number of students resulting in 2.92 items circulating per student.

The circulation rate for 8/20/2013-2/17/2014 was calculated based on 3460 items circulating with a student enrollment of 1026. The circulation rate increased to 3.37. The turnover rate measures the average number of times an item circulates. The media center catalog lists 10899 books. Following Bradburn’s method of calculating the turnover was calculated by dividing that total number of items in the media center by the number of items circulating results in 3.12. Data for troubleshooting and curriculum support requests were not included in this study as the numbers recorded were very small.
Table 14

*Circulation Activity Report Comparing School Years 2011-2014*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2011-2012</th>
<th>2012-2013</th>
<th>2013-2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>601</td>
<td>595</td>
<td>617</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>1048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>485</td>
<td>622</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>510</td>
<td>509</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>476</td>
<td>679</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>1701</td>
<td>2692</td>
<td>3597</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Materials Usage Results**

Using data from student sign-in sheets and teacher/media sign-up logs, the following results presented in Figure 18 reflect the usage of the media center from October 2013-January 2014. There is an increase in the number of visitors to the library except for the 2 weeks before the winter holiday. The week of December 9, 2013 was a short week because of inclement weather. December 20, 2013 was the day before the holiday break, attendance was down and teachers were asked to limit hall passes. This may explain the drop off in visits for those 2 weeks. It is not possible to compare these numbers to previous years as no data was recorded. This data will provide a baseline for future study.
Figure 18. Student Use of Library Media Center

Summary of the Findings

Survey

The data gathered through the two surveys provided an opportunity to measure any change in the students’ behaviors and attitudes regarding the frequency of visits to the library and the sense of comfort with the library surroundings and staff. The data from the survey were compared with the focus group information and circulation data in order to reinforce the findings. The survey results indicated the students were visiting the library media center more frequently and had an increased level of comfort and confidence. The circulation data supported these results with higher circulation numbers. Table 16 includes provides an overview of the questions and the statistical results.
Table 15

*Overview of Statistical Results*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>p-value</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How often do you go to the school library?</td>
<td>$p \leq 0.01$</td>
<td>frequency of visits increased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often do you find the materials you are looking for in school library?</td>
<td>$p=0.00$</td>
<td>frequency finding materials increased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often do you ask the school library staff for help?</td>
<td>$p=0.00$</td>
<td>frequency asking for help increased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel very comfortable finding materials in the library.</td>
<td>$p=0.00$</td>
<td>level of comfort increased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel the library staff is very helpful and friendly.</td>
<td>$p=0.00$</td>
<td>positive feeling toward staff increased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel comfortable asking for help.</td>
<td>$p=0.011$</td>
<td>comfort level asking for help increased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel the library is a welcoming and friendly place.</td>
<td>$p=0.00$</td>
<td>positive feeling toward library atmosphere increased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel confident about using electronic databases, such as Kentucky Virtual Library.</td>
<td>$p=0.008$</td>
<td>confidence level using electronic databases increased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel confident about finding information online.</td>
<td>$p=0.207$</td>
<td>confidence level finding information online decreased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel the library rules and policies are fair.</td>
<td>$p=0.00$</td>
<td>feeling library rules are fair increased</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The number of visits to the school library increased as did the positive comfort level with finding material and friendliness of the library staff. The one area that did not show significant change was the level of confidence in finding information online. Other data was collected such as reasons why students visit the school library, frequency visiting the public library and open-ended responses asking for likes and dislikes. The data were also analyzed using the Kruskal-Wallis test. This test is similar to the Mann Whitney U test but allows for more independent variables. The results of this test analyzing age, ethnicity, and grade with frequency of visits and comfort showed the differences were not statistically significance. In other words, no demographic group responded differently on the survey to a degree that was statistically significant.

**Focus Group**

The focus group provided some direction to the researcher and also provided support with helping re-arrange the physical set-up of the library. The focus group provided a student voice offering suggestions and acting as a sounding board for the researcher. The process was somewhat informal and some of the changes suggested by the group were implemented very quickly. For instance, the furniture shift was discussed during a book club meeting and the next day the move was started. Students volunteered during their lunches to help and the shift was made over only 2 days for the large items. The smaller pieces of furniture were moved regularly in a trial and error method to find the best place.
The under classmen group offered little input basically only answering direct questions and agreeing with each other and the facilitator. This may be because these students are more shy and less self-confident which may be part of the reason they initially gravitated to the library. The upper classmen were more forth coming with opinions and were willing to disagree with each other and present criticism. One student stated he did not feel it was his responsibility to encourage others to use the library. Another student stated he would prefer noisy or active students would not visit the library. This confirmed the need for multiple zones in the library to fit the needs of all the students. Some students want to visit the library for the peaceful, calming atmosphere. Other students want to visit for a place to meet friends and socialize. Both activities are appropriate depending on the time of the visit and if the student is directed there by a teacher for a specific purpose.

**Library Catalog and In-Library Use Data**

The library catalog data were gathered automatically by the library management software application. Reports were compiled and the data compared. An increase in circulation was indicated by the monthly circulation activity report. The student sign-in log was used to gather the number of student visits. As there is no previous data on student visits, this data only provide anecdotal information and a baseline for future study.
Chapter 5: Discussion and Recommendations

Overview of the Study

The purpose of this study was to use Schmuck’s (1997) Proactive Action Based research model to document the impact of shifting a high school media center from a traditional model to a learning commons model. The foundational purpose of the study was to increase student usage of the library and if possible, identify who (i.e., ages, ethnicities, and genders) was using the library and influence student attitudes regarding the library. In order to facilitate this study a variety of steps were taken including surveys, focus groups, evaluating circulation and equipment usage data. This study focused on the individual student rather than classes using the library.

This study was intended to start the discussion on how to make the media center a more integral part of the students’ experience during their high school years. Naturally, not every student wants to visit the media center but was it possible to engage more students and make them feel more comfortable visiting the school’s media center on their own? In an effort to answer this question, the researcher used a variety of research tools to measure students’ attitudes and opinions. Then, in an attempt to alter the media center to meet the needs of students, the researcher altered both the physical space of the media center as well as the policies and procedures of the media program.

A variety of data collection methods were used in order to triangulate the results thus strengthening any findings through confirmation. The survey was used as
a means to measure any change. The focus groups were used to offer suggestions and
a student voice throughout the process as the Schmuck’s action based method
required continual adjustments and refinement. The quantitative library circulation
and in-library use data provided another means to confirm the findings.

**Discussion of the Results**

This research project was intended to answer the question, “Will altering
several library policies, procedures and the physical environment of the library result
in changes in the number of library visits and circulation?” The resulting data
indicated that this was indeed the case and also demonstrated the possibilities of
making changes in student attitudes with very little effort on the part of the media
specialist. The students were surveyed in October 2013 and changes were
implemented over the next four months. The students were surveyed again in January
2014 and results indicated the increase in frequency of visits was statistically
significant. Students reported an increase in their ability to find materials and also
their willingness to ask for help. Students were asked similar questions such as “How
often do you find what you are looking for in the school library?” and also asked to
provide a rating of “I feel very comfortable finding materials in the library.” Results
to both of these questions showed significant increases indicating at least the
students’ perceptions of their competence increased. Similarly, the students were
asked to rate their feelings about the helpfulness and friendliness of the library staff
and also the sense of welcome felt regarding the library space. The results of both of
these questions showed a significant increase in the feeling of welcome the students
felt. A similar increase in positive feelings was shown regarding the question of the fairness of library policy and rules. While these questions do not measure a level of competence performing information literacy skills, the increase level of comfort and confidence are an indication of a stronger relationship between students and the library media center. The possible cause for these increases may be the accessibility and thus the familiarity with the library media center. Students were allowed to visit more often throughout the day including before and school. This allowed the library staff the opportunity to talk with students outside the classroom environment. Students regularly stopped by to chat with the library staff or share about a success or a problem. While these are not necessarily academic pursuits, this connection was important in building relationships with students and encouraging them to ask for help. It is important to note that these changes involved all demographic groups. A sense of community is essential in the learning commons model and determining what steps could be taken cultivate that sense was a goal of this study. The results of the study indicate that the changes made, at least in this instance, are moving the library media program closer to a learning commons model.

The area that did not show any significant increase was confidence with collecting online information. It is interesting that the results for the question pertaining to confidence level with online databases increased while general online information decreased. It is possible this may be a result of students discovering they did not know as much about online searching as they might have thought. Searching online databases requires less attention to evaluating the credibility of the sources
because articles were published in journals and magazines. Searching online requires the searcher to evaluate the source and the students may not feel completely comfortable with this process. This area of information literacy will be an area of focus for future library media activities in order to address students’ needs. It is somewhat encouraging the students already recognized a need for furthering their online searching expertise. Overall, the survey provided a quick glimpse into the students’ views regarding the library media center and provided a basis for comparison on those views.

The focus group discussions brought out an area of interest while discussing their individual views of what a library media center should look, sound, and feel like. While there was some disagreement on the desired sound and activity level, the group as a whole preferred an area free of classroom dictates and any specific learning goal. This part of the discussion reflected the desire for an opportunity to relax and read for pleasure rather than always for an assignment or measured goal. This sentiment matches some of the studies mentioned earlier that focused on reading enjoyment such as the Book Bistro model (Kasten & Wilfong, 2005) and the Cavazos-Kottle (2005) report on self-selected reading and student engagement of secondary students.

Circulation and library use data supported the findings of the survey and the general points brought out in the focus group discussion. Circulation increased corresponding to the frequency increase reported in the survey. While data reporting the specific activity of students were not collected formally during the before and
after school library hours, the researcher can add anecdotally that the five computer stations in the library were in use every morning and also in the afternoon. While some students relaxed, talked, and looked for books, about half of the morning group visited the library to use the computer to play games. This was not discouraged as it was before school. The students visiting in the afternoon also gravitated to computer stations although frequently for more academic pursuits such as homework, college application paperwork. Some of these students started visiting during the day for academic reasons and checking out books although the initial contact with the library was for recreational purposes. This concept matches the library learning commons model where students visit the library media center for a number of reasons.

Although the results of this study were encouraging, there were still areas for improvement. Even with the increase number of visits, there were still over 200 students that reported never visiting the school library (about 1 in every 5 students in the school). The other areas studied that showed improvement were still reporting means no higher than low 3s. Based on these results, it is evident that there are still significant numbers of students who do not visit the library or if they do, they do not feel comfortable in the place or with the staff. Some of this may just be a result of unfamiliarity. Having more of a presence in classrooms and taking part in orientation activities and a summer reading program may have a positive effect as well as more collaboration with teachers.
**Recommendations for Future Study**

As this study was only a preliminary step, it is important to follow with more intensive studies focused on details and specifics of the media center program. The survey instrument needs to be refined in order to enable the researcher to obtain more accurate and specific information. The survey itself had limitations regarding the nature of the data collected only allowing for nonparametric test analysis. Some changes were made between the first and second survey but the changes were minimal in order to maintain a consistent set of response possibilities. These changes should be addressed in any future survey tools. Even with each teacher given a set of instructions, it is reasonable to assume not everyone adhered to the instructions. This was evident by the response sheets that were returned and the failure to follow the researcher’s instructions regarding attendance. A larger research team would have allowed for more in depth study and more control over the administration of the survey. It was difficult to conduct of study of this magnitude and continue to work as a school media specialist with the responsibilities and duties of that position. It might be possible to form a group of librarians that work together at each other’s schools administering the surveys. This might help with any uniformity issues.

Another possibility for improving the effectiveness of the surveys might be to obtain feedback from the students immediately after a visit or as part of the closing activity with a class. This type of formative assessment might be more accurate a reflection of the students’ views as connected to a particular visit. One issue with the method used in this study was assuming the connection of the responses referred to
the library media center under study. It is possible that students, especially the freshmen class, had their middle school media center in mind when responding even though the survey asked specifically about the library media center under study. Obtaining the data in the library during the visit or immediately following the visit would help with this situation. One would need to be mindful of overloading the students with questions. There comes a point when the students are no longer interested in offering an opinion and just want to go about their business. This attitude was noticed during the research study.

Another limitation was the selection for the focus groups. It would have been helpful to include more students who may not already have strong ties to the library media center. This might have resulted in a different set of opinions and possible suggestions on improvement strategies. This study also lacked input from parents and had only limited input from the faculty. As an initial study, the focus was on the student but any future study should include a more inclusive set of stakeholders.

Future studies require some baseline data for circulation and student visits. Circulation data may be relatively simple to obtain as most library management software packages include the ability to sort various data into reports. The students visits require some other method of counting visits. The sign-in log is a crude method of gathering data as some students may not also sign-in and those that do sign-in may not include data and time. This impedes the ability of the researcher to gather accurate data for each period and day. Some type of electronic sign-in process would be more effective and more accurate.
Recommendations for Media Specialists

The students expressed a desire for more accessibility to the library and for an increase in the print collection. While the students are comfortable with technology, there was a stated interest in printed books. It might be possible to include a media center orientation and discussion session during summer freshman orientation as a way to get new students involved with the media center. If a summer orientation is not feasible, a library visit during the beginning of the school year would be helpful although considering everything freshmen face in the first few weeks of high school, it may require multiple visits in order for students to begin to feel a connection to the library.

A parent’s night or some type of parent orientation would also be helpful. This is an instance when technology may be useful. Many of our parents and guardians are not able to travel to the school, but it might be possible to provide some interaction through the school’s LibGuides page. Including a series of videos might be a method for providing at least some type of introduction to the media specialist and the media program. A particular software product such as the LibGuides might also be useful for increasing the library’s presence in the school.

The suggestions made earlier regarding orientations and parent’s night are already encouraged practices. Directing students to the library LibGuide page may be a way of directing students to the library media center in person. It might be possible to use technology as a library media center marketing tool.
A student focus group or book club can act as informal spokesmen for the library by spreading the word and inviting friends to visit the library. Organizing exciting and engaging field trips for the book club may generate interest and prompt more students to visit the media to ask how they might get involved in the media center activities. Offering opportunities for fun is a way to entice students to the library media center.

Library media specialists may need to reevaluate their image of what a library media center should be in order to fit the needs of the 21st century learner. This is similar to the divergent views brought out by students and their opinions of the perfect library media center and leads to a realization that there needs to be some consensus throughout the school as regards to expectations in the media center. The students’ displeasure with the occasional increased volume level in the library reflects the variety of expectations and management of the various teachers bringing their class to the library. There needs to be a balance between the expectations of the library media specialist and the classroom teacher who is also supervising the students during a library visit. The differing student opinions regarding the optimal atmosphere and environment illustrate the need for the school faculty to work in collaboration with the media specialist when scheduling library visits. It might be advisable to create a library learning commons working group within the school. This would be a team of teachers, the media specialist and maybe an administrator who would work together to create lessons, decide on policies and procedures and collection development. It can be a delicate matter for the library media specialist to
address student behavior that may be acceptable in other situations but may not be appropriate when sharing the space with other classes working on a variety of assignments. Using a group to develop and agree on a set of expectations removes the media specialist from the position of disciplinarian for those occasional classes that may be behaving in inappropriate ways.

The learning commons allows for more flexibility in activities because the model is adaptable to the particular schools’ needs. This flexibility should be capitalized. Depending on the size of the school, it might be necessary to add additional clerk positions to assist with technology projects and other activities that may require more individualized instruction. Above all, there needs to be a certain willingness to experiment and possibly fail. Educators ask students to try new things on a daily basis. We tell our students that they need to try and even if they are not completely successful. We need to be willing to follow that advice as well.

**Conclusion**

Ultimately, the goal of school library media center is to enhance learning and support the students and staff in the learning process. As reading has such a connection to so many educational activities, it is important to develop a school culture that embraces reading as both an educational and recreational activity regardless of the medium used to access the text. The Learning Commons model provides a welcoming, friendly space in the library media center that offers accessibility and choice to the students. Considering the pressure on schools with testing and accountability, it can be difficult to find the time to allow students to relax
and read for pleasure although there is data which suggests there would be achievement gains if students had the opportunity and resources for more authentic, in context reading.

Finally, it should be mentioned that this type of study and library media program requires the cooperation of the faculty, staff, and administration. In order to regulate student movement and provide adequate supervision, a set of policies were put into place for students wishing to visit the library. Morning and lunch passes were made and a set of guidelines were developed. The staff monitoring the hall in the morning and during lunches was briefed and readily followed the guidelines. It would have been simpler for the faculty and administration to require the students to remain in the cafeteria and main lobby before school and not allow movement to library media center during lunch. However, the benefits of allowing students a certain level of freedom were considered and the result was more students visiting the library and an increase in the general sense of comfort with the library. This provides a foundation for taking the next step in building a library learning commons for all students.
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Appendix A

High School Library Survey-Student

* Required

1. I am *
   Mark only one oval.
   - male
   - female

2. Ethnicity origin (or Race): Please specify your ethnicity.
   Mark only one oval.
   - White
   - Hispanic or Latino
   - Black or African American
   - Asian / Pacific Islander
   - Native American or American Indian
   - Multiracial
   - Other

3. What grade are you in? *
   Mark only one oval.
   - Freshman
   - Sophomore
   - Junior
   - Senior

4. How old are you? *
   Mark only one oval.
   - 14
   - 15
   - 16
   - 17
   - 18
   - 19
   - 20
5. How often do you go to the (school name) High School Library? 
(Pick the best answer.)

Mark only one oval.

☐ never
☐ twice a year
☐ once a month
☐ once a week
☐ three times a week
☐ daily
☐ multiple visits a day

6. How often do you find the materials you are looking for in the school library?
Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4

Never ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Frequently

7. How often do you ask the school library staff for help? *
Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4

Never ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Frequently

8. When do you go to the school library? (Check all that apply.) *
Check all that apply.

☐ before school
☐ during lunch
☐ during school with a pass from a teacher
☐ after school
☐ only when I have to with a class

9. I feel very comfortable finding materials in the library. *
Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4

Strongly Disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly Agree
10. I feel the library staff is very helpful and friendly. *  
   Mark only one oval.

   1  2  3  4
   Strongly Disagree  □  □  □  □  Strongly Agree

11. I feel comfortable asking for help. *  
   Mark only one oval.

   1  2  3  4
   Strongly Disagree  □  □  □  □  Strongly Agree

12. I feel the library is a welcoming and friendly place. *  
   Mark only one oval.

   1  2  3  4
   Strongly Disagree  □  □  □  □  Strongly Agree

13. I feel confident about using electronic databases, such as Kentucky Virtual Libray. *  
   Mark only one oval.

   1  2  3  4
   Strongly Disagree  □  □  □  □  Strongly Agree

14. I feel confident about finding information online. *  
   Mark only one oval.

   1  2  3  4
   Strongly Disagree  □  □  □  □  Strongly Agree

15. I feel the library rules and policies are fair. *  
   Mark only one oval.

   1  2  3  4
   Strongly Disagree  □  □  □  □  Strongly Agree
16. **Please check all the reasons you visit the library.** *
   
   Check all that apply.

   - Find materials for school assignments
   - Find materials for my own pleasure.
   - Do homework.
   - Meet friends.
   - Socialize before school starts.
   - Study or do homework after school.
   - Use computers.
   - Prepare multimedia presentations such as PowerPoint, Movies.
   - Read magazines.
   - Only if I have to with a class
   - Other: ____________________________________________________________

17. **How often do you visit the local public library?**
   
   *Mark only one oval.*

   - Never
   - Twice a year
   - Once a month
   - Once a week
   - Three times a week
   - Daily

18. **What is the best thing about the (school name) High School library?**

   _______________________________________________________________

19. **How could we improve the (school name) High School library?**

   _______________________________________________________________

   _______________________________________________________________

20. **When you read for pleasure, which authors or types of books do you most often choose?**

   _______________________________________________________________

   _______________________________________________________________

Appendix B

Focus Group Questions - (These are initial questions intended to start the conversation. More questions will follow as the conversation develops.)

2. What are some obstacles to visiting the library you think students face?
4. What are some things you have heard about the library? Good/Bad. (You do not have to betray a confidence, just asking for opinions.)
5. Do you think the library media center is important to your school career/educational experience? Why/why not?
6. If you were asked to redesign the library media, how would you rearrange the space? You can draw a diagram or explain your plans.
7. You are familiar with the decorating we do in the library media center, the bulletin board and the doors. Do you think this has an impact on how students perceive the library? Do you think it influences anyone to visit?
8. We took a field trip to see Dracula in October and are planning another trip to the theater to see A Christmas Carol in December. Do you think these types of activities increases interest in the library media center?
9. What other activities do you think we should try as a way of enticing students to the library? Our focus is on students that do not typically visit the library media center.

10. Do you think the furniture is comfortable?
Appendix C

Focus Group Transcript

The following includes excerpts from the two focus group sessions. The students are directly quoted in order to provide a more accurate representation of the beliefs and opinions expressed.

Session 10th grade students

Discussion begins with introductions and explanation of the purpose. The students are asked if the library program is preparing them for college readiness and 21st century information skills.

“On a scale of 1 to 10, I’d give it an 8.”

Have you been able to take part in any field trips?

“Dracula and A Christmas Carol.”

Did you enjoy that? Is it something to continue? (All thumbs up from students.)

I know there are a lot of decoration in the library and themes. Last year there was a castle? Do you think this is helpful in getting more students interested in coming into the library?

“yes” (no explanation offered)

Let’s talk about the collection for a minute. There are only 3 girls in the book club?

Usually more girls are interested in book clubs than boys, so yea guys. What kinds of books to you like to read?

“Series”

“Mysteries”
“Thrillers”
Do you have any favorite books?
“Romance”
Anybody else, I haven’t heard from everybody. What’s your favorite kind of book to read?
“Pretty much anything to do with zombies, vampires…”
“I like historical fiction, and mythology, like Percy Jackson. (This refers to the Rick Riodan series.) For example, like books that give like the point of view of a soldier in a war or a little girl in nature, something like that.”
Have you read *Island of the Blue Dolphins*? It’s a true story about a girl left alone on an island for 18 years and how she lives and survives. (After this discussion, the students requested I purchase this book and it is currently circulating.)
“Um, my favorite type of books are the ones with the twist ending. My favorite book is the *Book Thief.*”
(This conversation devolved into a discussion of favorite books.)
What types of materials do you think other kids might want or need in the library…in general?
“Use their cell phones, technology, all that.”
Student than asks “Why don’t our teachers bring us the library anymore?” Group facilitator responds, “We were talking about that with the other group. Why do you think that is happening? Is there way to get your math class or your social studies
class or your English literature class to get to the library to check-out books, not just to do projects.” Students didn’t have a response to this.

[I spoke with the facilitator after the session and we discussed possible ways to schedule classes to visit the library for book check-out. The facilitator indicated there has been a decrease in library visits across the district. I was not offered any supporting data. This was an observation by an individual that works closely with all the districts library media specialists.]

Students were encouraged to remind their teachers to allow them to visit the library for check-out.

How did you first get to the library?

“A friend”

“I got lost”

“Lunch”

“I went looking for it.”

“I went looking for the library because I have enjoyed reading books since about 6th grade.”

Conversation concluded with a student initiated discussion of what credentials are necessary to be a librarian.

**Session 11th and 12th grade students**

Preliminary questions included “What do you enjoy most about this library?”

“Quiet, organized”

“I like the friendliness of the librarian.”
What’s your favorite part?

“The Books.”

Which kind?

“Anime…”

“Kids with disorders and challenges…Ellen Hopkins”

“The classics…Russian authors, existential authors”

How about you girls? What’s your favorite part of the library?

“Being with your friends”

If you could improve the library space or programs what would you change?

“We need more trips to the library as a class. We don’t get to visit with our class often enough.”

“They bring use here to use the notebooks (laptops). We don’t get to come down to read…we come down to use the computers. The library is for books, I know we are a technology school but we aren’t reading books and talking about books, we are chatting and playing around with computers.”

What can you do to help influence students to use the library on their own?

“Most kids don’t know much about the library because they aren’t allowed to move around the school before school or during lunch. We can come for just a few minutes. The library is not the first place that pops into most people’s mind. The reason that I came down to the library was because a good friend of mine. When I was in middle school I was scared away from the library. There were no choices; that was where you were forced to go like detention. And then I came here and a friend of
mine was like the library here is cool and all that. I said yea, ok, actually he drug me
down here and hey, he was right. Now it’s my favorite place in the whole entire
school building.”

Do you think there’s a way you could be to other students what that friend was to you
and spread the word just a couple people at a time?

“This isn’t a knock against the administration, but why do we have to do it? We fight
an uphill battle every day just to get to class and all this other stuff. The students here
that are concerned about doing their work have enough already.”

Do all the decorations help pull kids in at all?

“We need more stuff when the library is open. The lunch time is not enough.”

What do you think could pull kids in? Maybe book-talks?

“No”

Can you think of anything that would work with kids that don’t like to read, that
aren’t book fans?

“I honestly cannot. We live in a very stubborn, very self-centered generation and I
think that especially when they have made it this far it’s their decision that they don’t
want to read, they just don’t read and they supplement their life with other things.
Some people can get through life without knowing anything about the Bronte sisters,
or knowing who wrote War & Peace and they live a fine enough life. And it’s their
loss if they don’t want to read these books, but maybe it’s not the loss. Maybe they
read other things, maybe they’re more a sports person. It’s really their decision, you
can’t really force it upon them. You can’t really say Oh you have to read and enjoy this piece of fine freakin’ literature.

How do you feel about the library furnishings? If you were going to sit down with a book in the library where would you go?

“The comfy chairs up front by the windows.”

“My biggest problem is every time I get in here besides book club it’s loud. People don’t come in here to read. They’re surfing on the net and they’re talking. They don’t care. And the problem is that, you know, decorating is a good idea and I agree with more nice furniture and bean bag chairs and soft furniture…that would probably help, but I think the problem is not necessarily in the environment or the aesthetics. It’s the fact that kids at this age are very set in their ways. It’s very hard to change routines and things like that and change the mentality. It’s very hard for non-readers to have something forced upon them like reading a good book. I’ve read The Great Gatsby and I enjoyed it. I read it when I was in 7th or 8th grade on my own. I even enjoyed Catcher in the Rye. But then I read it again with the class with other people and it just drug on and it was forced upon you.”

This student’s displeasure with the volume level in the library reflects the variety of expectations and management of the various teachers bringing their class to the library. There needs to be a balance between the expectations of the library media specialist and the classroom teacher that is also supervising the students during a library visit. It can be a delicate matter for the library media specialist to address
student behavior that may be acceptable in other situations but may not be appropriate when sharing the space with other classes working on a variety of assignments.

During a discussion of research resources and writing papers, a student ventured into a slightly different area. Although the comments were not exactly on topic, he raises some interesting points on how he feels about the library.

“Something we haven’t really talked about…criticism and stuff like that. Again, Ms C’s gone over this (referring to proper citation formats such as MLA and APA). Why would anyone want to come to a place where everything always comes back to College and Career Readiness?...Everything has to have a statement goal attached to it. When we come to the library there has to be some underlying…um…” (Facilitator offers “learning target”)…”yes, that’s the word. Learning target. There’s no incentive on my part…the entire point…you have to deal with acronyms…OPAC, this, this and this, ACT registration and stuff like that. Can’t we just separate all of that collective crap from this and allow people to enjoy reading?...I want to go to a place where I feel like there’s not some agenda. This is why I come in here and talk to Ms. C, and I read and I talk about what I read. That’s what I want.”

The student continues to state that “the school doesn’t want us to read because we should read and have enjoyment and enrich ourselves, it’s because they want another statistic in the system for improving.”

This student’s comments met with general agreement from the rest of the group. This view reflects the view that students want to visit the library for enjoyment and socializing rather than research and study, or at least not only research
and study. The group collective reported interest in after school access which had already been implemented but possibly not advertised well enough. A student stated, “I know we have open library on Mondays after school, I think I’ve only heard one thing about it and it seems very structured. The library should just be open to people for an hour and a half, not with some people going first the half hour we are going to use the computer and afterwards you can talk.”

This statement reflects a level of miscommunication between what is actually offered in the library after school and what some students may perceive as being offered in the library. The use of the school announcement system, ie morning and afternoon announcements has been the method for relaying information about the library hours. It is possible some classrooms are too noisy for the announcements to be easily heard or students may not be paying attention.

Student makes another interesting statement that sums up what others mentioned during the session. “The library is just the best place to get away. Some people are constantly here, they eat 4 meals a day here. They live out of the school….Allow them to have a place where they can relax without any underlying thing.”

The focus group described two different opinions on what is considered the most desirable atmosphere. One camp identified a quiet reading nook space that is relaxing and peaceful. Other students expressed their desire for a space to come together and discuss books. This is the dilemma of a school library that is limited to one open area. It is difficult to meet the needs of all students. This difficulty is amplified when more than one class is present as the classes may have different
agendas and lesson objectives. Some classes may be working on group projects while others may be working on individual assignments. Because of this issue, collaborating and planning with teachers is vital. Last minute scheduling should be avoided in order to provide students with the needed learning environment.

Arranging equipment and furniture in the library that creates specific zones is one way of at least marginally meeting the students’ needs.
VITA

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HONORS

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PRESENTATIONS

Chiara, N. (2014) Book Club 2.0. Presentation submitted for annual conference of the Kentucky Society for Technology in Education Conference. Louisville, KY.

Chiara, N. (2013) Making Connections with LibGuides. Presentation submitted for the annual conference of the Kentucky Librarian Association/Kentucky School Media Association Joint Conference. Louisville, KY.
