

Librarians help students navigate an age of misinformation – but schools are cutting their numbers | The Conversation

By Karen W. Gavigan

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School librarians hear the question all the time: Why do we need school libraries and school librarians when students have the internet?

The perception is that a computer and Wi-Fi are all students need for their informational and recreational needs.

Meanwhile, the number of school librarians in the U.S. has dropped about 20% over the past decade, according to a July 2021 study funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services. Many states, including Arizona, Texas and Pennsylvania, do not fund or mandate school librarian positions. And an analysis from the National Center for Education Statistics revealed that Hispanic, nonwhite and nonnative English speakers are the students most affected by the decline in librarian positions.

“Access to school librarians has become a major educational equity issue,” says Keith Curry Lance, who with Debra Kachel led the IMLS study. In a recent email he told me, “School districts losing librarians tend to be ones that can least afford the loss in a society characterized by increasing economic inequality.”

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