

Library Media Center Recommendations for the Ohio School Design Manual

by the

Ohio Educational Library Media Association

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School Library Media Center Uses & Activities

The following activities commonly occur in school libraries, and these library uses often occur concurrently.

Instructional Activities

- Librarian instructs whole-class groups, small groups, and individual students in using print and online research resources.
- Librarian instructs whole-class groups on information literacy, reading strategies, research process, bibliographic citations, and effective use of online sources.
- Students participate in “virtual field trips” using Interactive Video Distance Learning (IVDL) equipment.
- Students and staff produce posters, visual aids, display boards, and multimedia projects.

Reading Activities

- Librarian provides reader’s advisory services through whole-class group book talks and by guiding individual book selections.
- Students and staff engage in leisure reading of books, newspapers, and periodicals.
- Read-alouds, storytelling, and language arts extension activities occur regularly in elementary school libraries.
- Students book clubs meet during lunch or after-school to share favorite reads and to discuss current reading selection.

Professional Development

- Librarian conducts staff in-service sessions on library resources, including curriculum-related print materials, electronic resources, computer applications, and equipment-use.

Special Presentations

- Special events are frequently scheduled in the library, including visiting author talks, book fairs, poetry readings, learning lunch, and poetry slams.

School & Community Support Activities

- The following groups schedule before-school and/or after-school meetings in the school library: school staff; parent associations; booster groups; student clubs; and community groups.

Library Management Activities

Materials circulation
Planning w/ teachers
Meetings with vendors

Processing & cataloging acquisitions
Budget-related record-keeping
Equipment storage and check-out

Ordering materials
Inventory

School Library Media Center Recommendations Overview

Excellent school libraries are the result of thoughtful planning and practical design. The following should be standard guidelines for designing new library media centers.

Librarian as Planning-Partner

The Ohio School Facilities Commission should strongly encourage school district administration to actively involve the librarian in the design-planning process. To fully understand and to adequately plan for library functions and uses, school librarians need to be integral members of the facility planning team.

Instruction

The library space must be configured for teaching students -- just as academic classrooms are designed to facilitate instruction. Whiteboards, projection screens, and LCD projectors are not optional; rather, this equipment serves as important instructional delivery tools. Elementary school libraries must have an open, multipurpose space for read-alouds, puppet shows, storytelling, and similar group literacy-building instructional activities.



Library Size

To support school curricula, student instruction, and a core print collection, every library must exceed a certain minimum size. Library design premised solely on building enrollment (e.g., 30 sq.ft. per student) may result in library media centers that do not provide adequate space for curriculum-related instructional activities.

Unobstructed Sight Lines

Usually, a single person supervises all library activity. The reading room should be configured to allow student activities to be viewed from the circulation desk. This includes a view of computer screens and all student seating areas. Under no circumstances should tall shelving be interposed between the circulation desk and areas of student activity.



Lighting/Windows

Control of lighting levels and the ability to darken the reading room for projected presentations is essential. Blinds must be installed on all windows. Without blinds, screen glare may make computers unusable during certain times of the day. "Walls of windows," while aesthetic from the outside, waste space and make light-regulation impossible.

Flexibility

The library space should be as flexible as possible to accommodate changing technologies and school populations. "Excess" electric outlets and network drops should be part of the original construction to avoid future costly remodeling. Book shelving should be installed over carpeting to allow shelving to be moved or to be reconfigured.

Recommendations for Design of Library Media Centers

Library Location

Central placement of the library media center in the academic area of the school is highly desirable.

Reading Room/Circulation

The main room of each school library should have:

- An area designed for whole-class instruction, plus areas for individual and small group activity, arranged so all areas can be concurrently utilized.
- A physical organization that allows the librarian easily to see and to supervise all library activities.
- Adequate shelving for the print collection as determined by the library media specialist. The shelving requirements will vary based upon grade levels, school enrollment, and anticipated growth of the print collection.
- Comfortable seating areas for leisure reading of books, newspapers, and periodicals.



Shelving

- Shelving height should be age-appropriate. Although full-size shelving is preferred in a middle school library or a high school library, full-size shelving should be avoided or minimized in an elementary library media center.
- Shelving should be moveable to allow future space reconfiguration; always install shelving over the carpeting.
- To avoid blocking sight lines, book shelving located around the perimeter walls is highly recommended.

Student Instruction

- The library is a classroom and there must be sufficient space for whole-class instruction.
- The instructional space must include sufficient student seating, whiteboard, projection screen, and video port/network drop for a projector.
- Also, there should be additional areas for students to work individually and in small groups concurrently with whole-class instruction.
 - Elementary school libraries must have multipurpose space -- perhaps designed with steps/platform -- for read-alouds, storytelling, and similar group instructional activities.
 - If intended primarily for library research and instruction, librarians may want the computer lab incorporated into the reading room, rather than being a separate walled-in space.



Physical Configuration

- The location of the circulation desk must provide a clear view of the entire library, especially seating areas, computers, and doors.
- To the extent possible, all computer screens should face the circulation desk.
- “Excess” electric outlets and network drops should be installed to permit future reconfiguration due to technology and enrollment changes. Similarly, provide “excess” capacity in wire/cable channels to accommodate fiber and/or other future upgrades.
- Although natural light is welcome, there must be full control of natural and artificial lighting. Windows and skylights must be equipped with blinds, to darken the reading/circulation room and/or computer area for projected presentations and to prevent glare on computer screens.
- Avoid “walls of windows” because they consume valuable space, negatively affect temperature control, and make it impossible (or expensive) to regulate the light.



Circulation Desk



- Desk height should be age-appropriate, i.e., the circulation desk in an elementary school should be lower than in a high school.
- To be ADA compliant, the desk must have a low section to accommodate students in wheelchairs.
- The desk should not be so long that it inhibits librarian movement and becomes a barrier between the librarian and students; an overly long circulation desk is not needed nor desired.

Media Specialist Office

An office space for the librarian is necessary and should include:

- Direct access to the reading room;
- A window/glass wall with a clear view into the reading room to allow monitoring of student activity;
- Work surface, bookcases, and lots of storage;
- Direct access to the workroom is a plus.
- As an option, the librarian may wish to combine the office with the workroom.

Workroom/Storage

A workroom for processing print materials and other library management tasks is essential and should:

- Be adjacent to the reading room – window to view the reading room is a plus;
- Include large work area, either a table or a fixed work surface;
- Be large enough to permit the use of multiple book carts/trucks;
- Contain bookcases and as much storage as feasible;
- May have equipment (e.g., photocopier) for use by building faculty, thus encouraging interaction between teachers and library staff.



Main Control/Equipment Room

If included, this room should be constructed to permit future reconfiguration and/or addition of new technologies.

AV Storage

Secure storage for audio-visual equipment and mobile computers (e.g. laptops) is essential. The AV storage room should:

- Be contiguous to the library media center;
- Contain open shelving sized for a variety of equipment and video/DVD collections;
- Have sufficient floor space for storage of equipment carts;
- Not include a desk and chair.

Multimedia Production Room

- As an option, a librarian may want this activity to be part of the reading room, where students can be better supervised.
- Many librarians would prefer a multimedia production area to be a separate walled room. There should be a window through which the librarian can view student activity.
- The production room must have cabinet and counter space, but not necessarily bookshelves.

Document Storage

With online availability of newspaper and periodical archives, there is less need for document storage.

- As an option, incorporate additional shelving or other document storage space in the workroom.

Conference Room

A conference room, *per se*, is not integral to most school library programs.

- Instead of a conference room, construct two or more smaller study rooms to allow groups of students to study/work together. Doors to these study rooms should have windows to allow monitoring of student activity.
- If the conference room is to be used primarily for non-library school functions, add a hallway door, so the room can be entered without going through the library reading room.

Computer Lab

- If intended primarily for library research and instruction, librarians may want the computer lab incorporated into the reading room, rather than being a separate walled-in room.
- If intended for significant non-library activities, add a hallway door, so the room can be entered without going through the library reading room.

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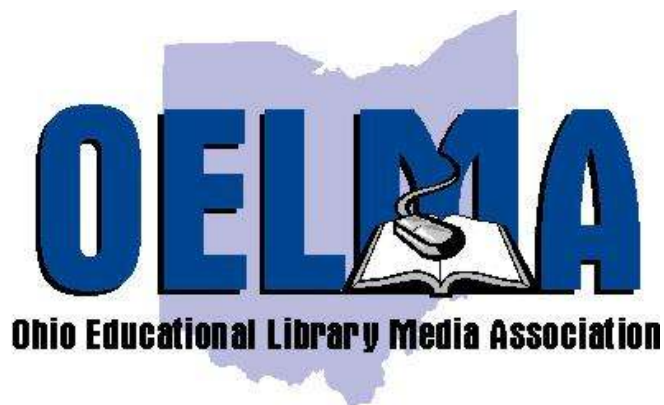
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OELMA is a professional organization dedicated to educational, literary and technological excellence in library/media services in Ohio's schools. We are the educators who link students, teachers, and other members of the learning community to the world of information by:

- teaching students to become information literate and lifelong learners;
- working in collaborative partnerships to meet individual needs;
- providing access to information resources and technology.

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