

Basic Library Skills for Teacher Librarians

By

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Over view of a Library

Library is a place where collection of books and other informational materials are made available to people for reading, study and reference. However, library collections have almost always contained a variety of materials. Contemporary libraries maintain collections that include not only printed materials such as manuscripts, books, newspapers, and magazines, but also art reproductions, films, sound and video recordings, maps, photographs, microfiches, CD-ROMs, computer software, online databases, and other media. The central mission of a library is to collect, organize, preserve, and provide access to knowledge and information. Libraries are designed to perform certain basic functions. These include:

1. Selecting materials and developing collections
ordering and acquiring materials
2. provision of information-access mechanism

3. conserving and preserving materials
4. Bibliographic and other forms of instruction.

School Library

A school library is defined as an organized collection of printed and audiovisual resources which is administered as a unit and is located in a designed place or places. The school library makes resources and services accessible and available to students, teachers and administrators. In general sense, the school library has one central function – to support the curriculum of the school. In addition it stimulates the imagination of children; it promotes critical thinking.

The purpose of this presentation is to highlight the basic library skills required by teacher librarians. Who in addition to the basic skills must be proficient with the wide range of information available and must be able to work with teachers to instill information literacy skills and to promote life-long learning in students.

Who is a Teacher Librarian ?

Teacher-librarians typically work in school library settings, and their jobs include: teaching classes either collaboratively with teachers or on their own; choosing appropriate material to support student growth and school curriculum; processing and cataloging new materials; encouraging reading for all age levels; maintaining library policies and the library

budget; planning for the library space, and maintaining an overall positive atmosphere in the library.

It has been demonstrated that when teachers and teacher-librarians work together, students achieve higher levels of literacy, reading, learning, problem-solving skills and information and technology skills. Having the initial responsibility for providing resources, the roles of teacher librarians is expanding to include recommending how to use the resources and coordinating the efforts of teachers. Their role needs support from administration and clear goals must be established to provide a good working relationship with students and staff. Today's teacher-librarian plays many distinct yet interrelated roles in order to accomplish these goals - as a teacher, as a collaborator, as a curriculum leader, as an instructional leader, as an information specialist, as an instructional technologist, as a program manager, as an advocate and as an information specialist. To perform these roles, teacher librarians require the following skills:

- i. Skills in accessing and evaluating information regardless of the format. The evaluation of the school library service also comes under the jurisdiction of the teacher librarian. They need to be aware of, and use library evaluation tools, work towards meeting the goals and objectives set, and then evaluate the effectiveness in doing this.
- ii. Skills in providing leadership in the appropriate use of information.

- iii. Know the school curriculum.
- iv. Involvement in the selection, acquisition, and organisation of materials to support the school curriculum
- v. Understand students and their social, emotional and intellectual needs.
- vi. Ability to work well with others on a team. As managers of people, time, resources and the environment, teacher librarians need to have good interpersonal skills as their job is interacting with people and at the same time be creative, flexible and have initiative with people and resources.

In order to achieve the objectives of the library, the teacher librarian, libraries carefully select, acquire and process information resources, which are latter organized systematically for easy access and quick retrieval. Libraries as systems are sub divided into sub-systems with each sub-system performing different functions so as to provide effective and efficient information service. The sub-systems are: Collection Development, Cataloguing, Reference and Circulation.

Collection Development

Collection Development involves the selection process, which is done in partnership with the teachers following the curriculum guidelines, taking into account the needs and interests of the pupils. For those resources which

come under the category of general interest, the teacher librarian is responsible for applying professional selection techniques, following the school selection policy. In most cases this would entail evaluating, filtering, repackaging and validating information for use in school so that it would be in usable form in light of curriculum needs. The teacher librarian also ensures the item is placed on the inventory, then catalogued and placed in the appropriate setting.

Cataloging

The library catalog might be compared to the index for a book. The index provides the reader with a way to find information in the book without having to read every page. The index tells the reader the page on which the information about a specific subject can be found. The library catalog does the same thing. It tells the library user exactly where materials meeting their specific needs can be found, with the call number of the book corresponding to the page number in an index.

The information contained in the cataloging record provides the many access points needed by the patron looking for information in the library. Traditionally, the library card catalog provided access by the author's name, the title of an item, and the subject(s) covered in the item. Other points of access were additional authors, names of series, illustrators, and sometimes the titles of contents. When library materials are cataloged in a careful and complete manner, access is provided for the library patrons and staff to all

sources of information on a particular topic, by a particular author, or in a particular format, that the library possesses. The better the access, the more use the collection receives, and the more satisfied the patron is in his or her search for information in the library.

The Teacher Librarian is also responsible for supervising the weeding out of poor or outdated stock, ensuring the process and disposal is following the school policy for this task. This ensures the library resources are current and frees space for more acquisitions.

Retrieval Tools:

The teacher librarian also has the role to develop an efficient system for retrieval of their resources and equipment which is relevant to the ages and abilities of the users. Some basic retrieval tools include:

- i. **Bibliographic:** This is the list of information packages, bringing together lists of sources bases on subject matter (integrated science, mathematics etc), on authors (Maria N. David-Osuagwu, F. Badaiki), by time period information and provide a centralised record of school resources. Each information package represented in the bibliographic list has a short description. A typical description includes author, title, edition, locale, publisher, place and date of publication.

- ii. Accession list – Listing of acquisitions with numbers assigned in the order of acquisition - What are the things we have received year 2008? 08-001, 08-002, 08-003, etc.
- iii. **Classification:** Classification basically is categorizing information package and also seen as information retrieval system. It is also defined as any process of dividing, sorting, grouping, arranging, ordering, ranking, mapping, and correlating. Taylor (2004) defined classification as the placing of subjects into categories. It is a scheme for the systematic organization of knowledge, usually by subject. Classification depends upon the complexity needed.
Classification can be simple:

M=Mathematics; E=English; I=Integrated Science

- Or complex:

E1=English Text;

E1/a=Story Books

E1/b=Most excellent in most things

Reasons for Classification

1. Classification is more than just a retrieval device, it puts like items together (collocation) and permits meaningful library organization.
2. Enable a person to find a book of which either the subject is known
3. To show what the library has on a given subject

4. Classification organizes library materials into subject categories, which allows for browsing
5. Classification allows for relative book locations.
6. New books can be shelved in between old books.

The Teacher Librarian is also responsible for organising and maintaining the resources to ensure they remain in good condition and are currently serving their intended purpose. They then need to link the students, teachers and others with the information they need. The teacher librarian has a role in locating professional literature that the teachers will read and use. The teacher librarian has a role in providing guidance to teachers on locating and evaluating information.

One of the key positions of the teacher librarian is the promotion of children's literature as an integral and essential aspect of learning in children. They need to have a comprehensive knowledge of children's literature so they can meet the needs and interests of their clients. They have an obligation to promote literacy by motivating, encouraging and reinforcing the child's interest in reading possibly by initiating, implementing and evaluating a school reading program, with informed and involved parents to make it successful. The personality of the teacher librarian will determine the type of place the students perceive the library as. If the teacher librarian is dynamic, encouraging, flexible, organised and an

innovator, it is quite likely the library services will reflect this and the atmosphere that is created will be similar to these adjectives. The teacher librarian has a role in determining which services will be offered in the library.

Teacher-librarians read to children, assist them in selecting books, develop information literacy, and assist with schoolwork. Some school librarians see classes on a "flexible schedule". A flexible schedule means that rather than having students come to the library for instruction at a fixed time every week, the classroom teacher schedules library time when library skills or materials are needed as part of the classroom learning experience

Cooperative planning of the curriculum

The teacher librarian's basic role has moved from a passive role to an active one with an expansion of the traditional roles, and extension into new areas. Traditional role of the Teacher Librarian includes collection development and manager of resources, supplier of reading guidance, and promoter of literature and information. The teacher librarian now has to reach out to users, both pupils and staff of the school, promote their services and collections and become more directly involved in planning of curriculum strategies. They have a knowledge of the school curriculum in a holistic way and need to be involved in the designing, writing, and evaluation of the curriculum, and link together related units. With this

understanding and knowledge of the curriculum framework, the teacher librarian can then work with individual and subject teachers in designing programs which will enrich student learning in all strands. The teacher librarian is then able to integrate key learning areas, providing the opportunity for across the curriculum integration of information literacy skills development and natural progression in learning.

To fulfill this role in curriculum development the teacher librarian must know and understand the curriculum guidelines of the state or regional department, the overall goals and mission statement of the school and understand the difference between curriculum goals and content. They must know the processes of curriculum development, instructional development, have access to and understand the most recent research on curriculum design and have a general knowledge of school wide grade levels and content areas so they can be considered as equals or even leaders in the field. It has been found that teachers generally tend to plan curriculum around what resources they know are available. Through their role as librarian, the teacher librarian is in a position to know what resources exist, know how to access them, organise them and use them.

School library programs work best when teacher-librarians work with a flexible schedule. This means that teacher-librarians need flexible time to accommodate classroom teachers' schedules in providing resource-based learning activities which extend learning beyond the classroom in a

meaningful way. A library schedule which is rigidly set can prevent many valuable learning opportunities from happening because they cannot be "scheduled" or planned for an opportune time. Flexible scheduling helps to ensure the library program becomes integrated into the curriculum.

Conclusion

Basic skills for selection and evaluations of relevant materials to meet the curriculum needs of the school; and skills for classification of resources as well as developing tools for accessing them are pertinent for all teacher librarians. The government and other relevant stakeholders must make deliberate efforts to training teacher-librarians by offering them sponsorship to study and providing funds to stock the libraries. Teacher librarians on their part must constantly learn either through self taught or by attending workshops and conferences to enable them play their role in the modeling and development of the feature generation.