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## Educating Preservice Media Specialists: Developing School Leaders

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*The leadership role of the library media specialists is the most important factor in establishing the viability of the school media program. The purpose of this study was to determine how preservice media specialists in the United States perceive leadership responsibilities and certain tasks associated with the school library media profession. One hundred and fifty preservice media specialists enrolled at five universities in the southeastern US were asked to participate in this study. Data indicated that many of the preservice media specialists in this study viewed themselves as support personnel rather than school leaders. For the most part, this research establishes the need to include leadership development courses in the degree programs offered to preservice media specialists.*

### Introduction

As we look into the future, the basic elements of library media services ring as true as ever: a warm caring individual who promotes the love of reading, stands as an advocate for youth, promotes learning through materials and technology, inspires excellence, provides the best learning tools, joins teachers in the creation of exciting learning experiences, and guides individual students as they venture into the world of information and technology.

It will be as true in 2020 as it [was] in 1994: The tools for learning, the best technology, the finest books, and the best resources of information don't jump out at students and automatically make a difference without an intermediary—the library media specialist. (Loertscher, 1995, p. 90)

Loertscher's (1995) predictions regarding the future of library media services were presented at the fifth Treasure Mountain research retreat held on November 8, 1994 at Brown County State Park in Indiana. The Treasure Mountain retreat, unofficially associated with the Research Committee of the American Association of School Librarians (AASL), brought together professionals interested in exploring research topics in the field of school librarianship. Questions addressed at the fifth retreat included: (a) "What will future schooling be like? (b) What is the role of library media specialists and library media programs in future schooling? (c) What is the probable education required for future information professionals?" (Grover & Barren, 1995, p. 7). Although the answers are likely to change over the course of the 21st century, Loertscher's description of the elements that should continue to underlie school library services are perhaps the ties that bind these questions together.

Preservice library media specialists who completed their degree programs in the late 1990s will move the profession into the new millennium. Each prospective library media specialist requires effective preparation for the challenges of meeting the ever-changing information needs of diverse educational communities. The purpose of this study was to determine how preservice media specialists perceived leadership responsibilities in relationship to the tasks associated with the profession they were about to enter. Specifically, data were collected to answer the following questions.

1. How do preservice media specialists perceive the leadership responsibilities associated with the profession they are about to enter?
2. How do preservice media specialists perceive the relative importance of three major task areas—instruction and collaboration, media center management, and professional involvement—associated with the school library media profession?
3. How do preservice media specialists perceive the relative amount of time they will spend on three major task areas—instruction and collaboration, media center management, and professional involvement—associated with the school library media profession?

Traditionally, schools have been viewed as change agencies responsible for preparing young people for the adult future. Although Loertscher (1995) and Rakestraw and Fowler (1995) described what schooling might look like in the future, that future exists now. As more and more schools open their doors to diverse populations, districts across the country are beginning to encourage the development of charter schools grounded in community participation; International Baccalaureate degree programs are being offered at public high schools as a way to meet the needs of academically talented students and to promote worldwide connections across the curriculum. Advancements in videoconferencing technologies and other delivery systems such as the Internet already play roles in classroom instruction, curriculum enhancement, and information dissemination. The notion that solely schools are responsible for educating students has changed dramatically.

Van Deusen (1996b) highlighted another dimension of the movement away from single, isolated sources of learning: the intricate nature of instruction. She wrote

learning styles, the explosion of information, advances in instructional and information technologies, and advocacy for collaborative teaching increase the complexity in planning for instruction. [Thus] teams of teachers who work together are more likely to address productively the complex task of planning for teaching. (p.229)

As we enter the 21st century, school library media specialists have increasing opportunities to fulfill the roles of information specialist, teacher, and instructional partner as defined in *Information Power* (AASL/AECT, 1998). In many schools in the United States today, the library media specialist func-

tions as the primary curriculum consultant. With expertise in accessing and using information resources that cover the breadth of the curriculum, with knowledge of information technologies and their applications, coupled with the ability to help teachers design meaningful learning activities, media specialists can be valuable participants in the teaching-learning process. It is critical, then, for library media specialists to assume a leadership role in establishing a vision of library media services that will best serve the teachers and students in an educational community.

The leadership role has been considered critical to the success of library media professionals and the programs that they administer. Crowley (1995) asserted that the library media specialist who accepts a leadership role is a service provider who understands the information needs of all the clients in the learning community and establishes a vision to meet those needs. The media specialist who thinks and acts like a leader maintains a high profile and works as a catalyst for change in the school setting. An acceptance of library media specialists as leaders will be defined by the relationships that they develop with the total learning community, not by a library media program viewed as an entity separate from the rest of the curriculum. Now and in the future, "school library media specialists will enhance their roles by interweaving partnerships, leadership, and advocacy for student achievement into everything they do" (Stripling, 1996, p. 1). Pappas and Tepe (1995) foresaw the roles of leader, change agent, and staff developer as the foundations for much of what library media specialists will accomplish in the future.

As educational reform movements encourage educators to place more emphasis on student-centered learning, teacher and media specialist roles inevitably shift from providers of knowledge to those of learning facilitators. Tallman and Bowie (1995), writing about collaboration and instructional consulting, predicted that library media specialists will need to initiate facilitative roles more often as schools turn to resource-based learning, as the use of educational technologies grows, and as information access and use become more complex. More recently, Haycock (1999) discussed the characteristics needed by teacher-librarians engaged in collaborative practices: initiative, vision, leadership and interpersonal skills, a willingness to take risks, and energy and enthusiasm. Of these, leadership training is the umbrella under which all the other characteristics can be developed or cultivated. For preservice media specialists, a course in leadership development can be a valuable opportunity.

Educators responsible for teaching preservice library media specialists and teachers have long recognized the problems that arise when students progress through a highly sequenced course of study followed by a brief internship that may not offer students the opportunities to practice the essential skills necessary to do the job on their own (Goodlad, 1991). Valli (1992) identified imitation, isolation, transfer, and technique as four problem

areas facing preservice educators. Callison (1995) examined how school library education programs may contribute to these problems.

1. *Imitation*. Preservice media specialists often report that the most valuable part of their field experience is the hands-on work, doing what school librarians do on a daily basis: processing materials, giving book talks, online searching, or reference work. These experiences too often dominate the internship, with little or no time spent on developing a familiarity with the foundations of a strong media program (i.e., establishing a vision, long-range planning considerations).
2. *Isolation*. For the most part, field experience for preservice library media specialists is typically spent under the direction of one practicing media professional. Particularly in elementary situations, partial staffing may prevent the media specialist from becoming a full member of any teaching teams. As a result, preservice media specialists may miss the opportunity to participate in collaborative discussions with teachers.
3. *Transfer*. The preservice media specialist may have only one opportunity during the internship to initiate the instructional consultant role and follow it through to the end of a project. The collaborative role may be taught in the university classroom, but may not be modeled by either the professor or media specialist supervising the intern. For preservice media specialists entering the profession without any classroom experience, the instructional consultation role can be problematic.
4. *Technique*. Preservice media specialists typically want to know the "how-tos" of media service (e.g., selection and ordering of materials, circulation) that can be learned on the job. Except from an observational standpoint, little emphasis is placed on the development of interpersonal communication skills or how they relate to effective leadership.

The proceedings from the fifth Treasure Mountain retreat (Morris, McQuiston, & Saretsky, 1995) made it clear that the profession's leaders expect school library media specialists to accept leadership roles in the educational arena. As professionals who understand the importance of information in today's world, library media specialists are responsible for establishing, communicating, and realizing a vision of information services that meets the needs of all the constituents in a learning community. As students are encouraged to take more responsibility for their own learning, as technology becomes more complex and the amount of information proliferates, library media specialists must have the skills and strategies to provide leadership in collaboration and instructional consultation activities.

### *Teaching and Learning*

Mehlinger (1996) has argued that the trio formed by the school restructuring movement, new approaches to the teaching-learning process, and informa-

tion age technology will make a difference in how schools operate in the future. Increasingly, access to worldwide networks and online resources provide students with information once controlled by teachers. Carver (1994) has written that library media specialists in the 21st century will be heavily involved in resource-based learning as teachers and students move away from textbooks as their single source of information on any given subject. By the year 2000, she expects library materials in schools to be 60% traditional print format and 40% online or in an electronic format. The abilities to access, evaluate, and use information have become basic survival skills. Now and in the future, students and teachers alike need to be able to: (a) understand and use an online catalog, (b) grasp information retrieval concepts, (c) create online search strategies, and (d) interpret search results in relation to needed information. Because they possess both an understanding of information resources and expertise in information skills, library media specialists are the personnel in schools best prepared to help teachers and students develop the full range of information literacy skills (Crowley, 1995).

Realistically, no single person—not a teacher or a media specialist alone—can meet all the information needs of students. Kuhlthau (1992) pointed out that library media specialists need to advance to a level of service where they work with the entire range of clients in the educational community. Often, this means teaching teachers to effectively access and use the same electronic information resources that their students are learning to use. Working together and learning from each other, the library media specialist and teacher form a powerful partnership capable of integrating a wide variety of information resources and technologies across the curriculum. "The teacher brings a knowledge of subject, content, and context while the library media specialist brings expertise in resources, technology, and process" (Kuhlthau, 1992, p. 50). Almost a decade later, this statement still rings true. The library media specialist is still the person who provides members of the learning community with the essential link between information resources and the process of finding meaning. The task of the library media specialist goes far beyond teaching access to information resources; it includes guiding students [and teachers] toward the generation of new knowledge and meaning (Kuhlthau, 1992).

Barren (1995) predicted that schooling would reach a point where all teachers need to be competent technology users, and his prediction has become reality as schools enter the 21st century. The role that library media specialists play in the development of technology literacy among faculty is now more critical than ever. In an era of increasing accountability, schools in the US are being scrutinized not only for how well students achieve on standardized tests, but on the impact that technology has on student achievement in general. For library media specialists, and teachers too, new technologies and software applications may pose the greatest challenge because these change so frequently. However, library media specialists who teach

staff development courses can help teachers understand the importance of integrating information resources and technology across the curriculum. In the role of staff developer, library media specialists are the professionals in schools who can lead the reform effort to integrate resources and technologies effectively into the curriculum. This does not imply that the library media specialist becomes the sole "technology teacher." Rather, it means that the library media specialist becomes a catalyst for educational change by leading staff development for teachers in all disciplines across the curriculum and at every grade level. Collaborating with teachers and students alike and assuming a teaching role outside library instruction are two important roles for the library media specialist in an information age school (Kuhlthau, 1995). As the 20th century closes, collaboration, leadership, and technology underlie the best library media programs (AASL/AECT, 1998).

### *Roles and Responsibilities of Library Media Specialists*

Guidelines for school library media centers were updated in 1988 when the American Association of School Librarians (AASL), in conjunction with the Association for Educational Communications and Technology (AECT), published *Information Power: Guidelines for School Library Media Programs* (AASL/AECT, 1988). As stated in this document, library media specialists were responsible for providing the leadership and expertise that would make their programs integral to the instructional programs of schools. *Information Power* delineated three essential, often overlapping roles—information specialist, teacher, and instructional consultant—that library media specialists should fulfill in providing services to the entire school. In 1998, AASL and AECT published *Information Power: Building Partnerships for Learning*. This new document emphasizes the importance of collaboration, leadership, and technology in developing the elements that will encourage students to be lifelong learners. Specifically, the library media specialist plays a role that:

- begins with promoting and reinforcing students' interests and abilities in reading, listening, and viewing;
  - expands to include fostering the full range of information concepts, strategies, and ability students must master to profit from the global resources that are quite literally at their fingertips; and
  - includes developing the full range abilities that students need to interact effectively with information and to construct meaningful knowledge.
- (p. 3)

Hartzell's (1997) description of library media specialists as involved leaders is appropriate to the roles delineated in the 1998 update of *Information Power* (AASL/AECT, 1998). To take on a leadership role in the school requires a vision of how all the integral parts of the educational community can work together (Brown, 1990). Library media specialists cannot meet the demands of the roles presented in *Information Power* unless they are good

leaders and can establish short- and long-range goals related to the school (Miller, 1991).

Inherent in the concept of leadership is the idea of recognizing and planning for change. As information continues to grow at a rapid rate, and as technologies change to meet new information demands, proactive library media specialists plan for change rather than letting change dictate their programs and participation in the educational arena. Taking an active approach to change requires that the library media specialist first construct a vision of library media services (Pappas, 1993). One critical area that will affect the development of a plan for library media services is the establishment of a budget that will support the changing information and technological needs of students and teachers. Although school budgets have traditionally been the responsibility of principals, more schools in the US are moving to site-based management and bringing other personnel into the budgetary process. To ensure that a budget can adequately support the mission and goals of the library media program, media specialists must request "dollar amounts within the context of curriculum and instructional changes, gaps or deficient areas in the collection, increased costs of resources, user information, and additional costs associated with using newer technologies" (Lewis, 1993, p. 52).

Callison (1995) cited a strong correlation between the regularity of budget conversations between the library media specialist and building principal and the amount of money spent on library media materials. On the whole, media specialists at each level—elementary, middle, and high—who had either weekly or monthly budget conversations with their principals received more dollars for their library media programs. Similarly, Winstead (1993) expressed the sentiment that library media professionals should compile and present evidence to principals detailing the impact that the library media program has had in the school community. In agreement, Callison wrote that library media specialists who regularly inform principals about "trends, issues, opportunities, risks, and demands ... are more likely to be leaders [who] make change happen—from updating print collections to the adoption of electronic information networks" (p. 106). It is this kind of well-planned, continuous advocacy that will help library media specialists realize their program visions. Carver (1994) too has stated that the school library media program should rank first in a school's budget expenditures because it facilitates the learning process for everyone in an educational community. Barren (1994) said that library media specialists

must take an assertive position to present our vision of the school library media program, support it with regular evaluations and reports, and ask realistically for what we need to accomplish our vision. If we are not willing or able to do these things, the principal, or any other administrator, cannot be held accountable for not supporting the school library media program, (p. 50)

Hartzell (1996) contended that library media specialists who are visible to administrators who control budgets and make personnel decisions gain the power to command leadership responsibilities. Blanchard (1995) suggested that library media specialists who develop their own sense of power are less inclined to rely on others for leadership and are better able to initiate partnerships, administer a program, and participate in the curriculum and instruction decision-making process. Pritchett (1991) characterized the visible, leadership-oriented media specialist as one who not only participates as an active member of the school instructional development team, but also seizes opportunities to work on curriculum matters at the district or state level. The involved library media specialist designs and conducts staff development and collaborates with teachers to design and implement instructional units.

One way to increase student learning and achievement is through the collaborative partnership developed when library media specialists and teachers work cooperatively to move students toward lifelong independence in accessing, understanding, using, and producing information. Wolcott (1994) stated that successful collaborative partnerships are more often the result of media specialists assuming a leadership role in the instructional planning process. As a rule, teachers are comfortable planning alone or with teacher-peers, but often lack the experience necessary to involve media specialists in the planning and implementation of learning activities. Some teachers are fearful that their authority will be usurped rather than a partnership developed. To become an equal partner in the teaching-learning process, library media specialists must do more than supply resources for an instructional plan developed and taught exclusively by the classroom teacher (Pickard, 1994). Instead of merely supporting instruction, library media specialists are instructional leaders. Often the library media specialist can help teachers construct a vision and subsequent plan for allowing students to use a variety of technologies to demonstrate knowledge gained. Learning to adapt to a variety of teacher planning styles and developing an understanding of how and why teachers plan does much to facilitate the collaborative partnerships that media specialists must seek to develop with teachers (Wolcott). In the instructional partnership role defined in *Information Power* (AASL/AECT, 1998), the media specialist has the following responsibilities:

- joins teachers and others to identify links across student information needs, curricular content, learning outcomes and a wide variety of print, nonprint, and electronic information resources;
- develops policies, practices, and curricula that guide students to develop the full range of information and communication abilities;
- works closely with individual teachers in the critical areas of designing authentic learning tasks and assessments; and
- works closely with teachers to integrate the information and communication abilities required to meet subject matter standards, (pp. 4-5)



The roles of information specialist, teacher, and instructional partner often overlap as library media specialists work with teachers and students in a collaborative learning environment (AASL/AECT, 1998). In the teacher/instructional partner role, the library media specialist is "often the most visible member of [the] staff," who helps teachers "maximize their use of professional resources ... and [helps] them incorporate the best instructional and information resources into the learning process" (Pritchett 1991, pp. 55-56). In the teaching role, library media specialists guide teachers and administrators toward the development of information and technology skills. Thoughtfully planned staff development courses aimed at teaching information literacy, resource-based learning strategies, and collaboration can further the use of library media services and augment the learning process for students (Haycock, 1991).

Van Deusen (1996a) found that the instructional consultation or partnership role was more likely to be carried out by elementary media specialists who served only one school and worked in automated library media centers with paid support staff. To a significant degree, automated circulation systems and paid support staff reduced the clerical work performed by elementary media specialists and increased the amount of time spent consulting with teachers. In a study that examined how high school media specialists spent their working hours, Everhart (1994) found that those secondary school librarians who worked in automated library media centers spent significantly more time on curriculum development, instructional consultation, and technology than their counterparts who worked in non-automated school media centers. However, the media specialists in Everhart's study tended to be information managers first, teachers second, and instructional consultants third. So although automation technology enabled the media specialist to have more collaborative time, Everhart found that most used any gained time for administrative tasks, not instructional consultation tasks. One could conclude from these findings that simply having more time is not the sole determining factor that encourages media specialists to assume leadership roles in the collaborative partnership with teachers. Practicing library media specialists, it seems, need to be educated in some of the same ways as preservice media specialists (Bumett & McNally, 1996).

Hug (1992) reported several characteristics that he believed would accurately describe beginning, experienced, and expert library media specialists. The beginning media specialists might be dependent, other-directed, and isolated whereas experienced media professionals would exhibit independence and be both participatory and inquisitive. The expert media specialist would be self-governed, cooperative, involved, interdependent, and visionary. Although it is possible that professional growth occurs over time, it is essential that both new teachers and library media specialists

come into their respective professions with a sense of the leadership responsibilities and roles that their jobs require.

### Education for Library Media Specialists

Universities that prepare preservice library media specialists would serve their students better if programs were structured to include coursework in cooperative planning, teaching adult learners, and the leadership skills necessary to effect partnerships with other educators in the school community. Baldwin (1995) proposed that preservice programs for all levels of professionals involved in the school library media program need to change. Education programs for principals should include coursework that more fully explains the role of the library media specialist; courses for library media specialists should concentrate on leadership training so that media professionals are ready to accept a role in school reform. Preservice education for teachers must include courses that teach the collaborative process and how to work with library media specialists (American Library Association, 1989).

Both preservice and practicing media specialists must learn to take a leadership role in the collaborative partnership formed with teachers; they cannot accomplish the task of teaching information literacy skills or implementing resource-based learning alone. Therefore, preservice programs for both teachers and media specialists should be revised to include information literacy connections (ALA, 1989).

As we enter the 21st century,

the successful integration of multimedia, networking, and virtual reality technologies will not only further the gradual metamorphosis from library to media center, it will transform an infrastructure that supported quiet, independent study and placed a high value on reading and text-based learning into one that encourages the appreciation of multiple intelligences and values communication and collaboration. [Thus] emerging technologies need to be incorporated into masters' and professional development programs and teacher in-service training to make this transition possible. Attention needs to be directed beyond technical education...to fundamental issues such as restructuring the library media center environment, adopting models that acknowledge the richness and diversity of the information learning process, and revaluing communication and collaboration as tools for learning. (Burnett & McNally, 1996, p. 137)

Each school library media specialist has rich opportunities to have an impact on the development of a school's curriculum, the teaching-learning process, student achievement, and teachers' professional growth and development. Understanding the information and technological needs of a school is not enough. Media specialists must be critically aware that teachers who have not been taught the collaborative process may be hesitant to engage in it. Waiting for these teachers to initiate collaborative partnerships only works to the detriment of students. Therefore, library media specialists must extend

themselves as leaders in establishing collaborative partnerships with teachers.

As leaders in information resources and technology integration, it is the responsibility of each library media specialist to establish a vision of how the media program relates to the entire curriculum. In doing so, the library media specialist should come to understand the budget requirements of establishing a media program that is an integral part of the school's curriculum. Also, if media professionals expect teachers to play an essential role in helping students gain information literacy skills, then staff development opportunities must be offered and taught by library media specialists. For library media specialists, the leadership role is the most important factor in establishing the viability of the school media program. Media specialists who practice in the 21st century must possess the ability to lead administrators, teachers, and students toward lifelong learning and a level of information literacy that encourages independent use and understanding of information resources.

### Methodology for the Study

In-depth reading of the research presented at the fifth Treasure Mountain retreat held in 1994 provided the impetus for this study and the development of a 12-question survey designed to assess how preservice media specialists perceived leadership responsibilities and task areas associated with the school library media profession. Leadership questions included items that asked respondents how often they expected to have budget meetings with their principals and who was primarily responsible for setting the vision of the library media program. Two questions asked respondents to rank three task areas—instruction and collaboration, media center management, and professional involvement—for both their relative importance and the amount of time each would require. From a selection of three unordered response choices, respondents were asked to describe the media specialist's role as an instructional consultant. Respondents were also asked one open ended question that provided the opportunity for stating why each had chosen to become a library media specialist. Finally, demographic questions were designed to obtain information about years of teaching experience, preferred level of media service, number of graduate hours completed in the library media degree program, and institutional affiliation.

### *Data Collection*

The sample selected for study included 150 preservice library media specialists enrolled at five universities in the southeastern US. At each site, a library media faculty member (or designated survey administrator) agreed to administer the survey to master's-level students enrolled in the library media program at their respective institutions. Respondents each received a cover letter explaining the research and a survey to complete and return to the survey administrator at their site. Only preservice media specialists who

did not hold or had not previously held positions as library media specialists completed the survey.

Ninety-three of the 150 questionnaires were returned from four universities by the due date of April 11, 1997. One university was dropped from the study because its surveys were not returned in time for analysis. Of the 93 questionnaires returned, 17 contained either missing answers or incorrectly answered items. Only useable portions of these surveys were considered for data analysis. For each item on the survey, respondents were asked to select one answer for each close-ended question.

### *Data Analysis and Results*

The frequency of responses for each choice was computed, and percentages were reported for each possible answer. Item 4 asked respondents to indicate the number of budget meetings each one expected to have with their principal throughout the school year. The frequency or percentage of each response is presented in Table 1. Approximately 90% of the preservice media specialists surveyed in this study perceived that they would hold either annual (41.8%) or semi-annual (48.4%) budget meetings with their principals. Existing research clearly indicates that frequency of budget conversations with one's principal is directly related to the amount of funding a media program receives; few expected to hold frequent budget conversations with their principals.

Item 8 asked respondents to determine the role of the media specialist as an instructional consultant in relation to the classroom teacher. Current literature stresses that both the teacher and the media specialist bring particular talents and skills to the collaborative process. Over half of the respondents (68.1%) surveyed in this study perceived the media specialist's role as complementary to that of the teacher; 28.6% viewed it as interchangeable with the teacher's role. Either selection indicates that respondents at least expected to participate in a collaborative relationship with teachers. Only a few respondents (3.3%) saw their role as separate from that of the classroom teacher. For the most part, then, preservice media specialists in this study seemed to understand that teachers and library media specialists must pool their individual and mutual abilities in order to make the collaborative process happen. The data for this question are reported in Table 2.

Table 1  
Perceived Number of Budget Meetings With Principal  
N=91

	Annual	Semi-annual	Monthly
Frequency	38	44	9
Percentage	41.8%	48.4%	9.9%

Table 2  
Instructional Consultant Role of Media Specialist in Relation  
to Classroom Teacher  
N=91

	Complementary	Separate	Interchangeable
Frequency	62	3	26
Percentage	68.1%	3.3%	28.6%

For item 9, respondents were asked whether the main role of the media specialist is one of leadership or support. Although current research literature unequivocally states that leadership is the primary role of the library media specialist and that all other roles are subsumed under the leadership umbrella, 61.3% of the preservice media specialists in this study perceived support to be the primary role of media professionals. Participants in this study may have perceived support as the primary role of the media specialist for a number of reasons. It is possible that inadequate emphasis, in both the university classroom and in textbooks, has been placed on the leadership roles that all practicing library media specialists should expect to fulfill. Approximately 77% of the respondents had previous classroom teaching experience. It is possible that many of these individuals view the media specialist's primary role as one of support because of their own personal past experiences as teachers. Because some 55% of the respondents had only completed up to 25 hours toward their library media degree, it is possible that they had not yet taken courses that specifically addressed the administrative or leadership duties required of practicing library media specialists. Historically, librarians have been viewed as people who "help" others find information. In some states, school library media specialists are eligible for service certificates rather than teaching certificates. It is conceivable that the type of certificate granted to media professionals contributes to how school

Table 3  
Main Role of Library Media Specialist  
N=93

	Leadership	Support	Other
Frequency	27	57	9
Percentage	29.0%	61.3%	9.7%

<sup>a</sup>Respondents who selected this option specified that they perceived the main role of the library media specialist to be equally split between leadership and support.

librarians perceive themselves. Frequencies and percentages for item 9 are presented in Table 3.

Item 10 asked respondents to decide whether the principal or the media specialist is responsible for establishing the overall vision of the media program in a school. Although 91.3% of the respondents in this study believed that the media specialist holds responsibility for establishing a program vision, data also indicated that most preservice media specialists did not fully understand or had not adequately learned the importance of negotiating a budget that supports the development of the media program that they envisioned. Frequency of response and corresponding percentages for item 10 are reported in Table 4.

Answers to the open-ended question that asked respondents why they wanted to become media specialists were analyzed to determine common reasons. Respondents chose the school library profession for a variety of reasons. Enjoyment of books, technology, and information resources were factors that influenced 48.2% of those surveyed. Another 30.1% wished to work with students and teachers in some capacity other than as a classroom teacher. A small percentage (16.9%) wanted to be media specialists because they enjoyed books, literature, and reading. An even smaller percentage (4.8%) simply wanted out of the classroom. For the most part, data indicated that many of the preservice media specialists who participated in this study have chosen the school library profession for realistic reasons. These individuals already have a grasp for the kinds of tasks that their jobs will entail. These results are presented in Table 5.

Items 5 and 7 asked respondents to rank three broad task areas—instruction and collaboration, media center management, and professional involvement—for relative importance and amount of time each expected to spend on these tasks. On item 5, respondents ranked the three task areas for relative importance; on item 7, these same tasks were ranked for the relative amount of time to be spent performing each. Approximately 76% of the respondents perceived collaboration to be a media specialist's most important task; almost as many (60.4%) perceived that collaboration would require most of their time. These findings suggest that the universities participating in this study taught preservice media specialists the importance of instructional consultation and collaboration. It is questionable, though, whether respon-

Table 4  
Responsibility for Establishing Overall Vision of School Media Program  
N=92

	Principal	Media Specialist
Frequency	8	84
Percentage	8.7%	91.3%

Table 5  
Reasons for Choosing Media Profession  
N=83

	Frequency	Percentage
Enjoy books, literature, and reading; want to instill love of literature in students	14	16.9%
Enjoy reading and books; interested in technology and information resources	40	48.2%
Desire to work with teachers and students in a capacity other than as a classroom teacher	25	30.1%
Want out of the classroom	4	4.8%

dents in this study realized the importance of initiating collaborative partnerships, because so many saw themselves as support specialists rather than leaders.

Media center management activities—those daily tasks that include circulation, network maintenance, supervision of staff, cataloging, and administrative duties—were viewed as important to 53.3% of the preservice media specialists surveyed. Approximately 47% believed that media center management would require a moderate amount of their time. However, few of those surveyed perceived professional involvement as a task that justified much importance or time. Although recent literature encourages library media professionals to be involved in teacher staff development, to serve on school improvement and curriculum planning committees, and to demonstrate leadership in learning new technologies, 70.9% of these respondents thought professional involvement was only somewhat important. In addition, 80% believed that professional involvement tasks would require the least amount of their time. These findings are consistent with the data reported in the present study regarding the leadership roles and responsibilities of library media specialists. Because most of these respondents believed that the primary role of a media specialist is one of support rather than leadership, it would appear that preservice media specialists do not understand the impact that professional involvement can have on the media program, nor do they realize how valuable their input can be into matters concerning the total educational program. However, it may be that specific kinds of professional involvement develop over time and with practice. Preservice media specialists may not appreciate the importance of professional involvement activities outside the confines of the media center simply because they are not yet practitioners. Data for these items are reported in Table 6 and Table 7.

Analysis of demographic data indicated that of the 93 respondents, 52.7% wished to find employment as media specialists at the elementary school level, 22% chose the middle school level, and 25.5% chose the high school

Table 6  
Perceived Importance of Major Task Areas  
Frequency/Percentage

	<i>Collaboration</i> <i>N=87</i>	<i>Media Center</i> <i>Management</i> <i>N=86</i>	<i>Professional</i> <i>Involvement</i> <i>N=86</i>
Very Important	66/75.9%	18/20.4%	3/3.5%
Important	18/20.7%	46/53.5%	22/25.6%
Somewhat Important	3/3.4%	22/25.6%	61/70.9%

level. Twenty-three percent of the respondents had no classroom teaching experience, whereas 30.8% had between one and five years. Eighteen respondents (19.8%) had between 6 and 10 years of teaching experience with the remaining 26.4% having between 11 and 16+ years in the classroom. Fifty-five percent of the respondents were in the first 25 hours of their degree program. This would indicate that approximately half had completed up to five courses toward their master's degree in library media services. Another 24% had completed 30 to 45 hours toward their degrees. Six respondents (6.6%) were nearing the end of the degree program with more than 50 hours toward their degrees. The remaining 13 (14.3%) were taking add-on hours for certification as library media specialists because they already had graduate degrees in other areas.

### Discussion and Conclusions

Current literature confirms that library media specialists need to assume active leadership roles in the educational community. Each library media specialist must take the initiative to be involved in curriculum development and design, the teaching-learning process, and teachers' professional growth and development. In addition, library media professionals must establish a vision of media services that provides a full range of information resources for the entire school community. To envision a media program is not enough;

Table 7  
Perceived Time to Be Spent on Major Task Areas  
Frequency/Percentage

	<i>Collaboration</i> <i>N =87</i>	<i>Media Center</i> <i>Management</i> <i>N=86</i>	<i>Professional</i> <i>Involvement</i> <i>N = 86</i>
Most Amount of Time	55/60.4%	34/37.4%	2/2.2%
Moderate Amount of Time	32/35.2%	43/47.3%	16/17.6%
Least Amount of Time	4/4.4%	14/15.4%	73/80.2%



one must possess the leadership skills to make the vision a reality. Chief among the leadership skills and knowledge that should be developed are those relating to budget management and program advocacy. Both areas are critical in media programs that are viewed as viable important components of the school curriculum. Although leadership styles and skills are apt to be developed over time and with practice, preservice media specialists should be required to include leadership courses in their degree programs. Doing so will better prepare new library media specialists to assume leadership roles on entering the profession. In an era of declining budgets, program cutbacks, and increasing accountability, library media specialists cannot afford to carry out the roles and responsibilities of their jobs as either passive activists or merely support specialists. If media specialists and the programs that they administer are to be viewed as integral partners in the teaching-learning process, then preservice media specialists should be prepared to enter the profession expecting to assume leadership roles and responsibilities.

The data from this study indicate that preservice media specialists in the US do value and expect to spend a substantial amount of time engaged in the collaborative process. However, because most of the respondents viewed the primary role of the media specialist to be one of support rather than leadership, it may also follow that many of the preservice media specialists studied do not understand the necessity of initiating or leading collaborative partnerships. Preservice media specialists must be made aware that teachers who have not been taught the collaborative process may be hesitant to engage in it. Therefore, it is recommended that preservice library media specialists be taught to extend themselves as leaders in establishing collaborative partnerships with teachers. Including a beginning leadership course in the program of studies designed for library media specialists is vital. Further, because one person alone cannot meet all the information needs of students, preservice classroom teachers should also be taught how to participate in and initiate collaborative partnerships with library media specialists. Like preservice media specialists, preservice classroom teachers should also be required to take courses designed to teach the collaborative process and leadership skills.

Several opportunities exist for practicing library media specialists and university professors to prepare preservice media specialists cooperatively for the demands of the profession they are about to enter:

1. Experienced media specialists could be invited into the university setting as guest speakers on a variety of topics such as budget management, program vision or goal development, collaborative partnerships, time management, and staff development.
2. Mentoring programs that pair preservice media specialists with experienced library media practitioners throughout a student's degree

program could foster the development of both leadership skills and realistic job expectations.

3. In courses designed to teach preservice educators about collaborative partnerships and techniques, experienced media specialists and classroom teachers could be invited into the university setting to model the collaborative process.
4. If, as the current literature indicates, less practicum time should be spent on media center management duties that are best learned on the job, then university professors and supervising media specialists should work together to ensure that the preservice internship is centered around activities that will provide leadership, collaboration, and professional involvement experiences.

Many of the preservice media specialists who participated in this study have chosen the school library media profession for reasons that include an interest in information resources and technology, as well as a desire to work with teachers and students outside the classroom setting. The choice to enter the library media profession was, for many of those who participated in this study, a career change. The school library media profession can offer individuals job satisfaction if those who pursue it understand that change has become a constant factor. Library media specialists must understand that their jobs require the ability to adjust to continual and often rapid change. As information and technologies continue to change, as the information needs of learners continue to change in relation to the evolving demands of a global workplace, library media specialists can provide leadership in helping colleagues manage change in the educational setting.

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