

Bridging Educational Silos: Exploring Professional Learning Opportunities through Academic Library-P12 Partnerships

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Introduction

- The impetus to explore academic library/public-school partnerships in our study was the passage of New Jersey's law requiring information literacy standards for P-12 students and P-12 educators (State of New Jersey, 2023) and how academic librarians might be able to provide P-12 public school educators with professional development specific to information literacy and other areas, including EdTech.
- Academic libraries and P-12 schools serve overlapping missions but often operate in silos.
- Partnerships can enhance equity, access, & instructional quality.
- Virtual platforms and state-level mandates create new opportunities for collaboration.

Purpose

1. To explore how academic library/public-school partnerships can support professional development & learning for P12 educators.
2. To examine stakeholder perceptions & identify strategic, logistical, & financial considerations for sustainable collaborations.

Research Questions

1. How do superintendents and academic library administrators perceive PDL opportunities through partnerships?
2. How can P12 educators benefit from academic librarian led PDL?
3. How can academic libraries benefit from these partnerships?

Theoretical Framework

Weick's Sensemaking Theory (1995)

- Explains how educational leaders interpret ambiguous policy shifts.
- Highlights identity transformation - academic librarians as regional education leaders.
- Emphasizes enactment, where leaders shape their organizations through strategic action.

Literature Review

1. Academic Library–P-12 Partnerships
2. Effective Professional Development & Learning (PDL)
3. Information Literacy (IL) in P-12 Education
4. Educational Technology (EdTech)

Literature Review

Academic Library–P12 Partnerships

- Historically focused on information literacy (IL) instruction and college readiness.
- Successful New Jersey models include statewide library organizational collaborations (Marks Jr. et al., 2023) and virtual outreach through professional development for P-12 educators on information literacy (Grimes & Marks Jr., 2024).

Literature Review

Effective Professional Development & Learning (PDL)

- High-quality PDL: content focus, active learning, coherence, duration, and collective participation.
- Job-embedded PDL and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) foster sustained instructional improvement.

Literature Review

Information Literacy (IL) in P-12 Education

- IL, defined by ACRL, is the ability to "recognize when information is needed and to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information," is critical for developing 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and digital literacy (ACRL, 2016).
- P-12 educators play a crucial role in equipping students with IL skills, yet many feel underprepared to teach these competencies.
- The importance of IL in P-12 education has become increasingly evident as students are required to navigate complex information landscapes in academic and real-world contexts.

Literature Review

Educational Technology (EdTech)

- PDL in EdTech supports innovation and addresses digital equity.
- Academic librarians offer expertise in AI, immersive tech, and digital learning tools.
- Grimes & Porter (2024) argue that libraries and librarians play a critical role in ensuring equitable access to technology and training through digital equity, thereby addressing systemic inequalities.

Methods

- Qualitative exploratory case study design
- 60 participants - 28 academic library administrators & 32 public school superintendents
- Questionnaires with all participants, and 7 semi-structured individual interviews
- Thematic coding and descriptive analysis to identify patterns and perspectives

Findings

RQ1: How do superintendents and academic library administrators perceive PDL opportunities through partnerships?

- Strong interest, but few formal partnerships
- ALA: See partnerships as mission-aligned
- PSS: See value for curriculum support; want structured proposals & strategic alignment
- Shared barriers: Staffing, communication gaps, lack of formal frameworks.

Findings

RQ2: How can public school educators benefit from academic librarian-led PDL?

- Instructional gains: IL, EdTech, project-based learning, evidence-based writing
- Flexible formats: Virtual, in-person, hybrid
- High demand for certification programs to build educator capacity

Findings

RQ3: How can academic libraries benefit from these partnerships?

- Strategic impact: expanded roles, increased visibility, alignment with state goals
- Long-term value: Stronger ties with future students & educators
- Preferred model: Pay-per-session PDL; scalable & budget-friendly

Conclusion and Implications

- Shared mutual interest and complementary strengths
- Effective partnerships require structured outreach, strategic alignment, & flexible financial models
- In practice: Develop clear proposals, designate liaisons, & offer scalable PDL formats
- Next steps: Explore long-term impacts, cross-state comparisons, & institutional readiness
- Our research study will be published in the peer-reviewed and Open Access journal, *School-University Partnerships*.

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