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School libraries and teacher-librarians

2003/04

Just about every elementary and secondary school in Canada had a library in the academic year 2003/04. However, budgets for collections were small and few schools had full-time teacher-librarians, according to a new study.

The study is based on data from the Information and Communications Technologies in Schools Survey, which collected information from elementary and secondary school principals in all provinces and territories. The survey examined whether a library exists, the number of employees by type of position, annual expenses for the collection and sources of funding.

The vast majority of schools, 93.3%, had libraries, but the median expenditure on the physical collection, including books and magazines, was \$2,000 (half of the values are above and half are below this figure). Given current costs, this would cover the purchase of one encyclopaedia series.

The relatively low median expenditures may limit the ability of school libraries to maintain collections that meet student needs in an information-based environment.

Despite a body of international evidence that shows teacher-librarians help improve student achievement, few schools in Canada had a full-time teacher-librarian on staff. On average, each school had 0.25 full-time teacher-librarians.

When spending on the physical collection and on library staffing is compared among the provinces, different patterns emerge.

Alberta and Saskatchewan led the provinces in mean per student library spending. Spending in British Columbia and Manitoba was also above the national average while expenditures in Ontario and Quebec fell below the average.

Prince Edward Island had full-time teacher-librarians in just over one-third of its schools, the highest proportion among provinces. In contrast, 2.0% of schools in Quebec and 3.6% of schools in Alberta had full-time teacher librarians.

The study found there were more library technicians per school than

teacher-librarians. Library technicians typically have a two-year community college diploma, but do not have teaching experience and are paid less than teacher-librarians.

Spending for libraries varies by province

In total, schools with libraries spent \$56.2 million on collections development in 2003/04. Collection development includes acquiring books, magazines, and audio-visual and electronic materials.

Median expenditures ranged from \$3,600 in Saskatchewan and \$3,000 in Alberta to \$1,000 in Newfoundland and Labrador and \$1,400 in Nova Scotia.

The study indicated a fairly wide gap in school expenditures on electronic materials (such as CD-ROMs or on-line subscriptions). Overall, schools reported mean expenditures of \$513 in this category in 2003/04.

However, when one considers the median, school expenditures for electronic materials were very small, ranging from zero to \$100 in all provinces. This indicates most schools spent little or no money for such materials.

Sources of library funding also varied from school to school.

Just under 30% of school principals indicated the library received funds from sources other than the school, the school board or district, or the province. The majority of these sources were fundraising activities, including book fairs and donations.

The survey did not collect data on the value of funds by source.

Few teacher-librarians in schools

On average, each school had 0.25 teacher-librarians in 2003/04. However, there was much provincial variation. Prince Edward Island had the highest level of teacher-librarians, 0.56, compared with 0.03 in Quebec and 0.07 in Nova Scotia and Alberta.

Libraries were also staffed to varying degrees by library technicians, teachers who were not librarians, professional librarians and clerical staff. In addition, many principals reported that volunteers operated the library, either solely or with other school staff.

Staffing levels varied significantly between elementary and secondary schools. The levels of teacher-librarians, library technicians and total staff in secondary schools were all roughly twice as high as in elementary schools, a reflection of the larger average student population.

Across Canada, there was a slightly higher average number of library technicians (0.26) than teacher-librarians. Again, staffing varied from province to province.

The provinces with some of the lowest average numbers of teacher-librarians per school had the highest number of library technicians. These included Alberta, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia and Manitoba.

Other studies have indicated that with recent budget pressures in education ministries in many provinces, teacher-librarian positions may have been substituted by lower-paid library technicians as a cost-cutting measure.

The use of volunteers in some schools may have prevented a reduction in library hours or the permanent closure of the library. However, they cannot perform the same range of duties as a teacher-librarian or library technician.

Teacher-librarians' influence extends through school

When schools have teacher-librarians, their influence extends throughout the school and therefore into the students' education, the study found.

Schools with teacher-librarians were more likely than those without to incorporate specialized technology applications into teaching practices. Such applications included spreadsheets, databases, software applications supporting creative works and software for special needs and desktop publishing.

Schools with at least one teacher-librarian devoted to the school library were roughly three times more likely than those with less than one full-time teacher-librarian to have links to the library on the school's informal Web site.

When compared with schools which had only a part-time teacher librarian, principals reported that in schools with at least one full-time teacher-librarian, the teacher-librarian was more likely to play an important or very important role in developing or contributing to the school Web site.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [5051](#).

The report *Canadian School Libraries and Teacher-librarians: Results from the 2003/04 Information and Communication Technologies in Schools Survey*, no. 28 ([81-595-MIE2005028](#), free) is now available online. From the *Our products and services* page, under *Browse our Internet publications*, choose *Free*, then *Education*.

For general information about the Information and Communications Technologies in Schools Survey contact Client Services (1-800-307-3382; cult.tourstats@statcan.ca). To enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact David Coish (613-951-1075; fax: 613-951-1333 david.coish@statcan.ca) Culture, Tourism and the Centre for Education Statistics.

Mean and median annual expenses per school for library collection development, by type and province/territory, 2003/04

| | Mean | | | Median | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------|--------------|------------|---------------------|--------------|-----------|
| | Physical collection | Audio-visual | Electronic | Physical collection | Audio-visual | Electroni |
| Newfoundland and Labrador | 1,606 | 465 | 565 | 1,000 | 200 | 10 |
| Prince Edward | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|--------------|------------|------------|--------------|------------|----|
| Island | 2,250 | 463 | 226* | 2,000 | 200 | C |
| Nova Scotia | 1,762 | 162 | 199* | 1,400 | 0 | C |
| New Brunswick | 2,281 | 173 | 92 | 1,789 | 0 | |
| Quebec | 2,649 | 518 | 493 | 1,680 | 100 | 10 |
| Ontario | 3,363 | 486 | 582 | 2,000 | 200 | |
| Manitoba | 3,360 | 530 | 435 | 2,500 | 300 | 10 |
| Saskatchewan | 4,560 | 766 | 450 | 3,600 | 500 | 5 |
| Alberta | 4,708 | 845 | 630 | 3,000 | 500 | 5 |
| British Columbia | 4,010 | 561 | 477 | 2,700 | 200 | |
| Yukon | 5,978 | 0 | F | 3,915 | 0 | |
| Northwest Territories | 3,261 | 741* | 446* | 1,600 | F | C |
| Nunavut | 1,609** | 573** | 245** | 700** | 500** | |
| Canada | 3,414 | 547 | 513 | 2,000 | 200 | |

F Coefficient of variation greater than 33%; data are too unreliable to publish.

* Coefficient of variation between 16.6% and 25%; data are less reliable.

** Coefficient of variation greater than 25% and less than or equal to 33%; data are less reliable.

Sources of funding for the library, by province and territory, 2003/04

| | Provincial/Territorial | School Board | School | Other |
|---------------------------|------------------------|--------------|--------|-------|
| Newfoundland and Labrador | 28.2 | 66.7 | 77.8 | 18.7 |
| Prince Edward Island | 40.0 | 73.4 | 66.2 | 34.4 |
| Nova Scotia | 22.5 | 74.1 | 66.1 | 23.9 |
| New Brunswick | 63.7 | 45.5 | 28.3 | 22.4 |
| Quebec | 29.0 | 53.2 | 65.9 | 20.4 |
| Ontario | 17.4 | 62.2 | 70.8 | 37.8 |
| Manitoba | 38.4 | 74.4 | 55.2 | 25.1 |
| Saskatchewan | 23.3 | 86.7 | 43.9 | 12.8 |
| Alberta | 32.8 | 50.5 | 70.7 | 28.5 |
| British Columbia | 31.5 | 58.9 | 66.6 | 31.0 |
| Yukon | 100.0 | F | F | F |
| Northwest Territories | 16.7 | F | F | F |

| | | | | |
|---------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Nunavut | 53.8 | F | F | F |
| Canada | 26.7 | 60.5 | 65.7 | 29.0 |

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| Average library staff per school, by province/territory, 2003/04 | | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|--------------|
| | Teacher-librarian | Teacher-non-librarian | Professional librarian | Library technician | Clerical Staff | Other |
| Newfoundland and Labrador | 0.27 | 0.09* | F | F | 0.03** | 0.03** |
| Prince Edward Island | 0.56 | F | F | F | F | F |
| Nova Scotia | 0.07 | 0.01** | 0.04 | 0.42 | 0.06 | F |
| New Brunswick | 0.08 | 0.03* | 0.05 | 0.27 | 0.12 | 0.11 |
| Quebec | 0.03* | 0.12* | 0.07 | 0.2 | 0.15 | 0.07* |
| Ontario | 0.39 | 0.03** | 0.02 | 0.24 | 0.11 | 0.03 |
| Manitoba | 0.17 | 0.03** | 0.04* | 0.41 | 0.26 | 0.06** |
| Saskatchewan | 0.24 | F | F | 0.44 | 0.18 | 0.07* |
| Alberta | 0.07 | 0.05 | 0.04 | 0.47 | 0.22 | 0.1 |
| British Columbia | 0.48 | 0.03* | F | 0.1 | 0.22 | 0.04** |
| Yukon | 0.35 | F | F | F | F | F |
| Northwest Territories | F | F | F | 0.26* | F | F |
| Nunavut | F | F | F | F | F | F |
| Canada | 0.25 | 0.05 | 0.03 | 0.26 | 0.15 | 0.05 |

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