



A Room

I remember the first day I walked into the old high school library as the new school librarian for the 2008–2009 school year. The dry stale air was oppressive. Dark corners. Closed doors. Shelves overflowed with unappealing old books, and a dozen or so twenty-seven-inch-screen televisions on tall black carts obstructed the front window of the library. The unintended message this gave to the school community bothered me each day as I entered the library until I moved those TVs to the back room. That was the beginning of a number of changes that I would set in motion to shift towards an inviting, contemporary facility.

The space, although disjointed and awkward, was not the only obstacle I faced. Marilyn Lombardi and Thomas Wall assert that the traditional concept of library is of

"gatekeeper with its interior spaces devoted primarily to processing, preservation and security of the collection" (2006). The students and faculty were comfortable with this traditional view of the library—a script that positioned me as the gatekeeper of resources. To borrow a term from Lombardi and Wall, I envisioned the library as a "gateway," not a gatekeeper, but to accomplish that goal I needed to make changes. However, I knew it was wise to make these changes slowly and to wait to see where I might make the most impact. So, in those first few months as I settled into the position, I observed how people interacted with the library. Students gravitated to the computers to socialize, print schoolwork, play games, listen to music and access their private lives. They rarely sought books or help for academic research. Teachers arrived with a

single, consistent request: "Could I get into the DVD room to see if there is a movie on ...?" I held the key for this treasure trove of films.

Access to the book collection, which had an average copyright date of 1978, was not a problem. Thousands of dusty and dirty books sat untouched on the shelves, many with the original book jackets from when my students' parents were in high school. If I was going to inspire kids to browse the shelves and encourage reading, I would have to discard books like *Kids Sure Rite Funny! A Child's Garden of Misinformation* by Art Linkletter and replace them with books with contemporary themes for teens.

Thus began the weeding project. It was easy to identify and remove outdated and inaccurate books from the collection, as well as those books

With a View

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that did not meet students' needs or support the curricula. It was more difficult to decide what to purchase. Should outdated books be replaced with updated books? Given the freedom to choose resources for assignments, students used the Web exclusively, unless a print source was required by the assignment. Since the library was valued as a social space and for its access to the digital world via our computers and students' mobile devices, I made the decision to spend the majority of my budget on databases, eBooks, and films. I did add print resources to support specific subjects, contemporary fiction to encourage pleasure reading, and audio books for core required reading selections.

Teachers rarely sought print resources, but the library owned an impressive film collection. When the teacher requested a DVD, I walked the entire length of the library, unlocked the DVD room, unlocked various drawers, walked back to the circulation desk with the disk for checkout, and finally handed it over to the teacher. I didn't have to perform this tedious routine many times

before realizing that it represented yet another barrier to my vision. I wanted teachers and students to have open access to browse these films, and to see me as an asset and partner in the education process.

Just as I had moved the televisions to the back area to remove the visual barrier, I transferred hundreds of films to the open shelves in the front of the library to provide unfettered access. Word circulated that there were hundreds of films available in the library, and as teachers drifted in to browse the titles, they were stunned at the size of the film collection on topics relevant to their curriculum, not just the one or two films they knew to ask for each year. Film circulation skyrocketed. Some teachers used films to build students' background knowledge, others to illustrate or enhance instruction on a topic that was difficult to grasp. For example, films used to enhance instruction were about American government, grammar usage, verb tenses in foreign languages, atrocities of the Holocaust, life under Jim Crow laws, how to conduct yourself in an interview, marketing strategies, examples of physics in real life, and how to search databases and search engines.

I took to heart Sharon A. Hollander, Barbara R. Herbert, and Karen Stieglitz DePalma's argument that "Librarians and faculty have many mutual goals and concerns. Both want students to develop a greater understanding of and respect

for books, journals, and other intellectual property. Both want to enhance student literacy, particularly information literacy, and help students become writers, problem solvers, critical thinkers, and self-directed, lifelong learners" (2004).

I wanted my faculty to understand that we share commonalities, while recognizing that I could provide the knowledge and skills to bridge their teaching with more interactive models, including Web technologies. I began describing this collaborative model one conversation and one teacher at a time.

I had a healthy budget to use for purchases to support teachers and students, so I purchased LCD projectors, Flip camcorders, a sound system, and headphones with microphones, as well as videos. During any face-to-face meeting with teachers, I would suggest videos and invite my colleagues to browse the collection. I subscribed to streaming media, placed catalogs in mailboxes, encouraged new requests, and sent Web links for relevant subject content on YouTube, Google Video, and video-on-demand sites. I also turned to the local public library for films, although I had to drop by the public library to pick up the films myself after school.

Now that demand for film and video to support curricula was strong, I began to design a viewing space. I used an eight-by-twelve-foot white wall for a projection screen, bought a hundred-dollar amplifier with good sound quality, hooked the amplifier and the DVD/VHS player into the LCD projector, and projected video. No longer did students have to watch movies on twenty-seven-inch screens from thirty feet across the classroom or

on a five-by-five-foot pull-down screen. Enhanced by amplified sound, films could be projected on a wide screen that filled the entire wall. When an English teacher brought students in to analyze *Shakespeare in Love*, the official theater area was born. Popcorn was the only missing ingredient.

Speaking of a missing ingredient...

At the start of the 2009–2010 school year, students, and faculty opened the doors to our reinvented library. They found the new books, the computers, the films—but they didn't find me. The professional librarian who had driven the rebirth and collaborated with the faculty was gone. Due to budget constraints, the position of librarian had been eliminated by the school district.

Is there a cost to the community when the high school library is no longer staffed by a librarian?

The library is more than a place. Under the direction and guidance of a professional librarian, it is a program with an ongoing mission. This mission is best seen in the manifestation of the initiatives, attitudes, choices, and relationships that the professional librarian creates within the school. When the library is staffed by a "gatekeeper," then the activities that happen within the walls of the library are limited. A capable aide can perform clerical functions such as the tracking of books and resources for library users, ordering supplies, troubleshooting printing problems, and answering general questions about how to locate a specific book or resource. But students and teachers require far more than cursory services; they need a professional librarian

whose collaborative work with faculty facilitates student learning using the resources and facilities provided by the library and the expertise of the librarian.

The professional librarian, not the clerk, teaches the foundational research skills and dispositions that enable students to move beyond superficial regurgitation of data to systematically investigate a subject to come to a conclusion

or determine a course of action. The professional librarian, not the gatekeeper, evaluates and selects young adult literature and media resources that match the state standards for supporting disciplinary inquiry and motivating teens to read, thus advancing school-wide literacy goals. The professional librarian, not the aide, instructs students about the ethical use of resources, teaches students

Movie Reviews: Guide to reviews of contemporary films

<www.kids-in-mind.com>

<www.allmovie.com>

Movie Descriptions and Dialogue: Detailed descriptions of movies, downloadable movie scripts, and phrase search

<www.imsdb.com>

<www.filmsite.org>

<www.subzin.com>

<www.script-o-rama.com/oldindex.shtml>

<www.thevideobeat.com/store/mod-movies>

<www.jinni.com>

<www.simplyscripts.com/movie.html>

Documentaries: Extensive collection of online documentaries

<<http://topdocumentaryfilms.com>>

<www.screenaustralia.gov.au/learning/diydoco/default.htm>

<www.mediaed.org/cgi-bin/commerce.cgi?display=home>

<www.snagfilms.com>

<www.docuseek.com/ressites.php>

<www.freedocumentaries.org/index.php?ct=6>

<www.bodocus.com>

<www.bbc.co.uk/filmnetwork/films>

<www.docuseek.com/ressites.php>

Video Search Portals:

to deconstruct media messages, and supports faculty and student learning of Web technologies.

If a school's mission is to prepare and educate its students to achieve to their potential, then everyone in the school must be able to articulate how the professional librarian contributes to that goal. Without institutional support for professional expertise, the school misses much more than popcorn.



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Works Cited:

- Hollander, Sharon A., Barbara R. Herbert, and Karen Stieglitz DePalma. 2004. "Faculty-Librarian Collaboration." *Observer* 17, no. 3 (March). <www.psychologicalscience.org/observer/getArticle.cfm?id=1541> (accessed September 3, 2009).
- Lombardi, Marilyn, and Thomas B. Wall. 2006. "Perkins Library, Duke University." *Learning Spaces*. Diana G. Oblinger, ed. Educause. <www.educause.edu/learningspacesch17> (accessed September 9, 2009).

Gateway for online films and film clips

- <www.open-video.org>
- <www.watchknow.org>
- <www.youtube.com/edu>
- <www.learner.org/resources/browse.html>
- <www.neok12.com>
- <www.clipta.com>
- <www.watchmojo.com>
- <<http://dsc.discovery.com/videos>>
- <www.icue.com/portal/site/iCue/welcomepage>
- <<http://anyclip.com>>

Where to Purchase Videos: Places to search for those hard-to-find films

- <www.moviesunlimited.com/musite/default.asp?>
- <www.insight-media.com/IMHome.asp>
- <<http://ffh.films.com>>
- <www.insvideo.com>
- <www.lvn.org>
- <www.ambrosevideo.com>
- <www.learner.org/catalog/catalog.html>
- <www.aplusvideorentals.com>
- <www.filmwest.com>
- <www.videoliberalian.com>
- <www.mpihomevideo.com>
- <www.pyramidmedia.com/items.php3>
- <www.bullfrogfilms.com>

Subscription Streaming Video Resources: On-demand video broadcasting for a price

- <<http://streaming.discoveryeducation.com>>
- <www.safarimontage.com>
- <www.learn360.com>
- <www.cccvod.com>

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