Media, Technology and the School Library

The Value of the School Library Media Center

Several recent studies, including reports by the American Library Association and the state of Illinois, concluded that strong school libraries (called "school library media centers" in the professional literature) impact student learning and even test scores. Over 60 state studies have supported this, concluding that with adequately staffed and trained library media specialists, the school library will positively impact student learning, inspire literacy, and contribute to better grades and higher scores on standardized tests.

New research, programs, pedagogy and ideas are already developing, and should serve as background, encouragement and inspiration for Great Campus. We envision instruction in the school library media center that compliments classroom learning; activities that use the library to promote civic engagement and social justice; and programs that foster community building and partnerships. The media center will incorporate and support other innovative aspects planned for the Great Campus, as well, such as its community gardens and theater.

Services, Programs & Instruction

The school media program should be one that promotes literacy and the gaining of foundational research skills. A strong emphasis should be on teaching students to use the library media center as this is seen as a central pillar to promote equitable and beneficial student learning and enrichment.

School libraries provide students with reference and referral services, along with instruction in the use of information resources and technology. At the most basic level, the school library supports the students' learning experience because it helps students learn how to find and evaluate information, in a wide variety of formats, both within and beyond the library's walls. Reference services in school settings help students learn how to locate facts, critically assess the information they find, and conduct more in-depth research. Referral services help students connect with people who may have information, expertise, and skills that are called for in school activities. In the Great Campus, community referral can be a very important part of students' learning experience. One library in Scandinavia even allowed its clients to check out people, in addition to books! Community input and participation can give students a direct and compelling connection with the larger world beyond the school's walls, especially with the diversity and richness of the population of Champaign-Urbana. The library media center could be the home for community displays and events; host storytellers, oral historians, and community residents who can bring family and local narratives into the school; and provide studio space for local artists, musicians, and craftsmen who can share their knowledge and work with students and others in an informal, ongoing manner.

School media center programs should actively gain the participation of everyone connected to the Great Campus, such as parent groups, literacy specialists, and

volunteers. In addition to standard fare such as active involvement in schoolwide programs such as African American History Month and Women's History Month, the school library media center could develop more innovative ways of linking people around shared interests and needs. For example, the library could host: a lunchtime reading activity for parents and toddlers; an evening group whose members could utilize books, magazines, videos and computer software to prepare a community garden design; or Friday evening poetry cafes for youth.

A critical role for the media center is to support the ability of students to become creators of information in the community, not just consumers. Examples of innovative programs include The Youth Action Research Institute in Hartford and the WILL Youth Media Workshop in Champaign-Urbana, programs that involve students in defining, researching and critically analyzing the challenges facing their neighborhoods, and developing local assets. In these projects, young people learn participatory action research methods and digital media production to better understand their surrounding community and promote social change. Similar projects are also part of the learning environment at the Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos High School in Chicago, with its mottos "The community *is* the curriculum," and "Live and help others to live."

School Library Facilities

Space, and the design of facilities, is important in a library media center, from bookshelf layout to lighting and furniture. Especially in an elementary school setting, the library needs to be an inviting, comfortable and secure. There are special ergonomic and technological needs of children that also need to be addressed in planning the media center.

Collection Development

What makes up the media center? Because Great Campus is a unique school with a diverse student body, the collection will need to be unique and diverse as well. The media center will provide a high-quality, up-to-date collection that reflects the *needs* of both those within the immediate school environment (students, teachers, staff) and the surrounding community, as well as the *goals and ethos* of the Great Campus.

Foreign language materials, high interest/low literacy books, high interest/high literacy books, multicultural fiction and non-fiction, as well as materials that inspire and support literacy, community-based activities, and social justice will be included. There should also be a collection to support teacher development.

It is imperative that the librarian has a collection policy that deals with issues such as censorship, gifts and selection criteria. A strong policy is the basic tool that provides students with exposure to excellent and appropriate literature and media that, in turn, ensures that students are stimulated and that critical reading skills are developed.

School Library Media Specialist

The librarian will need to have an accredited Masters of Library Science degree, but also a specific vision, energy and dedication. The Great Campus needs a library media specialist who will bring creativity into the school, a strong commitment to equity and excellence, the ability to form effective collaborative relationships both in the school and in the community, and excellent teaching and communication skills. Of critical importance will be the librarian's ability to form effective collaborative relationships as a teaching partner who plays an active role in developing, implementing, and assessing the school's curriculum, as well as library's own program of instruction. In recognition of the critical role librarians should play in all aspects of learning, they are sometimes referred to as "teacher librarians."

Technology Plan

The library uses technology in automating its own services, such as checking out materials and providing an online library catalog. The Great Campus library media center will also use technology to provide access to the Internet and its resources, to create and communicate a wide variety of information and knowledge, and to support all of its programs and services that are enhanced through technology. The school should, from its inception, formulate a long-term technology plan as studies show that technology greatly enhances students learning if it is carefully selected, implemented, and utilized. The technology plan should be revised regularly so that the media center's resources remain relevant to student learning.

What is a technology plan? According to Toth Bucher in the book *Information Technology For Schools*, a formal technology plan guides the purchase and use of technology, including hardware (cables, computers and other such items), software (interactive games, etc.), and electronic resources such as CD ROMs. The technology plan should involve school district personnel, community members, classroom teachers and media specialists, etc. -- the common value held by all of those involved in developing the technology plan should be an interest in equitable and meaningful outcomes associated with technology use.

Recommendations for further research related to the Great Campus School Library Media Center

Key points from research include a review of the professional literature, interviews with local librarians, and discussions with UI faculty and others with special expertise. Additional research that would be useful includes:

- Conduct more interviews with teacher librarians that would generate a wish list of the resources that a professional would need to make an ideal library for supporting equitable and excellent student learning.

- Seek to develop an "asset map" or directory of resources in the North Champaign community. The directory could include information on the skilled individuals in

the community, such as caterers, the storytellers and the historians. It could also include the talents, skills, knowledge and other assets of parents of students who attend Great Campus.

- Identify practical ways in which the school library media center can involve the community in student learning, the development of self-esteem, and a commitment to civic involvement and social justice.

- Compile a list of financial grants that the school library media specialist can apply for, with an emphasis on diversity-- meaning grants that would specifically give financial aid to supply the necessary software and hardware and other resources that would facilitate a diversity of students' learning and their use of information technology.

Key Resources

Harris, Frances Jacobson. (2005). *I found it on the Internet: Coming of age online*. Chicago: American Library Association.

A thoughtful and useful book, written by Frances Harris, Librarian and Associate Professor at University Laboratory High School.

Kaptizke, C. & Bruce, B. C. (2006). *Libr@ries: Changing information space and practice*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

The book examines how libraries are changing as they incorporate the @ (representing digital technologies). The central question concerns how traditional libraries are not being supplanted by digital ones, but rather incorporating them within their histories and traditional value systems.

Bruce, B. C. (Editor). (2003). *Literacy in the Information Age: Inquiries into meaning making with new technologies*. International Reading Association.

An edited collection by UI professor Chip Bruce, the book provides an overview of the concept of community inquiry he has spearheaded in numerous campus and community projects. From the IRA's website: "If you are tired of how-to manuals that simply celebrate the many new technologies available for classroom use, this is the book for you. The collection of 32 columns from the Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy examines critical aspects of literacy in the information age, focusing on the complex issues surrounding new learning technologies, such as credibility, access, and privacy. Educators of elementary-grade through college students will gain a thorough understanding of what new media and tools mean for teaching, learning, and literacy development."

American Association of School Librarians (AASL) Resource Guides for School Library Media Program Development
http://www.ala.org/aaslTemplate.cfm?Section=resourceguides&Template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=14760

Numerous reports, papers and websites, including state-by-state guides that link great school library media centers with positive student achievement.

AASL's Resource Guides for Collection Development
http://www.ala.org/aaslTemplate.cfm?Section=resourceguides&Template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=14819
Contains many resources on booklists, how to chose a collection, weeding a collection, etc. Of special interest may be:

- Yokota, Junko, ed., and others. *Kaleidoscope: A Multicultural Booklist for Grades K-8*. 3rd ed. Urbana, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 2001.

- Public Education Network and American Association of School Librarians. *The Information-Powered School*. Edited by Sandra Hughes-Hassell and Anne Wheelock. Chicago: American Library Association, 2001.

AASL's *Information Power* Books and Products
http://www.ala.org/ala/aasl/aaslpubsandjournals/informationpowerbook/informationpowerbooks.htm

"Information Power: Building Partnerships for Learning includes the Information Literacy Standards for Student Learning that will help students become skillful producers and consumers of information along with the guidelines and principles that will help you create a dynamic, student-centered program. The books' underlying concepts will guide you in:
- Helping students flourish in a learning community not limited by time, place, age, occupation or disciplinary borders
- Joining teachers and others to identify links in student information needs, curricular content, learning outcomes, and a variety of print and non-print recourses
- Designing authentic learning tasks and assessments
- Defining your role in student learning."

Baltimore County Public Schools Selection Criteria for School Library Media Center Collections
http://www.bcps.org/offices/lis/office/admin/selection.html

This is a website from the Baltimore County Schools on selecting resources for a library that support their vision of intellectual freedom. Provides dozens of recommended resources for further research and forms for teachers and administrators in selecting materials.

Lesley University Library Multicultural Resources
http://www.lesley.edu/library/guides/research/multicultural.html

This is an interesting website that has links to resources that may want to be included in the library. It also has instruction guides. In addition, it has links for further information. Also provides websites and information to other libraries with similar goals, such as The Community Change Library in Boston and toolkits for teaching Black History Month.

Latrobe, Kathy Howard, & Laughlin, Mildred Knight. (1992). *Multicultural aspects of Library media programs.* Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited. 217 p.

This collection of essays offers diverse perspectives on multicultural issues in the library media center, including how to meet multicultural needs, and other essays on collection development.

Curriculum Issues for School Library Media Specialists
http://www.utm.edu/staff/jimnance/curriculum/reading01.htm

A collection of e-books and articles there were prepared for a course on issues facing school library media specialists. Includes resources for materials, classroom activities, evaluating the library and creating partnerships.

School Library Journal Curriculum Connections
http://www.schoollibraryjournal.com/community/Curriculum+Connection/47086.html

We recommend that the school media specialist follow this website, or subscribe to the journal. While it is mostly traditional in its curriculum, it does have some innovative ideas and projects.

Teachers and Librarians: Collaborative Relationships by Shayne Russell
http://www.libraryinstruction.com/teachers.html

This website explains why collaboration is important and includes a clear definition of collaboration. Further insights (though not comprehensive) are provided about the conditions favorable to collaborative partnerships.

Washington Library Media Association. Working Together for Student Success on the Social Studies CBAs.
http://www.wlma.org/admin/editor/assets/cbas/ospi_collaboration.ppt

The teacher librarian and the classroom teacher should be working together. This PowerPoint presentation offers a practical example of a partnership stating what librarians contribute to partnerships in this case social studies. There is a graphical representation of the levels of collaborative relationships and a model for partnerships.

Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records. Collection Policy Development - Websites
http://www.lib.az.us/cdt/colldev.htm

This website gives an overview of the purpose and elements of a collection development policy and how to write one. The information is comprehensive and gives clear practical advice.

ACQWEB's is a directory of Collection Development Policies on the Web
http://acqweb.org/cd_policy.html

At present there are 10 schools listed. There are samples of school policies, and guidelines for collection development policy writing.

Multimedia Seeds: Audio Video Collections in Schools and Libraries
http://eduscapes.com/seeds/

A website for an online course offered by Indiana University that includes bibliographies and other resources.

Morton Grove Public Library's Collection Development and Materials Selection Policy
http://www.webrary.org/inside/colldevselproc.html#selguide

This website gives general information about collection development and materials selection. Illustrates what reference tools should be used.

School Library Association of Queensland (Australia). Policy Writing for Teacher Librarians
http://www.slaq.org.au/SubCommittees/Murrumba/PD/collection.htm

Explains why a policy is important and gives the elements that must be included. It speaks directly to the teacher librarian's role in developing library policies.

Hart, Thomas L. (2006). *The School library media facilities planner.* NY: Neal-Schuman Publishers.

Gives an introduction to planning the school library, calls the facilities "the key element" in a quality school library program. Complete with dozens of figures and examples. Provide "how-to" guides (e.g., selecting furniture) and samples of planning documents. Includes a glossary of terms, and DVD.

National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities. Library and Media Center Facilities Design: K-12
http://www.edfacilities.org/rl/libraries.cfm

NCEF's resource list of links, books, and journal articles on the design and planning of K-12 school libraries, including sample city and state guidelines, and resources on technology requirements.

The Illinois Technology Plan Online
http://www.op97.k12.il.us/tech/D97_tech_plan.pdf

Discusses the attributes and challenges of the district/school and community; one of the challenges is the issue of diversity that a school may face, however, an attribute that stood out is that of 'highly involved parents and [a] supportive community.'

North Central Regional Educational Laboratory. Critical Issue: Developing a School or District Technology Plan
http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/methods/technlgy/te300.htm

This website states some issues that must be taken into account if the benefits of integrating technology into the curricula are to be realized. Additionally, a framework is given for how to develop a technology plan.

Illinois State Board of Education Work Study Session II. (Sept. 20, 2000). Agenda topic: Evaluating the use of technology in Illinois public schools: Final report.
http://www.isbe.state.il.us/board/meetings/septmeeting/92000Technology%20in%20Illin ois%20Schools.doc

Gives insight into how The Board of Education is seeking to increase the quantity and quality of student and educator access to online resources. There is a K-12 technology plan and recommendations. In addition, the general ISBE website also reports on the results of numerous initiatives.

Universal Service Administrative Company
http://www.usac.org/sl/applicants/step02/

This website deals with developing a technology plan that can be funded via the school and library Universal Service Fund or "E-rate" program. It explains the necessary elements that must be included in the application process, the budget resources and the ongoing evaluation process.

Michigan Department of Education. (2006-07). Educational Technology Plan
http://www.techplan.org/

Designed to assist Michigan schools with the creation of a technology plan, it includes material relevant to other schools as well.

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