

# The Use of Microcomputers for Administrative Purposes by Public School Library Media Coordinators in North Carolina

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*In 1984, NCASL created a special committee whose purpose was to acknowledge library media coordinators' skills and expertise while responding to their interests in pursuing new ideas and projects. The committee now grants financial awards annually in support of its members' research projects that provide for professional growth, improve media program effectiveness, and enhance student learning. The first research grants were presented at the NCASL Work Conference in October 1984 to Carol F. Hall and Evangeline M. Freeman. The first to share her findings with the North Carolina Libraries readership, Carol F. Hall reports on her study of North Carolina's use of microcomputers for school library administration.*

*Applications for the 1986 grants are available from Beth Rountree, Thompson Staff Development Center, 428 West Boulevard, Charlotte, NC 28203.*

Beth Rountree, Chairman  
NCASL Research Grants Committee

With the introduction of microcomputers into the marketplace in 1976, their potential for use by school library media coordinators has increased to the point of becoming almost essential in the administration of the school media center. (For this report, the term "school media center" refers to school libraries as well as media centers; "school media coordinators" refers to school librarians and media coordinators.) Microcomputers have the capability to assist school media coordinators in performing administrative tasks such as circulation, acquisitions, cataloging, inventory, and overdues, thus providing more time for them to perform other services. For instance, using microcomputers to produce overdue notices may result in a savings of ninety per

cent of clerical time normally used for this task.<sup>1</sup>

With the introduction of the microcomputer, even the smallest school media centers are in a position to take advantage of computer technology.<sup>2</sup> In a time of seemingly increasing responsibilities for media coordinators in the management and utilization of information and technology as well as a reduction of staff and diminishing resources, media coordinators are deciding to automate.<sup>3</sup>

This research investigated the use of microcomputers by school media coordinators in North Carolina for administrative purposes in an attempt to find out if school media coordinators in North Carolina have been utilizing this new technology in the administration of their school media centers.

The author studied the prevalence of use of microcomputers by media coordinators in the school media centers in North Carolina, and the role media coordinators play in the selection of microcomputers, the sources of funding and the training and preparation for use of microcomputers received by media coordinators in North Carolina.

## Methodology

Survey methodology was utilized to implement this study. The survey instrument used to gather the primary data needed was a mail questionnaire. A ten per cent sample of 200 public schools was chosen from the 2,011 schools listed in the *North Carolina Education Directory*, 1983-84. For the process of sample selection, random numbers were generated using a function of the *Statistical Analysis System* (SAS). A questionnaire with a self-addressed, stamped envelope was mailed to the media coordinator in each school in the sample. Of the 200 questionnaires sent out, 143 were returned for a response of 71.5 per cent. The completed questionnaires were

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edited, coded and entered in the computer for analysis using the *Statistical Analysis System* (SAS).

### Summary of Findings

The median number of microcomputers in this sample of public schools in North Carolina is 6 and the mean number of microcomputers is 9.6. Senior high schools have the largest number of microcomputers while junior high/middle schools have more microcomputers than elementary schools. The larger the school is the more microcomputers it has. The number of microcomputers in the schools may have increased since the questionnaires were filled out due to funding recently provided by the North Carolina Legislature to school districts in the state to purchase microcomputers.

The median number of microcomputers in school media centers in North Carolina is one and the mean is two. In contrast to the total number of microcomputers in the school, senior high schools have fewer microcomputers in the media center than do junior high/middle and elementary schools. Media centers in larger schools have more microcomputers than media centers in the smaller schools. Again, this number may also have increased since the questionnaires were filled out due to the funding by the Legislature.

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## Media coordinators have not been actively involved in the selection and purchase of microcomputers ....

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Most of the school media coordinators (70.3 per cent) have a microcomputer readily available to them, but only 22.5 per cent of the media coordinators use a microcomputer for school/media center administrative tasks. Junior high/middle school media coordinators (43.3 per cent) use the microcomputer more for media center administration than do elementary (6.9 per cent) and senior high school (36 per cent) media coordinators. The reason given by most coordinators (35.6 per cent) for not using a microcomputer for media center administration was either "inappropriate" or "no software".

The greatest use of microcomputers for media center administration is for overdue notices (61.3 per cent), followed by their use for library instruction (35.5 per cent) and then followed by equal amounts of use (22.6 per cent) for circulation,

audio-visual inventory and equipment inventory. Microcomputers are used least for processing (12.9 per cent), bibliographies (12.9 per cent), order files (9.7 per cent), ordering (6.5 per cent) and equally 3.2 per cent for periodical control, library reports, word processing and supplementary book inventory.

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## Using microcomputers to produce overdue notices may result in a savings of ninety per cent of clerical time ....

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Overall, media coordinators indicated a total of thirty-two different software programs being used for media center administration. In several cases there were as many as eleven different software programs being used for the same task by different media coordinators in the sample.

The most predominant use of microcomputers located elsewhere in the school is for classroom instruction. Microcomputers are used to a lesser degree in the schools for generation of instruction materials and for school office administration.

A large number of media coordinators (70.8 per cent) plan to obtain microcomputers and seventy-five per cent of the media coordinators plan to use them for media center administration.

The findings indicate that media coordinators have not been actively involved in the selection and purchase of microcomputers in the school and even in the media centers. This fact is interesting since media coordinators usually have the responsibility of selecting audio visual equipment in the schools.

There was no large difference in funding sources for microcomputers in the schools. Forty per cent of the media coordinators reported that their schools purchased microcomputers with state funds, 30.7 per cent with local funds and 24.7 per cent with federal funds. Findings were very similar for funding used to purchase microcomputers located in the media centers with 36.2 per cent reporting use of local funds, 33.3 per cent reporting use of state funds, and 26.6 per cent reporting use of federal funds.

Most school media coordinators in the state have received some training and are familiar with the general use of microcomputers, but less than half of the media coordinators have received training in the use of microcomputers for media center administration.

The findings indicate that a large number (71.4 per cent) of school media coordinators in North Carolina need further training in the general use of microcomputers and (91.7 per cent) for school media center administration. The study shows that most of the media coordinators (92.6 per cent) would participate in a workshop or course on the use of microcomputers for school media center administration if one were offered.

#### References

1. Blanche Woolls, and others, *The Use of Technology in the Administrative Function of School Library Media Programs* (Fayetteville, AR: Hi Willow Research and Publishing, 1983), ii.
2. Betty Costa and Marie Costa, *A Micro Handbook for Small Libraries and Media Centers* (Littleton, Colorado: Libraries Unlimited, 1983), 20.
3. Mark R. Rorvig, *Microcomputers and Libraries: A Guide to Technology, Products and Applications* (White Plains, NY: Knowledge Industry Publications, 1981), 171.

This article was extracted from the report, "A Study of the Use of Microcomputers for School Library Media Center Administration by Public School Library Media Coordinators in North Carolina." Copies of the full report can be obtained through the School of Library and Information Science, N.C. Central University, Durham, NC.



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