

infotech by annette lamb and larry johnson

school library media specialist 2.0: a dynamic collaborator, teacher, and technologist

We already have a technology person. Does a teacher-librarian really need technology skills? Doesn't a media specialist just maintain the library collection, check out books, and teach library skills?

Over the past several years, the Internet has shifted from a place housing static pages to a dynamic environment facilitating global communication, commerce, and collaboration. School library media specialists (SLMS) have experienced a similar transformation.

Unfortunately, many school administrators aren't aware that today's teacher-librarian can play a critical role in transforming the school into a twenty-first century laboratory for learning with a wide range of resources and technologies.

With hectic schedules, it can be hard for school administrators and media specialists to find time to talk. It's sometimes difficult to put into words how quickly our profession is changing. Use this article as a springboard for discussing a twenty-first century partnership with your school administrator.

DEAR SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR . . .

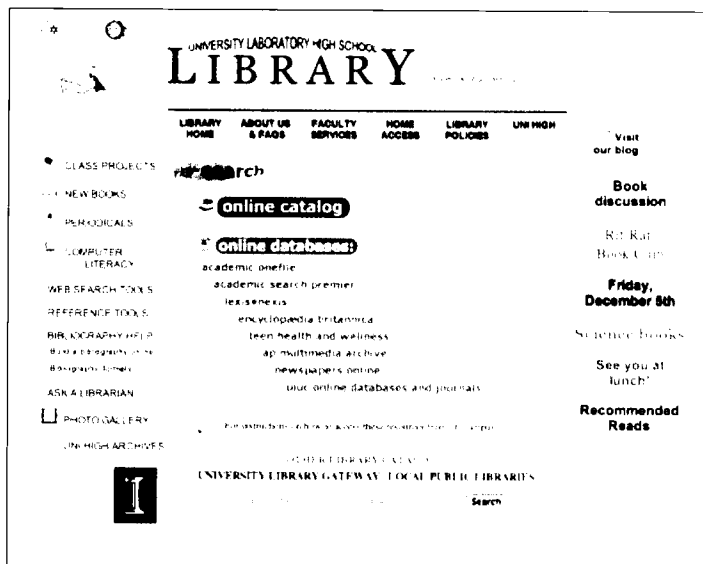
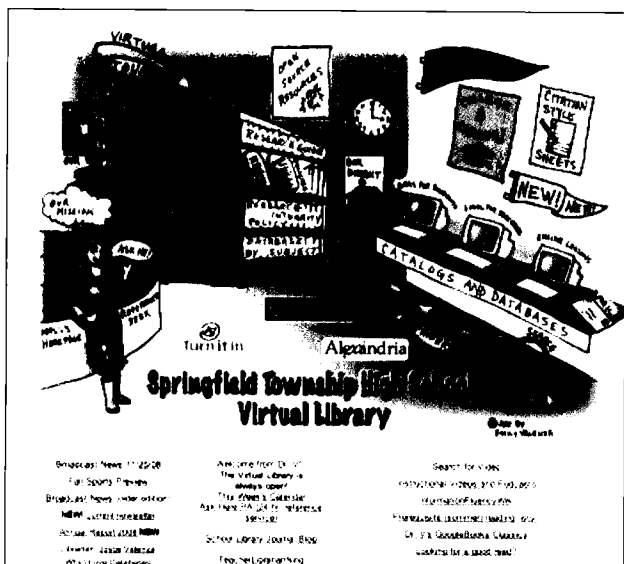
While teacher-librarians still help young people develop a passion for reading, today's recommendations might also include an audio book or web-based magazine. Regardless of the title you choose for the professional (librarian, teacher-librarian, media specialist; we'll use teacher-librarian and media specialist interchangeably), or the center, an SLMS considers learner needs in terms of multiple interests, abilities, and intelligences. Strongly valuing the importance of reading, they expand their vision to include electronic resources for reading, viewing, and listening. A school library is more than a book collection. And a vital, up-to-date media center extends beyond its physical confines. No longer simply the "keeper

of books," today's teacher-librarians are instructional leaders whose activities are woven throughout the school's curriculum. Technology is a key factor in this transformation.

The role of a school library media specialist and their relationship to technology can be examined in three overlapping views: SLMS as collaborator, SLMS as teacher leader, and SLMS as technologist.


SCHOOL LIBRARY MEDIA SPECIALIST AS TECHNOLOGIST

Technology encompasses a wide array of hardware, software and related techniques and applications. Today's teacher-librarian is often involved in identifying technology needs, selecting and acquiring new and replacement components, providing instruction and staff development, and supporting effective uses of technology in learning. John McDonald, an award-winning school library media specialist, writes that like any resource from books to electronic databases ". . . remember that technology is a tool and that you must evaluate whether that tool is effective in furthering the goals you have for your program and your students" (blog comment made September 2005, *SLMS Bridging Theory and Practice*, <http://slmsbridge.blogspot.com>).




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GRAPHIC NOVELS

PRECISION STORIES

Cory Doctorow's futuristic tales of the here and now. Doctorow and others. IDW, 2008. \$24.99. 978-0-7679-2037-7. Grades 7 and up. A girl who has mastered an online role-playing game at the cost of her own health discovers that she is ruining the lives of real people. A sysadmin must reconfigure the world from inside the husk of his corporate building. A garage sale junkie betrays an alien. In six powerful stories, Doctorow invites us to imagine the very present future.

The best science fiction finds the emotional heart of the situation it wants to explore and chooses for its viewpoint the one person who can give the reader the pulse of the imagined world. Whether it is the middle-aged junk dealer who manages to form a human connection with aliens just before they leave or a lonely father in the middle of a decaying totalitarian state, Doctorow's viewpoint character is always the single best choice to show us how these possible futures resonate with the same loves, anxieties, and hopes of the present.

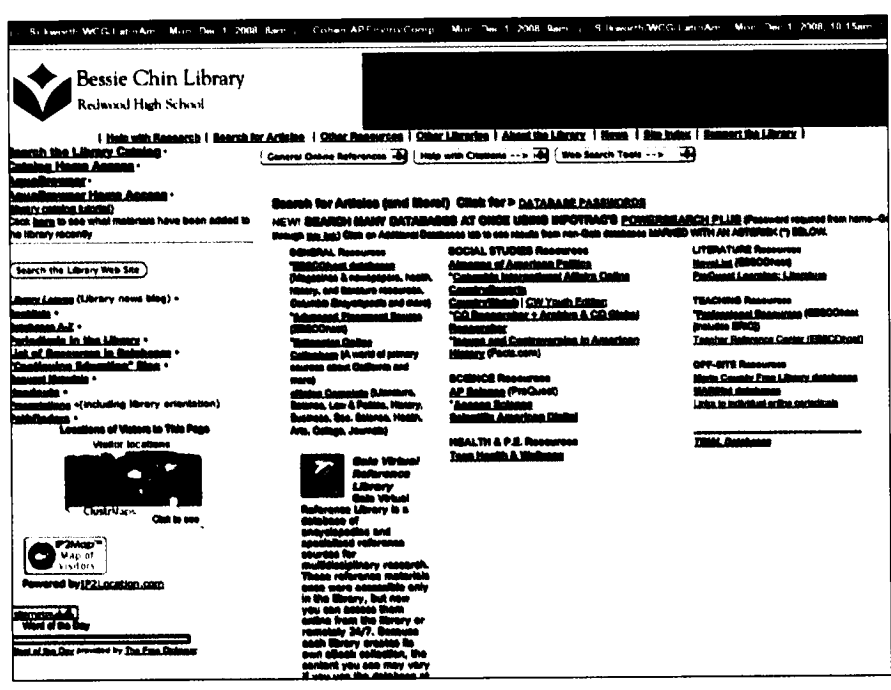
The wind in the willows. Kenneth Grahame, Michel Plessix, and Joe Johnson. Papercutz, 2008. \$17.95. 978-1-59707-095-9. All ages. This edition, which marks the re-launch of the Classics Illustrated line of graphic novels, makes great use of careful line work and perfectly pitched colors. The lines give a sense of delicacy to Mole's glasses and weight to foolish Toad's prison cell. The colors lend this classic children's fantasy an air of authenticity. Each two-page spread is a delicacy.

Students are similar to their parents and other adults in that they may work at odd times. In particular, teens may be working online at 1 or 2 a.m. in the morning. Knowing this, contemporary SLMS' work to develop dynamic websites that extend the media center's program outside the physical confines of the school building and beyond school hours.

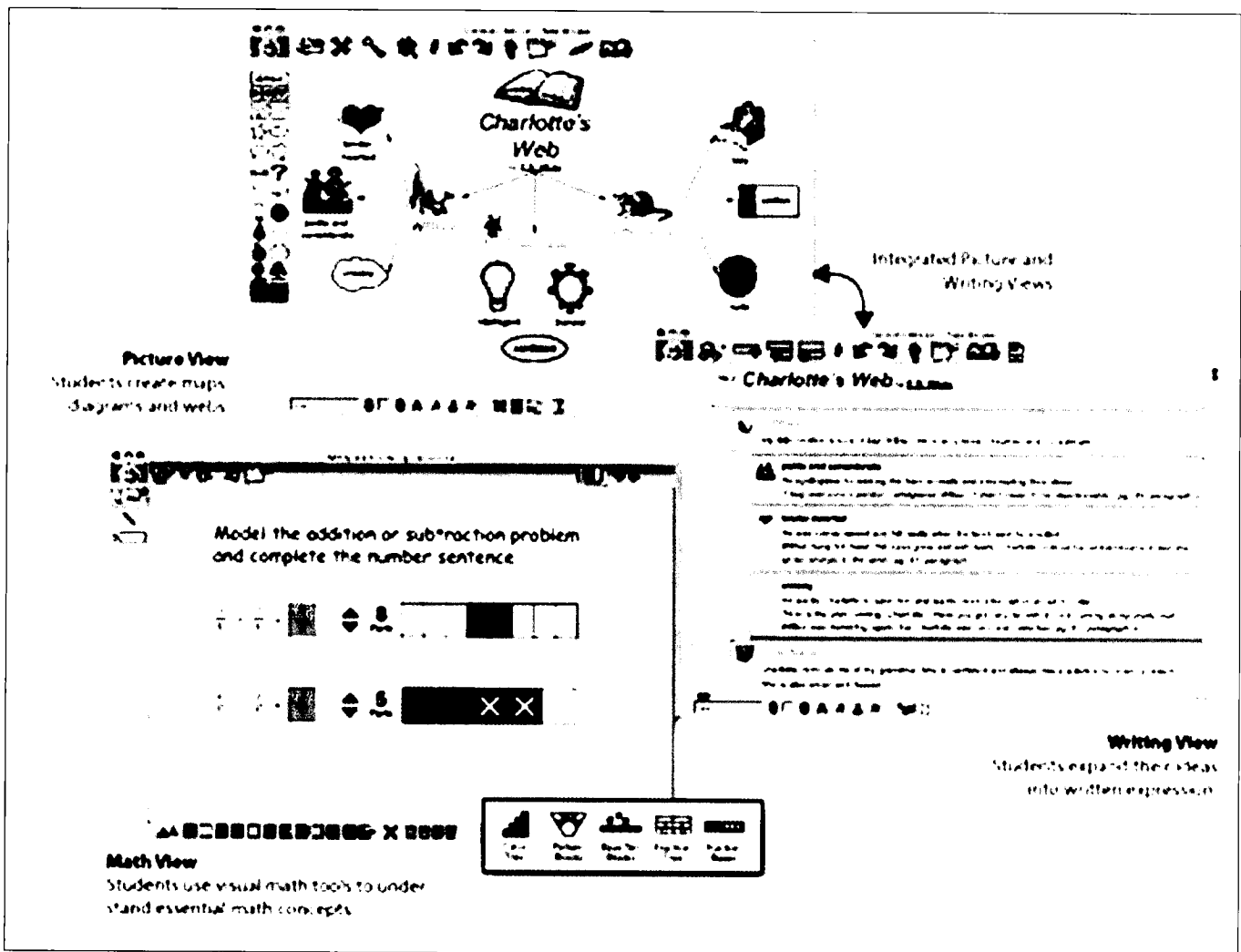
It is important to gain ideas about the vital content that is possible on a virtual

school library:

- Springfield Township High School Virtual Library, PA, www.sdst.org/shs/library
- Hunterdon Central Library—Instructional Materials Center, NJ, <http://central.hcrhs.k12.nj.us/imc/staff>
- University Laboratory High School Library, IL, www.uni.uiuc.edu/library
- Greece Athena Media Center, NY, www.greece.k12.ny.us/ath/library



The screenshot shows the Bessie Chin Library website for Redwood High School. It features a navigation menu with links for Home with Research, Search for Articles, Other Resources, Other Libraries, About the Library, Home, Site Index, and Contact the Library. The main content area is titled 'Search for Articles (and More!)' and includes a 'NEW! SEARCH MANY DATABASES AT ONCE USING INFOPAGE'S POWERSEARCH PLUS!' section. Below this, there are several columns of database resources categorized by subject: GENERAL Resources (EBSCOhost, ProQuest, etc.), SOCIAL STUDIES Resources (America of American Politics, etc.), LITERATURE Resources (Novelist, ProQuest, etc.), TEACHING Resources (Educational Resources, etc.), OFF-SITE Resources (Map of the World, etc.), SCIENCE Resources (AP Biology, etc.), and HEALTH & P.E. Resources (Teen Health & Wellness). A 'State Virtual Reference Library' section is also present, explaining that the library is a database of syndicated and syndicated reference sources for multidisciplinary research.



Kidspiration 3

• Bessie Chin Library, Redwood High School, CA, <http://rhsweb.org/library>

Explore these web sites and look for evidence of collaboration, interest and achievement of students, nature and scope of content, and primary/secondary audiences.

Whether facilitating a student videoconference on global warming or integrating an electronic database into a social studies assignment, the school library media specialist communicates and collaborates with members of the entire learning community. If the teachers and students have a need for increased video resources in the classroom, the teacher-librarian can analyze and assess options for streaming video. They can work with teachers to locate and recommend appropriate assistive technology and specialized resources such as audio books to meet specific needs of students.

John McDonald recommends that in introducing a new technology, it's important to "wrap it with a thorough understanding of the (learning) standards and then present it as part of a solution or ready-to-implement project rather than as an abstract training session" (blog comment made September 2005, *SLMS Bridging Theory and Practice* <http://slmsbridge.blogspot.com>). For example, blogs and wikis are part of a new generation of social, collaborative, and participatory technologies with potential across the curriculum. The media specialist may model use of these technologies by establishing a book review blog or local history wiki.

Effective technology integration is critical in school libraries and for learning. Library management technologies for materials circulation, recordkeeping, and data collection are fundamental. An effective

SLMS embraces next generation web tools that incorporate user-generated data to enhance his/her programs.

Teacher-librarians design and guide information inquiry activities across the curriculum and so promote high-level questioning, exploration, assimilation, inference, and reflection. They encourage students to use an array of information tools and technologies including software for image manipulation, presentations, graphics, audio and video editing, presentations, and web page development.

SCHOOL LIBRARY MEDIA SPECIALIST AS A TEACHER LEADER

Today's teacher-librarian provides staff development as well as direct and indirect student instruction. So in addition to



The teacher-librarian also facilitates student use of technology in both formal and informal situations.

using an electronic whiteboard to show students how to access and best use online databases, the school media specialist might present teachers with a brief, after-school session on how to use digital cameras or incorporate audio clips into multimedia presentations.

The teacher-librarian also facilitates student use of technology in both formal and informal learning situations. For example, they might show effective ways to use Kidspiration, www.inspiration.com, in concept mapping and organizing ideas for a group project. The bottom line is that today's media specialists have lots of ideas about how to integrate technology into student learning such as working with students to convert their winning stories in the school's Young Authors project into podcasts for community sharing. The most effective teacher-librarians become adept at matching or aligning ideas for technology integration with classroom and curricular needs. Similar to the movement of previous decades to shift the teaching of library skills into the real context of student learning

needs, the use of technology tools are appropriately aligned with curriculum.

As an educator, the teacher-librarian helps weave technology tools and resources throughout the curriculum to address content area standards, while also promoting information and technology fluency. The SLMS spends considerable amounts of time with teachers developing lessons, talking about instructional methodology, and developing curriculum. Instead of talking or explaining how to make a WebQuest, they might first provide a skeleton of a WebQuest for a science unit adapting existing unit plans and enhancing it with selected web sites.

SCHOOL LIBRARY MEDIA SPECIALIST AS COLLABORATOR

By collaborating with young people and their teachers on the effective and efficient applications of technology in learning, the media specialist models best practice as well as encourages inquiry and life long learning.

Today's school library media specialist is proactive in reaching out and involving themselves in classroom teaching experiences. Kelly in her first year as an SLMS blogs, "I approached a teacher about bringing his class to the computer lab so I could teach them how to use one of our online databases when they search for information for an upcoming unit on climates in the Eastern Hemisphere. He assured me that his students have always found what they needed . . . , but reluctantly agreed to let me pay him a visit during his prep period. I went to his room . . . borrowed his computer to log on to the database and show(ed) him how much easier it will be for students to use this rather than a general search engine. . . . Before he knew what happened, his classes were penciled in for a workshop."

Not waiting on the teacher and students to come to her, she took the initiative and at the same time made the teacher's job easier. Her effort also was prepared to fit the curriculum, rather than structured as an isolated instruction.



LIZETTE HANNEGAN
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> AUDIOBOOKS

SECONDARY

There are certain events or people that change the landscape—of our country, of our world, or of our imaginations. These superb non-fiction titles provide a glimpse into such change and are sure to broaden the scope of classroom study.

Key: C=cd, c=cassette, h=hardcover, p=paperback

Blizzard! The storm that changed America.

Jim Murphy. Read by Taylor Mall. Audio Bookshelf, 2003. \$26.95. 978-1-883332-91-4. Grades 6–9. As Murphy's compelling text is chillingly narrated in Mall's reportorial style, listeners discover that the "Great Blizzard" of 1888 shifted course while forecasters were on their Sunday break, causing hardship and death. Our 24/7 weather forecasting is a direct result of this storm, one of many facts sure to intrigue students drawn to disaster stories.

Hitler youth. Susan Campbell Bartoletti. Read by Kathrin Kana. Listening Library, 2006. \$38.00. C: 978-0-7393-3677-9. Grades 6–8. These stories of German youth during the rise of Adolf Hitler—how they were recruited, organized, and exploited and how some became clandestine workers against the Third Reich—provide an unusual listening experience. The addition of a photo CD allows students to see the young faces and offers a compelling conclusion to the audiobook experience.

King of the mild frontier: An ill-advised autobiography.

Chris Crutcher. Read by Crutcher. Listening Library, 2003. \$35.00. C: 978-1-4000-9500-1. Grades 9–12. The narrative structure of biography makes it a natural choice for audio. Crutcher has pushed the envelope of YA literature, expanding what is acceptable in terms of theme and language. Narrating his own story, the author introduces students to the highs and lows of his life, as well as his ability to laugh at himself.

In order to shift school library media programs in new directions, forward-thinking school library media specialists need the encouragement and support of their administrators. A crucial factor is developing close, nurturing, and cooperative relationships with the building principal, technology specialists, and district supervisors.

A middle school teacher-librarian has a crew of "greencoat" student workers (they wear green vests), volunteers who give up a study period to work in the media center. Greencoat duties include maintaining the school signage (poster printer), designing Webpages, creating promotional materials (video, print, and Internet) and resources for the media center, videotaping teachers and preparing the tape for self-evaluation, as well as assisting teachers with projects requiring the use of technology. "My rule of thumb is that if I perform the same task 10 times in a year, I try to see if a Greencoat can take it over."

Another aspect in collaboration is the school library media specialist's need to be active in their professional field. The most common avenue begins with membership and participation in professional organization(s), i.e., school library, technology, and others. Participation can help them keep abreast of new technologies, share and exchange ideas and techniques, and continue to develop leadership and presentation skills.

WE NEED FORWARD-THINKING ADMINISTRATORS

Naysayers state that school media specialists are very busy, and expanding to these new roles is just not possible. And maybe that's true if they continue to manage and operate their media centers as they've always done. But if the school library media specialist focuses on the curriculum and student learning, knows what teachers are teaching and when, and looks for ways that technology can engage learners in meaningful experiences, they can have a tremendous effect on learning. That means someone else (volunteers, student workers,

staff members) may have to give attention to the other tasks or they are eliminated entirely. It means giving up some control and placing student information inquiry above shelving books. The reward is to become a more integral part of the learning process and to help motivate students to achieve a higher learning potential.

In order to shift school library media programs in new directions, forward-thinking school library media specialists need the encouragement and support of their administrators. A crucial factor is developing close, nurturing, and cooperative relationships with the building principal, technology specialists, and district supervisors. They also work to gain the trust of teachers. Together they can develop a shared plan for making needed changes and set realistic, practical goals. With administrative understanding and support, the SLMS is empowered to take the calculated risks associated with new program endeavors.

The effective school library media specialist applies information and technology resources to affect learning. Today's teacher-librarians have twenty-first century skills and work with their school's faculty, students, and administrators to build a shared vision of a technology-enriched learning community. Like the dynamic world of Web 2.0, seek out creative school library media specialists that use the power of technology to promote information fluency in the next generation of students and join them.

our columnists

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