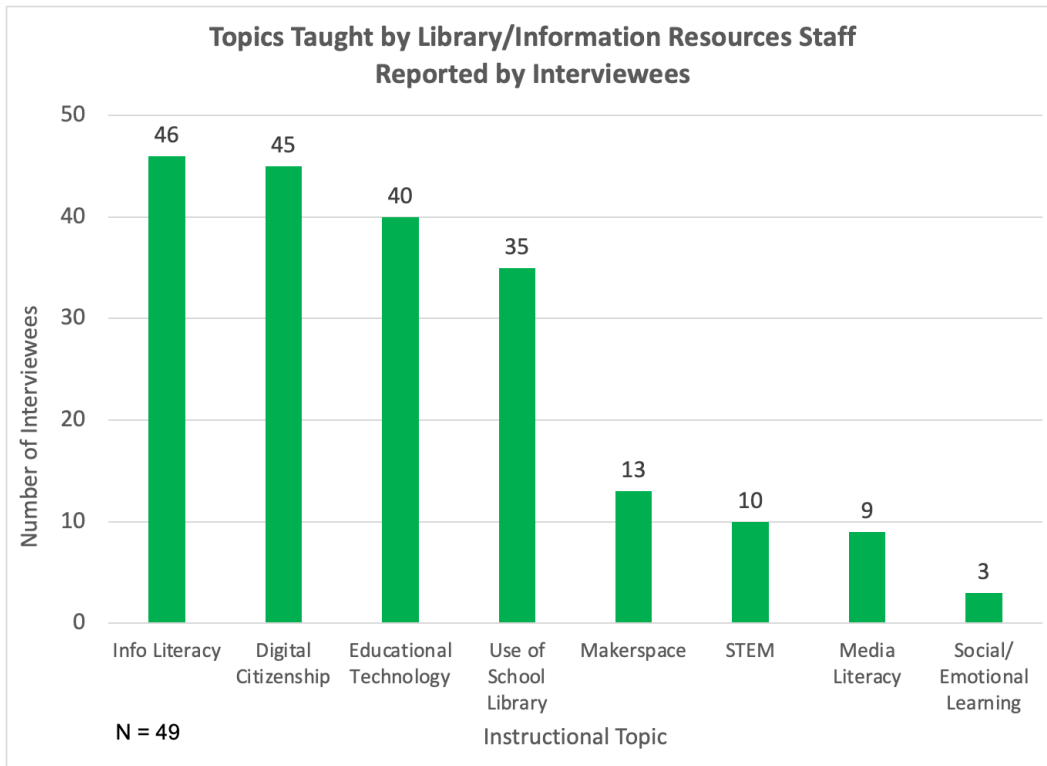


Voices of Decision-Makers
How District & School Leaders Decide About School Librarian Employment

Instruction Topics

The first substantial question in the interview of each school leader concerned what library/information resources topics were taught in their schools. As information literacy, digital citizenship, educational technology or technology education, and use of the school library were examples mentioned in the question itself, it is unsurprising that those four instruction topics were the ones most frequently mentioned by interviewees. Additional topics identified by interviewees included makerspace, STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math), media literacy, and social/emotional learning. (See Chart 2.)

Chart 2.



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Co-occurrence of Instructional Topics

The larger context of library and information resources-related topics is clearer when one considers which of the most frequently mentioned curricular topics coincided with each other, and how those concurrent topics varied between interviewees who reported adding school librarians and those who reported reducing, eliminating, combining, or reclassifying them. Among the 28 interviewees who added or restored librarians⁵, the instructional topics—in rank order—were information literacy, digital citizenship, educational technology, and use of the school library. Generally, a substantial proportion of both groups of interviewees indicated that these instructional topics tend to be taught together. It is noteworthy, though, that, whatever the interviewee’s decision about school librarian staffing, use of the school library was the least frequently mentioned instructional topic in the area of library and information resources of the four reported most frequently. The implication of these findings is that information literacy, digital citizenship, and educational technology were taught apart from use of the school library in some districts or use of the school library was not regarded as an instructional topic. (See Tables 10 and 11.)

Table 10. Co-occurrence of Instructional Topics Taught Reported by Interviewees Who Added or Restored School Librarians

Instruction Topic	Information Literacy	Digital Citizenship	Educational Technology	Use of School Library
Information Literacy	27			
Digital Citizenship	25	25		
Educational Technology	23	21	24	
Use of School Library	22	21	20	22

Note: The bold number in the gray diagonal is the number of interviewees in this group who identified that topic of instruction. Others reflect the number of interviewees identifying the topics in the intersecting rows and columns. N=28

Table 11. Co-occurrence of Instructional Topics Taught Reported by Interviewees Who Reduced, Eliminated, Combined or Reclassified School Librarians

Instruction Topic	Information Literacy	Digital Citizenship	Educational Technology	Use of School Library
Digital Citizenship	27			
Information Literacy	25	25		
Educational Technology	23	21	24	
Use of School Library	22	21	20	16

N=26

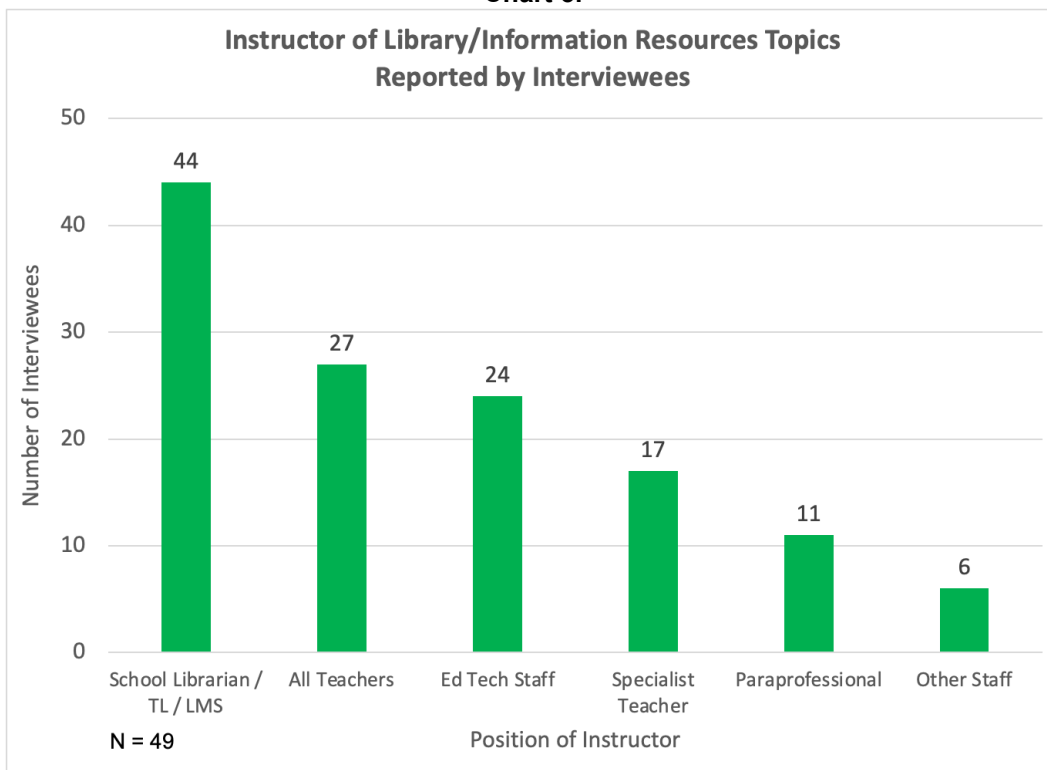
⁵ These 28 interviewees include 23 who only added or restored librarians plus four who both added or restored and reduced, eliminated, combined, or reclassified positions.

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Instructors of Library / Information Resources Topics

When interviewees were asked who taught the topic or topics they identified, by far the most frequent response (44) was a school librarian, teacher librarian, library media specialist, or the like. This included three interviewees who reported combined librarian/educational technology positions. That was not, however, the only position identified as addressing these instructional topics. Slightly more interviewees (27) reported that all teachers taught the identified topics than reported that educational technology staff (24) taught those topics. Smaller numbers of interviewees reported that such teaching was done by specialist teachers (17), paraprofessionals (11), or other staff (6). (See Chart 3.)

Chart 3.



Voices of Decision-Makers
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Instructional Topic & Instructor

The “disconnect” for some interviewees between teaching use of the school library and teaching other instructional topics related to information resources—specifically, information literacy, digital citizenship, and educational technology—makes the responses of the interviewees about who teaches those topics even more interesting. (See Tables 12 and 13.)

Almost all of the interviewees who made positive decisions about school librarian jobs identified them as teachers of those four inter-related topics. Indeed, school librarians were the most frequently mentioned instructors on those topics among all interviewees, whether they made positive or negative decisions about librarian jobs. In the case of those who made positive decisions, school librarians were identified as instructors on those topics twice as often or more than the nearest other type of instructor—all teachers.

Notably, other instructor types—particularly all teachers and educational technology staff—were also mentioned as having responsibility for teaching these library/information resources topics. And, unsurprisingly, those instructor types—along with specialist teachers—were more frequently mentioned by interviewees who reduced, eliminated, combined, or reclassified school librarians.

While school librarians generally acknowledge that teaching such topics effectively requires their collaboration with other specialists as well as classroom teachers, these findings suggest that, where school librarian positions have been added or restored, many school leaders expect the school librarian to teach these topics without collegial support. As for school leaders who decided to reduce, eliminate, combine, or reclassify library jobs, far more of them indicated expecting other specialists and classroom teachers to at least share in teaching these topics. Perhaps this finding reflects the decision-maker’s recognition that a librarian whose hours have been reduced—in whatever way—cannot be expected to teach information-related topics as effectively as they might have done previously without the support of other teaching colleagues.

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Table 12. Instructional Topic by Instructor Reported by Interviewees Who Added or Restored School Librarians

Instructor	Instructional Topic			
	Information Literacy	Digital Citizenship	Educational Technology	Use of School Library
School Librarian*	27	25	25	24
All Teachers	13	13	10	11
Educational Technology Staff	11	11	9	11
Specialist Teachers	6	6	7	6
Paraprofessionals	7	7	6	7

* School Librarian category includes combined School Librarian/Educational Technology Staff positions.
 N=28

Table 13. Instructional Topic by Instructor Reported by Interviewees Who Reduced, Eliminated, Combined or Reclassified School Librarians

Instructor	Instructional Topic			
	Digital Citizenship	Information Literacy	Educational Technology	Use of School Library
School Librarian*	19	19	17	15
All Teachers	17	15	15	10
Educational Technology Staff	14	14	12	9
Specialist Teachers	11	9	10	6
Paraprofessionals	5	5	4	4

* School Librarian category does not include combined School Librarian/Educational Technology Staff positions as no such positions were reported by any of these interviewees.
 N=26