This paper reports on selected findings from the New Jersey School Library research study One Common Goal: Student Learning that provides insights into the future of school libraries, and their evolution and transformation in the digital age. The research was undertaken by scholars in the Center for International Scholarship in School Libraries (CISSL) at Rutgers University in two phases from 2009 to 2011. Collectively the findings showed that New Jersey school libraries and school librarians contribute in rich and diverse ways to the intellectual life of a school, and to the development of students who can function in a complex and increasingly digital information environment. Phase 2 of this study examined 12 public schools in New Jersey whose school librarians reported high levels of instructional collaboration with classroom teachers. It sought to understand the dynamics of these successful school libraries, particularly through the eyes of school leaders and classroom teachers. Data were collected from 97 participants in focus groups in these schools. The findings provide a framework for conceptualizing Gen Next School Libraries for a digital world, which center on five core dimensions: (1) the school library as a learning and pedagogical center, and the school librarian as a co-teacher and information learning specialist for faculty and students; (2) the school library as an inquiry learning center; (3) the school library as a center for digital citizenship; (4) the school library as community connector; and (5) the school library as a surrogate home.

Introduction
The motivation for this paper centers on questions surrounding the sustainability of school libraries in many countries. Reports, for example, by the American Library Association “The Condition Of U.S. Libraries: School Library Trends, 1999-2009” (Davis, 2009), and “2011 State of America's Libraries Report” (ALA 2011) provide evidence that shows that that library funding for certified school librarians and learning and reading resources has been dramatically cut back. In the USA, and in some school districts, elementary school libraries have all but disappeared (Davis, 2009, 2011). There are also fundamental questions being asked about their future in the increasingly digital information environment of school education, the transformation of information provision and access through digital devices, and the increasing trend of mobile technology as the dominant platform for accessing information content. In addition, the changing arena of content publishing and development of new delivery platforms for students, teachers and school librarians such as ebooks and etexts, and apps-driven content delivery adds to the complexity of what constitutes an effective information environment in schools. At the same time, fundamental questions are also being asked about the educational preparedness of young people to live and work in a digital device-oriented, networked global society. These questions are posed amid increasing calls for the development of creative pedagogies centering on information-based inquiry, critical thinking, problem solving and the development of intellectual engagement and intellectual rigor in learning through digital information and use of technology tools (AASL, 2007).

For many decades, an extensive body of research has been undertaken which consistently shows that there is a positive relationship between student achievement on standardized tests and the presence of school libraries (Scholastic, 2008). Students’ higher test scores correlate with: (1) the size of the school library staff; (2) full-time/certified school librarians; (3) the frequency of library-centered instruction and collaborative instruction between school librarians and teachers; (4) size and currency of library collections; (5) licensed databases through a school library network; (6) flexible scheduling); and (7) school library spending. (Baumbach, 2002; Callison, 2004; Lance, et al., 1999; Lance, et al., 2000; Lance, et al., 2001; Lance, et al., 2005; Smith, 2001; Baxter & Smalley, 2003; Todd, et al., 2005a, 2005b; Todd, Gordon & Lu, 2010, 2011).

While this body of substantive research exists, educational authorities are asking: Are school libraries as we know them today necessary? If they have a future, what is their role in this emerging educational landscape? As new technology frontiers for learning develop, such as the creation of virtual learning worlds, online schooling, virtual gaming and other innovative approaches to the integration of digital content into learning and their impact,
where do school libraries, if at all, fit in? As presented in this paper, several recent studies shed light on answers to these questions.

As part of the School Libraries Futures Project initiated by the New South Wales Department of Education and Training in Australia, Hay & Todd (2010a, 2010b) gathered a diverse range of viewpoints and perspectives on the status and future of school libraries in Australian schools, with a view to identifying directions, challenges, and support for the continuous improvement of the information landscape in these schools. Through a moderated discussion blog School Libraries 21C hosted by the School Libraries and Information Literacy Unit of the NSW Department of Education and Training, 225 participants provided insights into three themes: the future of school libraries, the school library of the future, and the initiatives, strategies and support necessary to create a sustainable future for school libraries. The purpose was to identify common and pervasive themes and relationships that would provide key insights into the questions posed on the blog. Respondents were asked to present a case for school libraries in 21st century schools, and to support claims made with argument and evidence.

While there was a strong affirmation that the school library is an important part of school life, this affirmation came from within the school librarianship community, with little response from outside of this professional group. The posts provided a cogent set of reasons why schools need school libraries, particularly centering on the strongly state view that school libraries provide a common information grounds for supporting learning across the school and fostering the development of deep knowledge through the provision of accessible resources, and the development of sophisticated information and technology understandings and skills.

Underpinning this conception was the view of the school library as an intellectual agency for developing deep knowledge and understanding, rather than that of information collection. In particular, the concept of “pedagogical fusion” aligned with information literacy development emerged as a strongly stated argument for school libraries Hay & Todd, 2010a, 6). The notion of pedagogical fusion centers on the school library providing a common place across the school for investigating and experimenting with information, examining multiple perspectives, in an environment where students are guided by professionals and given appropriate instruction to effectively utilize information and the most appropriate technology tools to support student achievement. As such, it is conceived as a unique learning environment–common, central, flexible, open, providing the opportunity for teams engaging in pedagogical experimentation to access and use information and web tools to empower learning through creativity, discovery, inquiry, cooperation, and collaboration. At the same time, respondents in this study often lamented that others in the school did not see it this way or perceive this to be its potential.

From 2009-2011, the Center for International Scholarship in School Libraries (CISSL) undertook the New Jersey School Library research study One Common Goal: Student Learning. Phase 1 of the research sought to provide a comprehensive picture of the status of school libraries in New Jersey, including staffing, infrastructure, information technology, instructional collaborations, instruction, collections and budgets (Todd, Gordon & Lu, 2010). In this phase, data were collected from 765 participants, predominantly certified school librarians, representing 30% of the school libraries in New Jersey, both public and private. It represents an insider’s perspective to the status of school libraries across New Jersey. Collectively the findings showed that New Jersey school libraries and school librarians contribute in rich and diverse ways to the intellectual life of a school, and to the development of students who can function in a complex and increasingly digital information environment. The findings identified six key learning outcomes: (1) contribution to development of curriculum standards and contribution to test score achievement, (2) mastery of a diverse range of information literacy competencies, (3) development of research process and learning management competencies, (4) development of thinking-based competencies in using information, (5) development of positive and ethical values in relation to the use of information, and (6) increased interest in reading increased participation in reading, the development of wider reading interests, becoming more discriminating readers (Todd, Gordon & Lu, 2010, 160-168).

The data also provided insights into the extent and nature of instructional collaborations, the nature of information literacy instruction, the integration of information technology into learning, and the reading and literacy initiatives undertaken. It was found that the instructional role of school librarians was a predominant characterization of the school library landscape in New Jersey. The study found that on average, school librarians contributed 27 cooperations, 15 coordinations and 5 instructional collaborations with classroom teachers during the school year (2008-2009). The large numbers of collaborations developing information literacy capabilities, as well as large numbers of cooperations and coordinations, showed a strong level of engagement in teaching and learning agendas of schools. (Todd, Gordon & Lu, 2010, 104-105).

Similar to the Hay & Todd (2010b) study, this phase also raised the lament that outside of the library world, there is a perceived lack of understanding of the nature and role of school libraries and their contribution to learning. The participants were asked to identify their priorities for
change. 711 responded to this question, and emerging out of all these expressions of priority was a powerful sense that school librarians want, more than anything else, to be able to perform their roles that they have been educated to do by virtue of their professional graduate education and the specifications of their role as articulated in professional documentation, and to have this educational responsibility understood, honored and enabled in each school. Overall, seven key priorities for change were identified:

1. Adopting flexible scheduling for school libraries across the grades.
2. Developing richer and comprehensive understanding of the role of the school library, the work of the school librarian, and the contribution of the school library to learning outcomes for teachers, administrators and community members.
3. Building a sustainable culture of curriculum-centered collaboration in the school focusing on integrating information, technical and critical literacies into curriculum.
4. Providing adequate support staff to enable the professional role of the school librarian to be undertaken, particularly for instructional collaborations.
5. Continuing to provide state-of-the-art information technology for access to information, as well as access to technology tools, to support the production and presentation of knowledge.
6. Providing adequate budgets and participation in budget decisions.
7. Enhancing and upgrading library facilities and space.

(Todd, Gordon, & Lu, 2010, 185-193)

The second highest priority (32 % of priorities identified) centered on school community understanding of the professional role of the school librarian and enabling it to be enacted in the school. In voicing this as a priority, school librarians at times conveyed a sense that they were “chopped off at the knees” because they are not able to enact a professional role due to school administrators’ misconceptions of their role. The persistent cry was: “…understand the complexity of the role we are required to do.” (Todd, Gordon, & Lu, 2010, 187).

Against this backdrop, Phase 2 of this New Jersey study (Todd, Gordon & Lu, 2011) sought to examine 12 public schools in New Jersey whose school librarians reported high levels of instructional collaboration with classroom teachers. It wanted to understand the dynamics of a sample of successful school libraries based on Phase 1 data, particularly through the eyes of school leaders and classroom teachers – an outsider’s view, so to speak. In addition, it sought to gain insights into what might be core dynamics of the school library of the future. Data were collected from 97 participants in focus groups in these schools (school principals, curriculum leaders and classroom teachers, including specialists such as special needs and literacy teachers, as well as school librarians). A full report of the findings is available at: www.cissl.rutgers.edu

Collectively, the findings from this study provide a framework for conceptualizing Gen Next School Libraries. Key components of the school library of the future, based on the findings, center on a pedagogical rather than an informational base which has traditionally characterized school libraries. The key components are: (1) the school library as a pedagogical center; (2) the school library as connector; (3) the school library as a center for inquiry-based learning; (4) the school library as a center for digital literacy; and (5) the school library as surrogate home. Integrating these components are two key dynamics: the school librarian as co-teacher, and the school librarian as teacher of teachers.

The School Library as Pedagogical Center

I think there’s a traditional view of what the library is – it’s a place that’s very quiet, it’s a place where you can get a book, a place where you can sit in solitude. If you come into our library, you’ll see that traditional notion has really dissipated. This is a central hub. It’s active. It’s loud to a certain extent, there are kids working independently, there are, small learning cohorts – that are ongoing, there are the media specialists, there are teachers you know, that have come to this central locations – so I think it’s re-envisioning the space as the setting where people can come together to exchange ideas. If you come during lunch, if you come before school, or you come after school, that’s the picture of what our library or this space has evolved into. (Supervisor of Instruction)

The school library as a pedagogical center emerged as the strongest statement of the future school library, and the central organizing mindset. (Todd, Gordon & Lu, 2011, 63-75). We argue that this conception underpins any future conception of school libraries. While school libraries are traditionally conceived as places for accessing and exchanging information, this was not the predominant conception of what school libraries were in these schools. Certainly there was the recognition that their physical space contains a range of information resources and structures and systems that provide access to these in organized ways. Without exception, participants in all of the schools presented the school library first and foremost as a learning center, and one that is at the “heart” of learning in information-age schools. It was not information per se that was at the heart of these school libraries. It was the learning that students engage in that was the predominant activity of the school library. There were 209 references to learning, and in the stories of these schools, “learning” was
the central organizing construct. It was perceived as the central mission, the central activity, and the central outcome of the school library. It was also the central mission of the school librarian.

From the perspective of the participants in this study, the school library functioned primarily as a pedagogical center for all faculty and students nurturing intellectual growth, pedagogical expertise, and key learning outcomes in information-age schools. It was viewed a common and active instructional zone for the whole school, where students learn to learn through information, develop complex information-to-knowledge capabilities, led by professional school librarians who have specialist expertise in resource-based inquiry learning.

The overriding function, as conveyed by focus group participants, was instruction, not the provision of information, and the school librarian was portrayed primarily as a teacher. From the teachers’ perspectives, the goal of this instruction was knowledge creation. Instruction through the school library first and foremost was perceived to enable the development of deep knowledge of core content curriculum topics. The development of a range of information process and research capabilities, however, was also seen as a vehicle to the curriculum content standards, and not an end in their own right, even though such capabilities were viewed as vitally important. Teachers across the discipline areas in these schools wanted their students to develop deep knowledge and understanding of curriculum content, and their collaborative instruction with school librarians served that goal.

The library helps promote or create – it’s a space for students where they can find knowledge .... So it represents that space, it represents that thirst for knowledge –where students can go if they want more. And um I think not only physically is it that space, but also psychologically representing that to them, because our jobs is also to create a thirst of knowledge. I just always remember going to the library as a space where I could find out – look in books and find out more – creating that desire is something library does. So physically but also on another level it represents that. Having that space for them is important for them, to go there, and to know that’s there, and that someone will guide them through. And to point them in the direction they need to go. Because sometimes we know we need to find things out but we don’t know how. (Teacher)

To this end, the core capabilities developed by school libraries for students that emerge from the focus group conversations included:

- Resource-based capabilities: Seeking, accessing and evaluating information sources in a variety of formats, including print-based and digital literacies, social and cultural artifacts, and technological tools.
- Knowledge-based capabilities: Creation, construction and sharing of the products of knowledge that demonstrate deep knowledge and understanding.
- Reading-to-learn capabilities: Comprehension, interpretation, communication, and dissemination of text in multiple formats to enable the development of meaning and understanding.
- Thinking-based capabilities: Substantive engagement with information through higher order thinking, and critical analysis that generate original ideas.
- Learning management capabilities: Preparation, planning and successfully undertaking a curriculum-based inquiry unit, and
- Personal and interpersonal capabilities: Learning how to learn as independent learner and collaborative learners. (Todd, Gordon & Lu, 2011, 30-31).

These core capabilities were perceived by teachers to provide students with the essential learning scaffolds for living, working and learning in a digital, networked world.

The School Library as Connector

The library is the place where the disciplines meet. It’s where the academic disciplines are integrated. In the classroom we sometimes become compartmentalized. Here, students can access info across disciplines, and I think that’s a really important application of the knowledge that’s happening in the classroom. They can come here and apply it in a real world setting. (Social Studies Teacher)

Participants saw the school library as a mechanism for bringing together and linking various informational aspects of the school and the wider community (Todd, Gordon & Lu, 2011, 63-67) to enable meaningful learning. The library was perceived as enabling students to make connections between curriculum learning and their personal interests and the real world. It enabled teachers to connect disciplines to provide a richer interdisciplinary approach to learning, and to connect with information and technology expertise that enabled them to develop their own pedagogical practices. It enabled quality connections to the wider world of information, and connected people to provide the best learning experiences for students.

The connections were perceived to be “easy” because of the systems, processes and organization in place in the
The school library, and because of a philosophy and practice of “help” provided by the school librarians. The school library as connector was portrayed in many different ways:

- The school library connects with the values of a school district and with its school community;
- The school library connects the school and home through technology, and through the relationships the school librarian establishes;
- The school librarian is an information broker who connects people with resources;
- School librarians bring information and people together at the point of need;
- The school library is a digital library that has no walls;
- The school library is multi-disciplinary: It is where the disciplines meet in a real world setting;
- The school library, through information, breathes life into the curriculum and connects curriculum to the real world of students;
- The school library connects people to each other as they learn together;
- The school librarian connects the school library with the public library.

The School Library as Center for Inquiry-Based Learning

According to the participants in this study, the school library contributed directly to quality teaching in schools through the provision of a unique kind of resource-centered inquiry-based instruction that is based on research in the information and learning sciences and implemented through instructional teams (Todd, Gordon & Lu, 2011, 76-81). This inquiry-based instruction was seen to give emphasis to intellectual agency for developing deep knowledge and understanding, rather than that of information collection and skills of finding information. Inquiry learning was viewed as the vehicle for covering the curriculum while embedding information skills relevant to the digital age. While both teachers and librarians in these schools acknowledged the importance of developing a range of information handling skills, the concept of “information literacy” was not a unifying concept in these stories. Rather, the most pervasive conception of the nature of learning through the school library was that of learning curriculum content through engaging students in a rich information-to-knowledge journey, with emphasis on knowledge development rather than the mastery of a discrete set of information literacy skills. Participants identified several central features of this instruction:

- Research task typically involves choice of topic, engaging questions, and choice of how to represent new knowledge through the discovery process;
- Engages students in critical thinking, examining diverse and conflicting information;
- Builds scaffolds to develop knowledge through Instructional interventions that develop thinking, problem solving; analysis; synthesis; reflection; and managing the research process.
- Developing project management capabilities.

With emphasis of these school libraries on inquiry, thinking, reflecting and communicating, the school library was positioned as a knowledge space, rather than an information place.

Teachers recognized that inquiry learning was not enrichment, rather, it was seen as a necessity for going beyond rote memorization, which has little long-term effects, to thinking skills that are viewed as a critical dimension of educating youth in a digital age, and developing their research capacity as citizens of a digital world. As such, the school library was portrayed as a common ground across the school for meeting individual and special needs. This was particularly identified by teachers of at-risk students and literacy teachers who saw the school librarians as providing targeted information and guidance to meet unique learning needs, and to support their individual inquiry tasks and special needs.

Students’ capacity to undertake quality research through engaging with information in all its forms was recognized as an important aspect of learning in all curriculum areas. The instructional role of the school librarian was explicitly linked to improvement in students’ research capabilities, and providing them with significant work and life skills to thrive in a digital environment.

School Library as a Center for Digital Literacy

I think that there’s an assumption that because members of this generation are considered digital natives, that they’re completely tech savvy and are able to use the kinds of programs that are in demand in our workforce. But when I have my freshmen come in, I find that a lot of them are not proficient in Microsoft Word, they’re not proficient in PowerPoint, they’re not proficient on the Internet. What they’re good at is social networking, what they’re good at is using technology to communicate with one another, which I think is appropriate for teenagers, but I think we need someone like [the librarian] to show them how to use these things in an academic way and in a productive way, eventually in the way they’re going
to use them in the workforce. I would suppose the outcome that I see, that is related to that is, as someone who has taught both freshmen and juniors here, I see a progression from freshmen year to junior year in their ability to use these kinds of programs. I think that’s also important, that you have someone who is extremely proficient on the computer in these kinds of programs modeling these things for the students every single day. Seeing that difference between freshmen and junior year is something that I have noticed. (Teacher)

Overall, the strongest set of capabilities identified by the participants as developed through the school library centered on developing capabilities around digital citizenship. In particular, teachers recognized the multi-modal nature of literacies that have emerged from the digital environment and the importance of addressing these literacies through formal instruction. They positioned the school library as a center for digital literacy, enabled through inquiry-based instruction. This was strongly emphasized in all focus groups and acknowledged by most teachers and school principals. (Todd, Gordon & Lu, 2011, 106-113). Indeed, participants identified that the instructional role of the school librarian was a significant mechanism for the development of students as digital citizens. This underscores the pervasive theme across the data – the role of the library as a pedagogical center that prepares students to live and work in an increasingly digitized, collaborative world.

Teachers were clear that you cannot make assumptions about students being “digital natives” who are instinctively knowledgeable and capable of managing digital environments. They highlighted a range of digital capabilities as central to the work of their school libraries:

- Recognizing quality information in multiple modes and across multiple platforms.
- Accessing information across diverse formats and platforms.
- Participating in digital communication in collaborative and ethical ways to share ideas and work together to produce knowledge.
- Using sophisticated information technology tools to search, access, create and demonstrate knowledge in new ways.
- Learning appropriate ethical approaches and behaviors in relation to use of digital technologies.
- Understanding legal and regulatory frameworks that govern information use.
- Understanding the dangers inherent in the use of complex information technologies and learning strategies to protect identity, personal information, and safety.


From the perspective of the teachers in this study, it was clear that school libraries served as a gateway to effectively, ethically, and safely participating in a globalized digital world. They acknowledged that students are already actively engaged in a technology-led participatory culture, including Facebook, message boards, gaming communities, and other online communities. They saw students using technology tools to produce new genres, mash-ups, and outcomes. They saw their students blogging and communicating across geographical and cultural boundaries. And as they watched their students engage in online participatory cultures, they voiced that they were deeply concerned that their students learn the dispositions, skills, and capabilities for working collaboratively in ethical and safe ways. They valued the school library for giving strong attention to developing ethical approaches to information use, as evidenced in instruction centering on the appropriation of information, acknowledging and citing the ideas of others, and understanding the ethics of information ownership.

The library was seen as a microcosm of the complex information landscape and a place where appropriate ethical behaviors could be taught, modeled and developed. Teachers were aware of the need to develop information competencies in the context of good information to ensure quality learning outcomes for students. They saw that the presentation of quality information, instruction in finding relevant information, as well as safe and ethical behavior constitutes the teaching of digital literacy through school libraries. This role was viewed as essential for the whole school, and teachers saw the school library as the central mechanism for integrating digital literacy with mainstream curriculum across the school.

The School Library as a Surrogate Home

We tend to make the assumption that students are going to go home ... and have a quiet place to work, and that parents will be supportive of their academic pursuits. ... Some of our students ... don’t have that advantage at home. I think it’s very important in a school to have a space that’s academically oriented, that is quiet, that is positive, and that is expressly for the purpose of furthering a project and studying before or after school. Sometimes people are disadvantaged and don’t have that, and if you don’t have it at school, and you don’t have it at home, where are you going to get it? (Teacher)
The school library is a safe environment for our students as well. They know that not only do they have access, but they’re getting it in a way they can trust. They trust the teachers, they trust [the school librarian] who has access to so much. If they are home, they have the same internet at home, and the school library at home, which is a wonderful infrastructure we have here … Online databases have so much to offer. They’re getting – I don’t want to say supervision, because it’s not necessarily that kind of role. It’s more of a mentoring role. … [Students] are able to [get] access in a safe environment. And also [the school librarian] is wonderful at telling them the difference between a good website, and one that isn’t so good, which is really important these days. (Science Teacher)

School Librarians as Co-Teachers

Probably the greatest asset is that all three librarians see themselves as co-teachers in every situation, instead of what we thought of as a traditional librarian. So I see that as our greatest strength. They are three individuals who truly believe that they are co-teachers …. They are impacting a very specific type of knowledge that they want the students to come away with whether it’s research or media literacy leading to content knowledge. They are approaching it from a teaching standpoint which has not always been my experience. (Principal)

As identified above, the school library functioned primarily as a pedagogical center for students and faculty, serving as a common instructional zone for the whole school where students learn to learn through engagement with information led by professional school librarians utilizing creative pedagogies centering on inquiry. Focus groups participants portrayed the school librarian primarily as co-teacher who has the unique role of seeing the ‘big picture’ and pulling the academic disciplines together through creative, purposeful instruction (Todd, Gordon & Lu, 2011, 67-72). According to the participants:

- School librarians bring depth to learning by helping students and teachers develop information skills that lead to the retrieval and utilization of good information;
- School librarians facilitate the integration of skill and content instruction for the development of curriculum knowledge;
- School librarians cannot do this alone; collegiality grows from mutual intents and shared experiences as teachers;
- Teachers open their classrooms in order to collaborate because they recognize the pedagogical value they derive from collaborating with the school librarian;
- Teachers see themselves as modeling collaboration for students;
- Teachers respect the school librarian as an educator with whom they can identify and on whom they can rely.

Principals were willing to support the acquisition of resources for the school library with an adequate budget because they perceived the school librarian as a good teacher who actively engaged in curriculum planning, team-based instructional design and measurement of learning outcomes. The highly visible role as co-teacher played a major part in reshaping traditional conceptions of librarians. In some of the focus groups teachers expressed

The notion of the library as a surrogate home emerged strongly in the discussions. The school library was seen to provide access to resources, technology, and information and instructional services that were not available in the homes of the school community. Specifically it put in the hands of students a range of resources, technology, reading materials, expert information assistance and learning guidance that may not be available in home. Many principals pointed out that communities surrounding their schools were not wealthy. Indeed, some were very poor, and the presence of a school library served as an equitable information environment for all, regardless of economic circumstances. In terms of information, it was portrayed as a community equalizer, providing equity of access to the essentials of learning in information-rich environments. This did not just apply to access to information resources; it also applied to having space available for students to engage with information and to give them the appropriate support and expert guidance for their learning.

Connected to the conception of surrogate home was the notion of the school library as a safe place (Todd, Gordon & Lu, 2011, 130-131). “Safe” was interpreted from a range of perspectives: a place where students can engage with information knowing that they can get individual guidance; a place where they can explore diverse topics, even controversial topics, in privacy and without interruption; a place where they know information they access is trustworthy; a place where they can retreat and work without interruption and intervention by other students without any kind of threat; and a place where they can obtain individual mentoring as needed without any kind of judgment.

Integrating all of these components into a sustainable model of the future school library are two key dynamics: the school librarian as co-teacher, and the school librarian as teacher of teachers.
deep emotion about how school librarians helped them to be better teachers. Principals recognized the need to provide professional development for school librarians that enables them to be good teachers and good teachers of teachers.

**School Librarian as Teacher of Teachers**

So, [school librarians] have sat in on many meetings and been represented and representative of the kinds of things that we can do. I think that they help inform the path that we want to take. So for us...because of who they are as professionals, it works out really perfectly. Their philosophy of making learning and teaching better plays exactly into where we need to go. Having them as a part of our meetings...listening to their voices throwing things out, having them take things and run with them, has really enabled us to go further faster. (Principal)

Participants identified the information-learning expertise of the school librarian and the co-teaching role of the school librarian as not being limited to students. Rather it extended to considerable in-school training of teachers that was high “value for money” (Todd, Gordon & Lu, 2011, (140-146). The school librarians were positioned and seen to deliver effective professional development in their schools, with ongoing support and encouragement from the school principals. This primarily focused in inquiry-based learning, using Web 2.0 tools for knowledge building and presenting new knowledge, as well as innovative reading development initiatives. Because the professional development offered by the school librarian was primarily hands-on, teachers felt that they were learning something useful, and were more likely to use it in the context in which they learned it. The school librarian played a dynamic role in building collaborative and collegial relationships among staff members through this sharing of information-learning expertise, ideas, problems and solutions, and was perceived to be a knowledgeable team player working collectively to build a better school and improved learning outcomes. The wider school culture of investing in school libraries, and giving the school librarians freedom to implement professional expertise gave rise to a pervasive notion of school libraries as part of a “culture of help” in schools. School librarians took an active role in nurturing this help, which created further ripples of help and support.

**Qualities of Effective School Librarians**

The teachers and principals participating in this study consistently referred to the qualities of school librarians as a major factor in the success of the school library program. (Todd, Gordon & Lu, 2011, 146-154). The school library reflected the dispositions and personality traits of the school librarian. Principals in particular recognized the importance of library staff in the effectiveness of the school library program. The qualities of effective school librarian that emerged from focus group discussions centered on:

- Being resilient;
- Being non-judgmental with students and teachers;
- Building an atmosphere of open communication;
- Being willing to go the extra mile to be supportive of teaching and learning;
- Actively building a profile of the school library as an active learning center;
- Having high visibility as teachers and works to sustain this as a priority;
- Being sociable and accessible, inclusive and welcoming;
- Being the living antithesis of the librarian stereotype;
- Loving to learn and being a lifelong learner who wants to share knowledge and expertise;
- Having a strong “help” orientation, i.e. this is about learning, not the library!
- Focusing not so much on their libraries, but on their commitment to enabling multiple learning needs to be met;
- Being solution-oriented;
- Creating the ethos of the library that is an invitation to learning, a place to be, do and become;
- Having high expectations for colleagues and for students;
- Liking and caring about young people and having flexibility in creating a learning environment that appeals to them;
- Being leaders and instructional innovators who are not afraid to take risks, be creative, and do what best serves learners of all ages

**Conclusion**

Notwithstanding 50 years of research that affirms the significant contribution of school libraries to student learning and achievement, the future of school libraries hangs in the balance. In charting a sustainable future, this paper identifies dimensions of successful school libraries in New Jersey which contribute to their current sustainability. As the educators in these schools clearly articulated, school libraries are not a dispensable add-on, frill, or luxury. They are an integral part of an education that is highly relevant to an information and digital age. These dimensions are building blocks for future school libraries, however they might be structured, organized and labeled. The school library of the future is a 21st century classroom that provides the information- and technology-rich learning environments that young people confront in the world in
which they live. It provides the instructional frameworks for enabling them to engage meaningfully with information in all its forms to build deep knowledge of their curriculum topics, of themselves, and the world of work that is part of their adult futures. As a pedagogical center, the school library is a place where school educators can collaborate and innovate, experiment and take risks with information and technology, explore new technologies and their integration into learning, learn new pedagogical approaches and co-teach with school librarians to develop information and thinking skills in print and digital environments. The school library is a communal and connected information and knowledge center that supports investigation and experimentation with information and technology to foster quality teaching that empowers learning across the school. It is also an affective commons, nurturing emotional development, and developing social, interpersonal and communication skills that are important for living and working outside of school.

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