

The Impact of a School Library on Learning



Dorothy Williams

Impact

What difference does the school library make to learning?

What is it about a school library that makes the difference?



Learning?

Attainment

Learning outcomes

Learner development

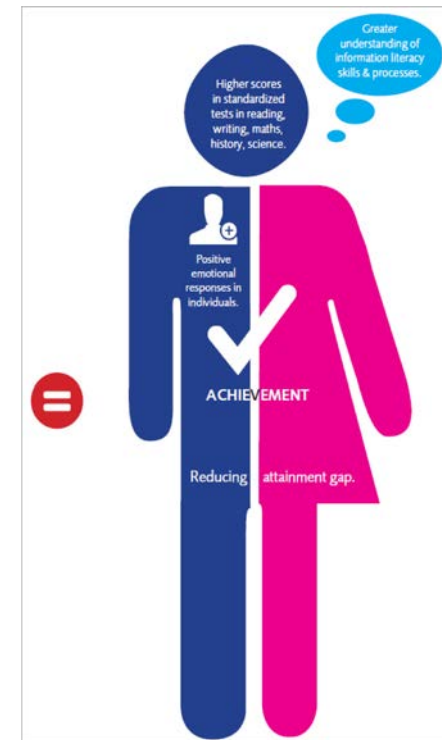


Impact of School Libraries on Learning

(Williams, Wavell & Morrison 2013)

“There is a considerable body of international evidence showing that school libraries impact on:

- higher test or exam scores equating to academic attainment;
- successful curriculum or learning outcomes, including digital and information literacy;
- and positive attitudes towards learning. ”



What difference does the school library make to learning?

Statistical correlations between school library provision and attainment

School students' and teachers' perceptions of the impact of the library on learning



Impact on attainment

Lance and others



- Lance's statistical studies over 25+ years: 34 studies over 26 US states, a Canadian province, Australia...
- 100,000+ schools
- Impact of school library on average scores in standardised tests: elementary, middle and senior school

Higher achievement with strong school libraries.

- Schools with strong school libraries have higher average test scores
- Improvement in average attainment levels in reading, writing, English language arts (incl. research to build knowledge), subjects



Addressing the attainment gap

South Carolina 2014

- Demographics such as gender, ethnicity, disability and poverty status... did not explain away relationships between libraries and student performance

Pennsylvania 2012

- Students who are economically disadvantaged, black, Hispanic, or have Individualised Education Programmes benefit proportionally more than students generally.

Washington State, 2015

- One key factor distinguishing high-performing high-poverty schools from low-performing high-poverty schools is a quality library program.



Impact on reading

National Literacy Trust UK:

- 2010 survey of 17,000+ pupils - Strong correlation between reading attainment and school library use
- 2017- pupils who use their school library had higher reading scores than those who do not use the school library.

Sullivan & Brown (British Cohort Study) 2013

- Reading ability is the best indicator of academic success;
- Children who read for pleasure made more progress in maths, vocabulary and spelling between the ages of 10 and 16 than those who rarely read



The perceptions of learners and teachers

Todd (USA, 2004-6), Hay (Australia, 2005-6)

The impact of the school library in 7 key areas:

- finding information
- using information
- developing reading interests
- using computers in home or school
- developing knowledge
- independent learning
- achievement

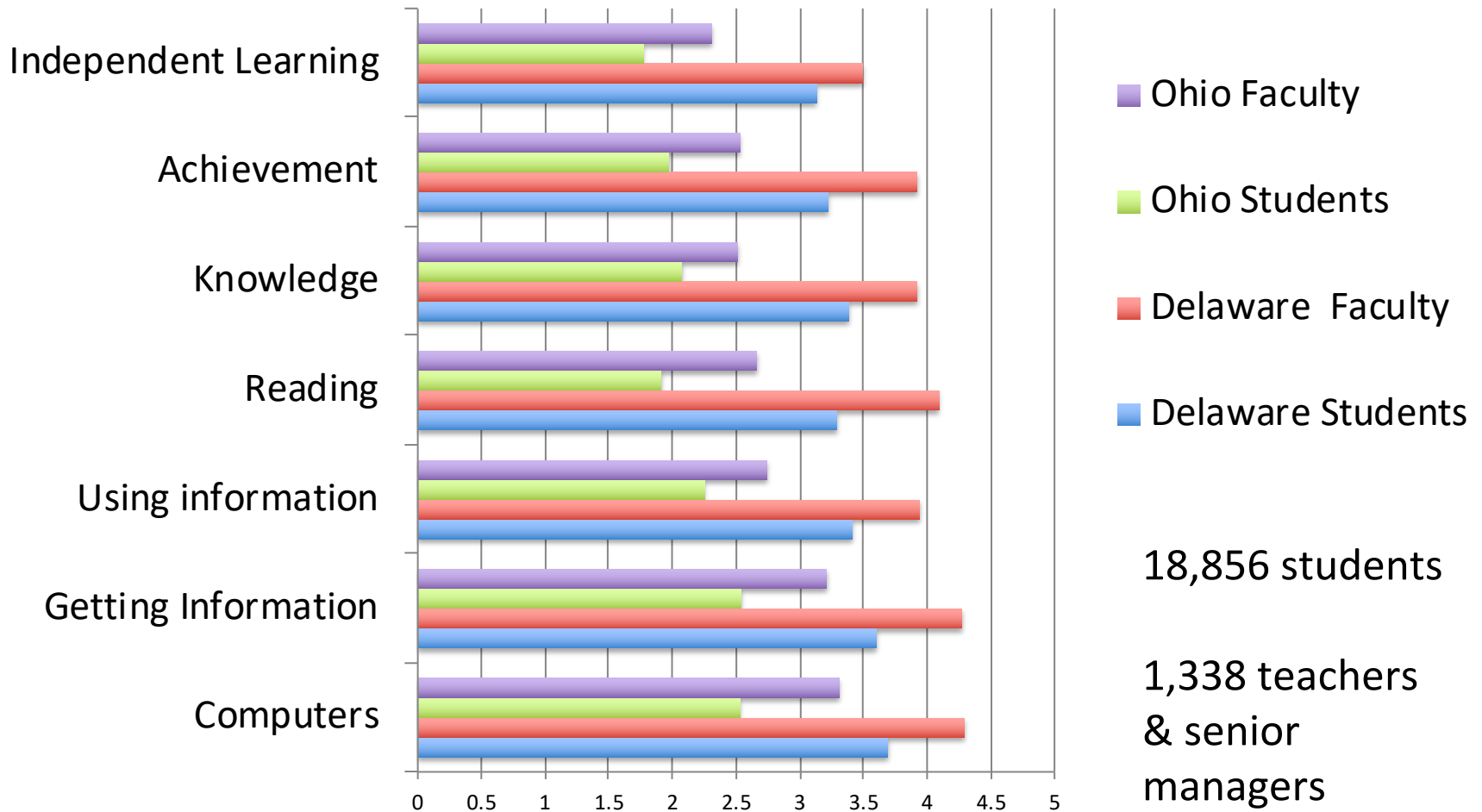
Scaled (0-5) responses to statements about how much the library had helped the students

e.g. The school library has helped me

- put ideas in my own words.
- enjoy reading more
- be more careful about information I find on the internet
- get the first facts about my topics
- figure out my own opinions on things
- feel more confident about doing my school work

The perceptions of learners and teachers

Todd & Heinstrom, 2006; Todd & Kuhlthau, 2005



How much has the library helped?
(average score, where 0= No help & 5= Helps a lot)

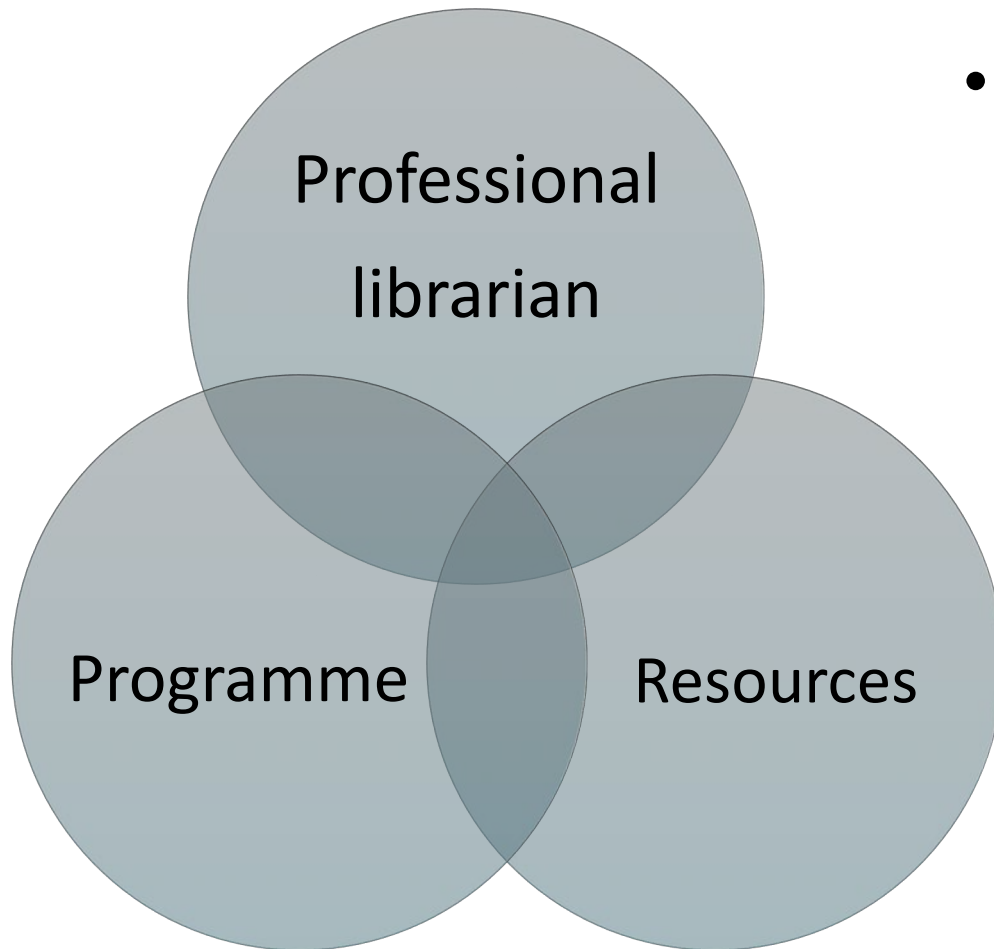
Impact on the learner

- Motivation
- Confidence
- Independence



- Wellbeing
- Self-esteem

What is it about a school library that makes the difference?



- Washington State, 2015
“it is the **quality** of the library facility and related instructional services rather than its presence or absence that makes a difference for student achievement”

The most substantial and consistent finding...



- Positive relationship between full-time, qualified school librarians and scores in standardised tests of reading, writing, Eng language arts
- Higher and stable library staffing linked to higher performance in a range of subjects (Kansas, 2012)
- “The mere presence of a librarian is associated with better student outcomes, but what librarians do also has positive effects.” Lance, 2018

Professional staff

Students' test scores tend to be higher where librarians spend more time:

- Instructing students, both with classroom teachers and independently;
- Planning collaboratively;
- Providing professional development to teachers;
- Meeting regularly with the HT/principal;
- Serving on school committees;
- Facilitating the use of technology by students and teachers;
- Providing reading programmes.



Resources & Programme

High quality, multi-format
range of resources

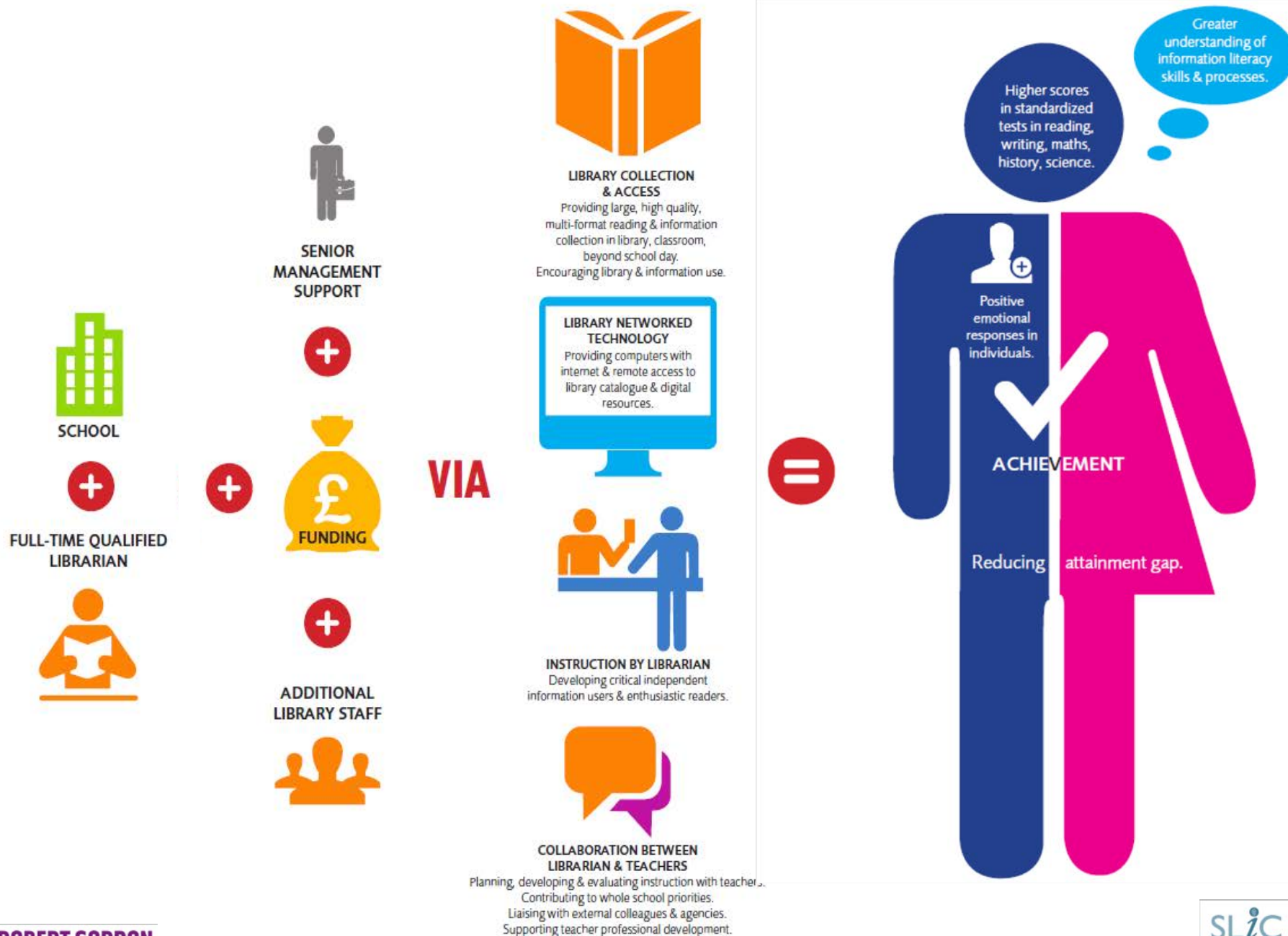
Flexible access to resources
using networked ICT



Information literacy and
reading programmes

Collaborative input to
curriculum

IMPACT OF SCHOOL LIBRARIES ON LEARNING



Impact on the whole school



“The library is the central hub of the school because our business is learning and the library is all about learning”

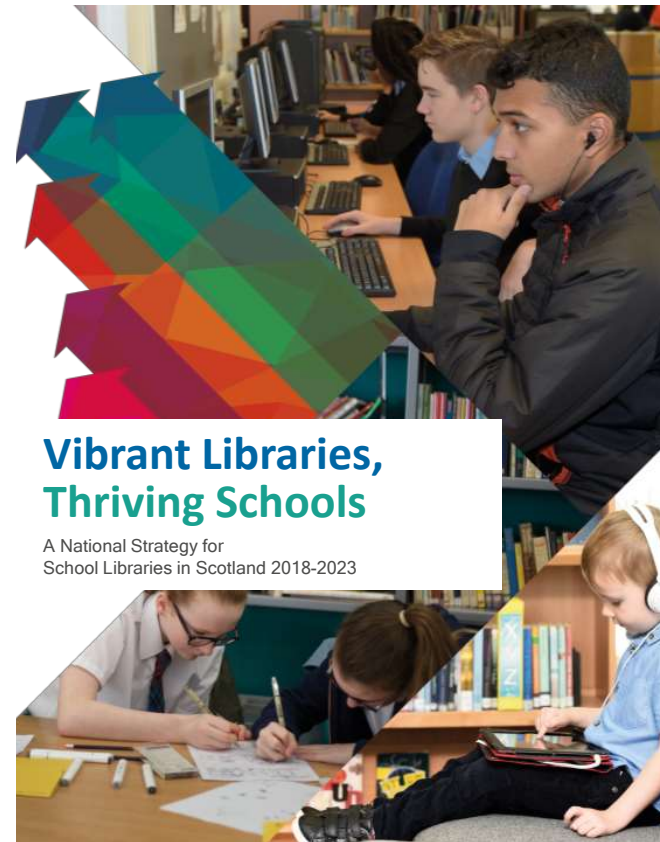
Teacher in Aberdeenshire,
Scotland, 2018

The impact of a school library on learning

A positive impact that is relevant beyond school

- Attainment
- Development of lifelong learning skills and attitudes
- Development of the learner

Even more relevant in the internet age



Further information

- William, D & Wavell, C Impact of School Libraries on Learning, 2013 <https://scottishlibraries.org/research-skills/impact-of-school-libraries/>
- Teravainen, A & Clark, C. School Libraries : A literature review of current provision and evidence of impact. National Literacy Trust, 2017 <https://literacytrust.org.uk/research-services/research-reports/school-libraries-literature-review-current-provision-and-evidence-impact-2017/>
- The Lance studies - <https://www.lrs.org/data-tools/school-libraries/impact-studies/>
- The Todd studies - <https://cissl.rutgers.edu/research/impact-studies/>
- Overview of USA studies <https://antiochlis.libguides.com/schlibcert/research>
[h](https://antiochlis.libguides.com/schlibcert/research)



Thanks to school librarians in Moray, Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Edinburgh who have kindly allowed me to use photographs from their school libraries.