Fifth Edition

SCHOOL LIBRARY MANAGEMENT

Catherine Andronik

Linworth

School Library Management

Fifth Edition

Edited by Catherine Andronik
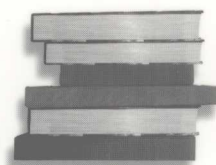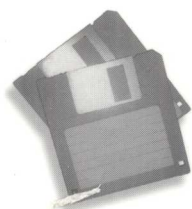
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Introduction

S ome things change, and some things stay the same—it's as true in the school library media center as it is in most facets of life. In the past 15 years, the mere blink of an eye in the history of libraries, we've seen revolutionary developments: increasingly powerful yet affordable computers, CD-ROMs (on which we can even record!), the World Wide Web, e-mail, e-books, *Information Power*.

Much of the *how* part of our day-to-day job has changed as a result of these developments. The end product of a research assignment almost always used to be a standard term paper, or perhaps an oral report or poster for the more progressive teachers. Today, students are presenting their information via PowerPoint, Web pages, and slick desktop publications such as newspapers and brochures, as well as the more traditional formats. Once, we could offer students a few dozen periodicals, saved over a handful of years in hard copy and tediously indexed year by year in *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature*. Today, classes can access decades worth of hundreds of publications, complete with full text and graphics, through easily searchable online databases—from home as well as from the library. Remember giving students an exasperated glare when they asked how many books they had out and the due dates? A few clicks of a mouse with today's automated circulation systems can provide the student with a quick, printable list. I remember starting to write for professional publications because, as the only librarian in a private high school, I felt isolated from "others of my kind," except when I attended the annual statewide conference. The Internet, e-mail, and a host of listservs now put us in touch with our colleagues across the country and even around the world.

The *how* may have undergone a sea change, but the *what* would be recognizable to a librarian from the last century—perhaps even from the last few millennia. We're still keepers of the books. And, like our colleagues from the past, we're also managers of a complex service organization, instructional specialists when it comes to teaching our patrons research skills, experts in locating the perfect resource and creating the optimum presentation, and avid promoters of that wonderfully mind-expanding activity called reading. *Information Power* formulates and encapsulates our roles and our relationships with our administrators and fellow teachers. It gives us a goal to strive for and guidelines for getting there. But at its heart, it's simply the *what* of our profession.

Because *Information Power is* such a driving force in the school library media profession, this fifth edition of *School Library Management* has been reorganized to reflect its principles. This book consists of an anthology of articles culled from issues of *The Book Report*, *Library Talk*, and *Library Media Connection* from the past five years, along with a few "classic" articles from *School Library Management*'s fourth edition. It opens with a brief setting of the stage by one of our field's most respected authorities. Indeed, one of the special aspects of Linworth's publications is their authorship—not by theorists removed from real kids and real teachers, but by practitioners of our special craft. They are school library media specialists considering who they are and what they are doing at the turn of the millennium.

One of our roles as defined in *Information Power* is teacher. This role is hardly one-dimensional. Of course, we instruct students in all aspects of information literacy. But we also engender in them an appreciation for and (we hope) a lifelong love of books and reading. Because many of us manage a staff of paraprofessionals, student workers, and volunteers, we also find ourselves involved in another type of teaching: job training. And we are often relied upon as staff development instructors, introducing the latest in print and technological resources to our colleagues in the classroom.

We are not as isolated in our buildings as we may once have felt, for we are now seen, ideally, as instructional partners, collaborating with a variety of colleagues in the school and the community. Most obviously, we cooperate in lesson planning with our fellow teachers so that our students learn both subject content and information literacy skills as they work on their assignments. We also communicate with administration so that our program dovetails with the goals of the school and district. Some of us are reaching out to the community at large with cooperative programs. Through statewide, online union catalogs, we connect to other school and public libraries. And many of us bring the creators of the books our students whisk off our shelves into our schools through author visits.

Perhaps the most traditional role of the school library media specialist is that of information specialist. We know our collections. We know how to find answers to our students' myriad questions. We keep up with curricular and cultural trends, and our collections reflect changes and developments. The information we provide or recommend is as accurate and up-to-date as possible, whether it is in print or electronic form. We are prepared to defend the items in our collections and the right to read them, if challenged. Students can locate items on our shelves through logically organized catalogs. And, while most of us may not be able to take a computer apart and put it back together in working order, we are reasonably familiar with its hardware and know how to correct any minor glitches.

Finally, we are program administrators. We manage the day-to-day workings of our facility and plan for its future. We set policies for the optimum use of our resources, and we are open to the necessity of revising those policies as circumstances change over time. Our job descriptions have grown dramatically in the past two decades even as we face a shortage of qualified people entering the field as many of our colleagues approach retirement. A boomlet in the school-age population has necessitated the renovation of older schools along with the construction of new schools across the nation. Media specialists provide vital input into the design of 21st-century library media centers to service those schools, an exciting and daunting prospect for many of us. At the same time, however, declining budgets and rising book prices are forcing us to be careful and creative in how we manage our money. To keep current with all these trends, we seek out professional development opportunities and supportive organizations.

Occasionally, a student who sees me straightening up the library media center at the end of the day, leafing through a journal or catalog, or sneaking in a few minutes of reading a new novel at the desk will ask me whether my job is interesting or boring. When they discover the educational background that goes into the career (and when they're aware that I also do quite a lot of writing on the side), they wonder why I—and others of my profession—didn't opt for something "sexier" or "more challenging." I can confidently say that, after more than 15 years as a school librarian in a variety of settings, I've been "bored" a total of perhaps three or four days. Our jobs are busy and rich, challenging, and full of responsibility for both a complex facility and a multitude of inquisitive young minds. It's a job that would be totally overwhelming without a grasp of management techniques to get us through the day, the school year, and the changes inherent in the span of a cutting-edge career.

Being Proactive

By Gary Hartzell

You hear it all the time: "Be proactive. School librarians need to be proactive." It sounds good, but what does it really mean? Educational discussion is filled with buzzwords, slogans, and cliches. Is this just another one, or is there substance in the concept? Just what is proactivity? What does a proactive school librarian look like? Does proactivity have a downside? Do I really want to be proactive? These are good questions—and worth looking at. Let's take them up one at a time.

Just What Is Proactivity?

A Definition

Proactivity is a way of behaving that directly alters your work environment.[1] The concept is rooted in what is known as an interactionist perspective.[2] In any given environment, we, our behavior, and our environment are all interactive; each has an influence on the other two. You can envision it something like this:

The environment can affect how
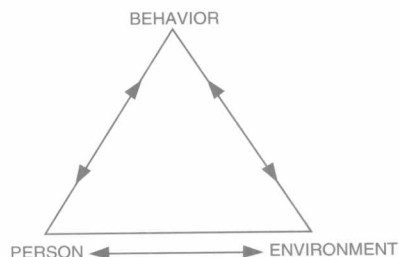
we think and feel, and consequently, how we behave. Our behavior affects our perceptions of ourselves and influences who and what we become as individuals. At the same time, our behavior has an impact on the environment. These changes in the environment affect both our behavior and our self-perception. All of these interactions occur simultaneously and continuously.

You might think of a burning candle as an analogy from the physical realm. The candle affects the environment by putting out heat and light. Changes in the environment influence how quickly and effectively the candle burns. Burning changes the size and shape of the candle.

While illustrative, the analogy isn't complete, because people-unlike candles-are not wholly at the mercy of the environment. In fact, the notion of proactivity is that our behavior shapes the work environment more than that environment shapes our behavior. Proactive behaviors do more than simply allow us to adjust to a changing environment or to survive by acquiescing to the environment's demands. When we are proactive, our behavior is driven by considerations beyond environmental forces alone. Proactive behavior surmounts or even transforms the environment.[3]

This is what makes proactivity an important concept for school librarians and others who spend their days in work organizations. Many of the elements that determine the maximal level of our job performance are found in the working environment:

- what resources we have available to us
- the condition of the physical surroundings in which we work
- our supervisor's perceptions of the role, function, and importance of our position
- our supervisor's perceptions of us
- the level of respect with which peers and the larger community treat the work we do and the services or products we deliver
- the level of respect with which peers and the larger community treat us as individual professionals

The notion of proactivity argues that we can intentionally and directly influence these and other elements and, by doing so, influence and enhance our chances of being successful in our jobs.[4] If we accept this idea, then part of any job involves striving to shape the environment within which the job itself is performed.

It's important not to make a mistake here. The key in proactivity is in taking the initiative to change the working environment. It goes beyond simply selecting the environments in which we wish to work and beyond refiguring our perceptions of the conditions we find within a given environment. A couple of examples will illustrate.

In the first example, think about school librarians who hold teaching credentials and can choose to work either in the classroom environment or in the library. Choosing one or the other doesn't represent proactive behavior if the chosen environment is flawed yet still accepted as it stands. Proactivity kicks in only when behaviors to alter that environment begin. Initiative is central to proactivity. Proactive people don't wait for someone else to improve the environment for them.[5]

In the second example, consider those of us who consciously choose to see problems as opportunities. This studied effort to reconfigure our perceptions of environmental conditions is known as "cognitive restructuring." While healthy in many respects and certainly positive from a motivational perspective, this is not really proactive behavior because the initiative—the generation of environmental conditions—rests with others.

The Role of Initiative

Because initiative is so important in understanding proactive behavior, it's worth a moment to examine it as a separate concept. Webster's tells us that initiative is the "energy or aptitude displayed in the initiation of action; self-reliant enterprise; self-initiated activity."[6] That's a good beginning, and it is certainly congruent with the concept of proactivity. In the workplace, however, initiative takes on some additional characteristics of importance.

First, taking the initiative at work means more than just working without direction, even more than seizing ideas and applying them in

ways that make us more effective in what we already do. Initiative, in the words of Robert Kelley at Carnegie Mellon University, "involves moving out of your own protective job description to bridge the spaces between job spheres."[7] Picture your school's organizational chart. For librarians, this means bridging spaces, such as those between the library and the classroom teachers; the library and the counseling staff; and the library and the administration.

This is particularly important in schools because they are brain-powered organizations and human enterprises, which is to say that they are fluid. Students grow and change during their time in a given school and are replaced by other students. Teachers have different students assigned to them each term, leadership turns over, and personalities clash and match in ever-shifting relationships. Knowledge and curriculum change along with approaches to teaching and instructional techniques. Government and board mandates alter conditions, while technology changes emphasis and delivery in accelerating waves. Yet it's all done in a culture that supports an individualistic model of working. One of the great contradictions in how schools run is that we know from research that both teachers and students benefit from collaboration among the adults in a school. However, the pervasive paradigm is one adult in one room with one group of youngsters for one period of time.[8] True initiative in schools involves building bridges and tightening links.

This is not to say, however, that we can afford to invest every moment in initiatives that take us outside our own environments. The day-to-day responsibilities of the job as it is now defined must be met. Initiative is exercised above and beyond the job description. Students who need help now must have it. Forging links with their teachers, counselors, and administrators is done in addition to our prescribed duties.

The second characteristic of initiative flows from the first: Because it reaches beyond the limits of one person's environment, initiative exercised at work benefits others as much or more than it benefits the person taking the lead. Absent a visible benefit to others, people who press into the areas beyond their own job descriptions are likely to

be perceived as self-serving. One of the reasons initiative is appreciated by others is that it benefits them. People value that which makes their jobs easier, makes them more effective, helps them succeed, and makes them look good.

Third, while the dictionary cites initiative only as beginning something, workplace initiative requires a commitment to completion. This means taking responsibility for providing clear explanations, gathering resources to support the activity or process, and rallying people to its support. It may even involve long range monitoring and participation. False starts and withered dreams are not initiative. This doesn't mean that every act of initiative must lead to success, but it does mean that ideas need to be carefully thought through to raise the odds of success.

Last, initiative doesn't refer only to large-scale efforts.[9] Over time, twenty small steps will take someone as far as one great leap—and with less chance of failure. An accumulation of small successful initiatives is perhaps a better measure of proactivity than a few great attempts at change.

What Does a Proactive School Librarian Look Like?

Thomas Bateman at the University of North Carolina and J. Michael Crant at Notre Dame have done the foundational research on proactive behavior and proactive people.[10] They contend the proactive person creates change rather than merely anticipates it, crafting the future as much as predicting it. According to Bateman and Crant, these people exhibit seven interrelated characteristics. If we examine each of these and make school library media applications, we also can catch a glimpse of what a proactive librarian looks like.

Characteristics of Proactive People

1 *Proactive people look for change opportunities.* Like the prospectors of the Old West, they scan the environment, looking for nuggets and veins of opportunity to mine, each rich with the possibility of having an impact on their operations and organizations. They recognize that sometimes the resources and people they need to develop their finds may lie outside their own immediate environment. As organizational

researcher Robert Kelley has pointed out, people who seize the initiative at work often look into those areas between the boxes on the organizational chart, between the job descriptions that not only define but limit the activities of many others.[11]

Mining opportunities abound in the school library media environment. Proactive librarians examine student assignments for pathways back to teacher interests. Teachers who accompany their students to the library media center can be observed and engaged in conversation in order to assess their information retrieval and technology skills. Over time, a profile of the faculty can be drawn, which will indicate places where the librarian might make a contribution to staff development. Administrators are always in need of the latest information and research on curriculum and instruction, law, policy, finances, and model programs. Identifying what people need before they think to ask for it is to strike the mother lode of opportunity.

2 *Proactive people set effective, change-oriented goals.* This means that they focus on accomplishment in their work. They handle their designated responsibilities in an effective manner, but they don't stop there. Achievement is not defined only as meeting a difficult deadline, staying within a budget, or even bettering last year's numbers—although those things must happen. Along with those commendable accomplishments, proactive people seek accomplishments that change the environment. Proactive achievements open new paths of operation and establish new relationships. Proactive people seek further accomplishments that will have an impact on the way others see them and on how others approach their own jobs.

It takes work to change people's perceptions—not just more work, but work that is qualitatively different from that required to create and operate a technically sound media center. For example, crafting a grant proposal that will integrate library and classroom activities or offering support to counselors through bibliotherapy assistance meets the above definition of initiative; it reaches

beyond the borders of your job and will deliver the greatest benefit to others.[12] Bringing all your research resources and skills to bear as a member of a committee or task force can be a start. Depending on the topic under discussion, you possibly can bring more useful information to a meeting than just about anyone else there. This will help you take the lead—or at least be a leading contributor—to an important achievement. At the same time, it will show others that your perspective is not limited to library media—an important alteration in the perceptions of many other educators.

3 *Proactive people anticipate and prevent problems.* They do their homework, analyzing their own performance and product, looking for danger signals in their relationships, and watching for changes outside their own areas that may have implications for operations within their own areas. Proactive librarians address this characteristic in multiple ways. Beyond client surveys, you can use the technology at your disposal to analyze circulation trends, budget trends—both library allocations and expenditures—collection status, collaborative efforts with others, volunteer performances, student aide performance, and myriad other library functions, operations, and programs. Get useful feedback from your principal by pressing the administration to accept or develop an evaluation instrument geared to library media personnel and practice instead of the teacher evaluation form or some variant of it. Develop close associations with the assistant principal, dean, or other person who handles discipline in your school to raise the odds of quick and effective assistance and support when the inevitable discipline problem emerges. If you're in an elementary school, get down on the floor regularly-seeing the facility the way the children see it-to spot hazards and temptations and improve your perspective. Go to board meetings regularly and identify emerging issues. Tap your professional organization for information on trends, challenges, and problems that could affect you.

4 *Proactive people tend to do different things or to do things differently* from their non-proactive counterparts. They continually look for new ways to

accomplish what they are about. They are not bound by tradition; rather, they try to become the source of new traditions. They are akin to the kind of people Edgar Schein at MIT has in mind when he writes about "creative individualism" and "role innovators"-people who accept as required only the pivotal behaviors, values, and norms of their positions.[13]

How this characteristic manifests itself in proactive librarians depends, of course, upon their individual personalities and the unique situations in their schools. Typical activities could include such things as attending department or grade level meetings. Arrange for team or departmental showings of newly acquired materials. Volunteer to work with teachers at different grade levels and departments to develop research activity packages that substitutes can employ. Involve teachers in the development of library policies that might affect them. Involve teachers in weeding the collection. Offer the library as the site for an "idea bank." Beginning teachers who are creating lesson plans, veteran newcomers who need help to learn the preferred approaches in their new schools, and people who teach outside the areas of their preparation-and there are thousands of them-need ideas. Be aggressive in creating a professional library for teachers and administrators.

5 *Proactive people take action.* They try things. They're not passive, they don't stop at the idea stage, and they don't hesitate to take the lead. They are willing to take risks. In some ways, they subscribe to the slightly cynical line that one should not be afraid to try things with which one is not too familiar-after all, the Ark was built by amateurs and the Titanic by professionals.

This is an attitude more than a behavior set, and it's not really possible to identify specific activities here, though sometimes, the concept can be operationalized by doing nothing more than changing a few words here or there. For example, instead of telling someone, "Call me if you need help," the proactive librarian sizes up the situation and initiates the exchange by saying, "I see you have a new assignment this year. I can help you with that."

It suffices to say that proactivity incorporates what Tom Peters and Bob

Waterman called "a bias for action" in their book *The Pursuit of Excellence*.[14] Proactivity is akin to leadership, and the one universal characteristic of leaders is that they make things happen.[15]

6 *Proactive people tend to persevere.* They keep going. Perseverance, however, should not be confused with stubbornness. That is, proactive people do not necessarily continue to use the same strategies and tactics if they don't work; they take off in new directions when others dead-end. The key is perseverance in pursuit of the objective, not in the application of a given way of accomplishing that objective. Proactive people exhibit a belief in what researchers call equifinality-the idea that there are many equally effective ways to reach the same end.[16]

Proactive librarians try to build bridges with whomever they can. If one teacher or grade or department doesn't respond, move on to another. If the principal isn't listening, try the assistant principal or a teacher who has the principal's ear. If grants don't pay off, talk to local groups like the Rotary or Kiwanis.

7 *Proactive people achieve results,* especially change-oriented results that have an effect on operations, organizations, people, or situations. It's not just trying-it's doing.

Profile Summary

Taken together, these seven characteristics almost outline a personality type. Proactive people are more than just flexible and adaptable in the face of an uncertain future—as important as it is to have those qualities. Their behavior is aimed at creating, or at least controlling, certain aspects of that future. While few of us can control every aspect of our working environments, proactive people make a concerted effort to craft and control those elements that are within their reach—and they attempt to extend both their reach and their grasp over time. There is deliberateness to what they do. Contrast this attitude and approach with people who allow others to define the environments within which they must function. They merely hope that the result will be positive and that they will be able to successfully adapt to the conditions.

Does Proactivity Have a Downside?

Instigating change is always associated with risks. The downside of proactivity can be institutional, personal, or both.

Potential Institutional Downside

First, unbridled proactivity has the potential to damage an organization. As Bateman and Crant express it, "Proactivity cannot be allowed to run amok. There cannot be such a strong bias for action and change that adequate forethought and good execution fall by the wayside."[17] Proactivity can be misguided. Harnessing initiative takes careful thought. If the consequences of an action are not thought through, an idea that looks good from one perspective actually may undo the good work of others. Similarly, too much proactivity can threaten an organization's structure and operation. Schools, like other organizations, run on integrated and sequential schedules and activities. Too many multidirectional initiatives can be counterproductive.

It would be nice if there were a formula by which you could ascertain the proper amount and direction of proactive behaviors, but there isn't. Every episode is a judgment call. In the main, though, popular literature and the criticisms that flood the practitioner suggest that schools could tolerate much higher levels of proactivity before approaching anything remotely like counterproductive conditions.

Potential Personal Downside

Second, there is always the possibility of a personal downside. Proactive behavior most often stimulates a positive reaction in others,[18] but nothing is guaranteed. You are likely to meet resistance from some people on the staff because you will upset the status quo. Activities that challenge the norms of school culture and argue better ways of doing what traditionally has been done only one way will meet resistance. Research demonstrates that once people become accustomed to an individualistic style of teaching, a particular way of dealing with students and other faculty members, and a certain role and status in a school, they find it difficult to seriously consider other ways to approach their work lives.[19]

Another element of risk is that you continually put your reputation at risk in the actions you take, and it can ebb and flow with whether you succeed or fail.[20] Minimize this risk by doing your current assignment well, by making sure that what you're doing has benefit to others, and by staying close to the core activities of school goals and operation, "the critical path," as Robert Kelley calls it.[21]

Last, proactivity gives you a wider stage on which to perform, but the price is that much of this stage, at least at first, can be unfamiliar territory. Because proactivity reaches outside your little box on the organizational chart, you learn new roles and structure new relationships. Sociological and organizational research indicate that learning new roles and how they fit into the changing work environment is one of the most difficult tasks people face in changing the ways in which they work.[22]

Through increased involvement with others, proactive people become more visible in the organization and so attract more attention. Some of it is negative. Proactive people are able to make larger and more significant contributions than their non-proactive counterparts, but they also experience more conflict. There are always others who also care about the school, but whose perceptions and values differ dramatically. Proactivity is immensely rewarding, but it is also immensely demanding.

Do I Really Want to Be Proactive?

So, we come down to the two most important questions: Should I strive to be proactive? So much of what I read and hear tells me to be proactive, but do I really want to?

The answers to these questions, of course, are to be found in the mirror. There are institutional and personal reasons why striving for proactivity is not only valuable, it's an operational necessity if you want to have maximum personal accomplishment in a maximally effective school.

Should I Strive to be Proactive?

On the institutional level, an absence of proactive behavior among staff members reduces organizational effectiveness and can lead to complacency[23]—something that will ill-serve librarians and schools alike in these turbulent times. Proactivity and initiative are forms of organizational citizenship today.

But it's not all altruistic. Cecil Rhodes is reputed to have observed that philanthropy is good, but philanthropy plus five percent is better. On the personal level, proactivity and initiative are highly valued by supervisors. That's your five percent. Research study after research study has shown that perceived conscientiousness and resourcefulness in subordinates fosters increased trust in the working relationships between those subordinates and their bosses.[24] Trust translates to opportunity, and research suggests that people who are known to have a great deal of initiative are allowed more failures than people who rarely take the initiative.[25] Trusted followers have more influence, are given greater opportunity, receive more information, have more decision-making latitude, generally receive more favorable performance appraisals, are more likely to have chances at promotion, and find their jobs more satisfying.[26] That's a pretty good return on your investment.

Gary Hartzell is a Professor in the College of Education at the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

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CHAPTER ONE

The Library Media Specialist as Teacher

When people learn that I'm a teacher, they naturally ask what I teach. I resist the urge to respond, "Kids." I answer, "I'm a librarian. I teach *everything*." In our own way, we do.

For career presentations, I've been asked to talk about why I chose my profession. I have a feeling my situation is far from unique. I was an undergraduate English major, and for a while I did consider teaching secondary school English. But even then I realized that my interests ranged far beyond the traditional canon of literature. I loved history, even had a craving for certain aspects of mathematics and science. Art and music were incredibly important, enriching parts of my existence. I did not want to teach *one* of these subjects; I wanted to share my enthusiasm for *all* of them. I considered public library work, but found the close interaction with a familiar population of energetic young people over a span of years much more stimulating and rewarding. And so I ended up where I am today.

When I'm teaching research skills, I try to resist the easy temptation to teach a specific resource. Of course, specifics are sometimes necessary: our circulation system has some bells and whistles the students might not identify on their own; the organization of the volumes of General Statutes can be bewildering, even to a regular user of other library materials. But I try to frame everything in a larger context: not Follett's CirculationPlus, but the concept of a database with multiple searchable fields; not a resource with an unusual organization, but the indispensability of an index. That's a major reason why the Big6 model for research has become so popular: it's logical, it works, and it's flexible enough to be applied to a variety of situations, both in and out of a library setting.

Not many teachers in most schools, except the library media specialists, regularly instruct people other than their students. We, however, work with student aides, paraprofessionals, and volunteers. Often this instruction remains at the concrete stage: our workers learn to perform a set of assigned tasks. It's exciting, however, when these workers return year after year, or express an interest in understanding why things are organized and done as they are in the library, or exhibit special skills—creating displays, reading aloud, and assisting students. It's especially gratifying when a parent volunteer or a student worker begins asking about the logistics of becoming a librarian.

We're often the first people in our schools to encounter new technologies. We tend to be the ones with the most experience searching the Internet. We know how to get the pictures out of the digital camera and into the PowerPoint presentation. We read all the really good picture books or YA novels as soon as they come out of the box. When you find yourself repeating a mini-lesson on these sorts of things with one teacher after another on an individual basis, it may be time to schedule some staff development sessions. And be sure to reach out to those teachers who ask whether you're in the teachers' or paraprofessionals' union, who seem surprised when you talk about your student teaching experience, your certification renewal date, or your college degrees.

I said earlier that one of the reasons I became a librarian was that my interests were too wide-ranging to be limited to a single subject. Another reason is that I am, and have always been, an insatiable reader. I love to share what I've read, which got me involved with Linworth years ago as a reviewer. My most memorable compliment from a student remains, "You know all the good books!" Not every student is going to become "infected" with my passion for the written word. Nevertheless, I'm always on the lookout for great titles to recommend, both for the teen with mature and sophisticated tastes, and for the kid who just wants something to get the next book report over with as painlessly as possible.

After a number of years working with the lower grades, I also became addicted to reading aloud, an activity my high school students now appreciate (once the initial snickering stops). I've met colleagues, especially at the high school level, who haven't quite reconciled the schizophrenic nature of what we teach: solid research and reading for pleasure. Others concentrate on the technological aspects of our role as teacher, seeing this as the wave of the future. I like to think we can help develop young people who are adept lifelong learners on an academic and a personal level, and who also appreciate the pleasures of a good read. My students will be parents in a few years—some already are. If they don't understand the importance of reading for pleasure, they're not likely to pass down that value to their own children.

We need to keep in mind that, as we teach, we may be reaching generations to come.

Using the Big6™ to Plan Instruction and Services

By Jodi L. Kearns

The relationship between school library collections and services, the school curriculum, and information problem solving can be characterized in many ways. Traditionally, the library media specialist develops the collection and provides library services while classroom teachers and administrators develop the curricula. However, these two information problem-solving activities do not have to be approached independently!

Classroom teachers and library media specialists can work together to incorporate information problem solving in the school curricula.

This collaboration results in meaningful and successful learning experiences (Haycock, 1992). Furthermore, through the use of the Big6 Skills model students become masters of a process approach to problem solving. The Big6 process provides a plan of action as students seek to solve personal and school-related information problems (Eisenberg & Berkowitz, 1999).

Collaboration & Materials Selection

Selection The relationship between collection development, curriculum development, and information problem solving is improved by applying the Big6 Skills process to the selection of materials and teacher collaboration. When library materials are selected collaboratively by the library media specialist (LMS) and library program users, the materials reflect a wider range of information needs. The Big6 Skills can help guide the selection of library collections and materials (see Figure 1).

The Big6 Skills model is also useful when library media specialists and teachers plan lessons and resources cooperatively. Collaboration is essential to resource-based teaching and integrating information literacy skills instruction (Woolls, 1994). Using the Big6 Skills approach for cooperative planning with teachers reinforces the effectiveness of information problem

solving as part of the planning process.

The Big6 Cooperative Planning Chart (see Figure 2) is an organizational tool that effectively and efficiently manages tasks while planning for instruction and services. As an added benefit, using the Big6 Skills as part of the planning process may serve to introduce the teacher to the Big6 Skills.

Figure 3 shows a tool for cooperatively planning integrated instruction and services. For this example, a third grade teacher contacts the LMS to ask for help with a unit: "Can my students use the library resources to learn more about reptiles?" The chart in Figure 3 can be used to organize the objectives

and needs of collaborative projects. The chart will be continuously revised as classroom teachers and library media specialists plan instruction and plan to serve the students' information needs. The chart will help organize thoughts and instruction throughout the lesson. The chart also serves as a guide for future approaches to similar lessons sons with the same or different teachers.

By using the Big6 Skills approach to select materials and to cooperatively plan instruction, library media specialists "practice what they preach." That is, they themselves use the Big6 in problem solving while planning media program services and instruction.

Figure 1—Using the Big6 Skills for Collection Development

Big6 Skill 1 (Task Definition):
What needs to be done?
I need to discover what materials are needed in our library media program from the perspectives of administrators, teachers. students, and parents.

Big6 Skill 2 (Information Seeking Strategies):
What resources can I use?
I need to create materials request and suggestion forms that are suitable for administrators, teachers, students, and parents. I can also use the selection materials available in the library.

Big6 Skill 3 (Location & Access):
Where can I find these resources?
I will send the request/suggestion forms home with students, leave some in the staff center, and have some in the library media center (LMC). I will invite administrators, teachers, students, and parents to come in to examine the current collection and to review selection tools I have available in the LMC.

Big6 Skill 4 (Use of Information):
What can I use from these resources?
When I receive feedback from students, teachers, parents, and administrators, I will add the suggestions to my consideration file in the form of a chart that will specify the origin of the suggestion and place it in one of five categories: Books, magazines, reference materials, software, or supplies.

Big6 Skill 5 (Synthesis):
What can I use to make the final selection?
I will make my selections based on the information I have recorded in the chart. I will focus extra attention to requests for materials that appear more than once.

Big6 Skill 6 (Evaluation):
How will I know if I did my job well?
When the new materials arrive, I will publicize them to administrators, teachers, students, and parents. I will monitor the reactions of these users to the materials, and I will listen to their further suggestions.

Figure 2—Big6 Skills Cooperative Planning Chart

Task Definition:
- What is the assignment?
- What are the instructional objectives of the assignment?
- What Big6 Skills can be incorporated into the lesson?
- How will we integrate this instruction?

Information Seeking Strategies:
- What resources will students need to complete the assignment?
- What resources will the teacher and library media specialist (LMS) need to plan and carry out the instruction?

Location & Access:
- Where can these resources be found?
- Are these resources readily available in our library?
- Do we have enough resources, or do we need to obtain more resources from other libraries?
- Are the resources age-appropriate, and will they support independent learning and discovery?
- Do we have resources that present a variety of approaches to the assigned topic and represent several points of view?
- Do we have the resources that the LMS and teacher need to plan and carry out instruction?

Use of Information:
- How can we record the resources that we will need to plan and carry out this assignment?
- Do we want to develop a list, chart, or database for our own or for students' use?
- How will we record the ideas generated for instructing students?

Synthesis:
- How and when will instruction take place?
- What roles will the teacher and LMS play in the instruction?
- How will the teacher and LMS provide continuing student support?
- How will the teacher and LMS facilitate each individual student's learning paces and styles?

Evaluation:
- How will we know if we were successful?
- How will we know if our students are successful?

Figure 3—Example of Using the Big6 Skills Cooperative Planning Chart

Big Skill 1—Task Definition:
What is the assignment?
- Students will use the Big6 information problem solving process to find information about reptiles.
- Students will explore the library resources to identify a reptile about which they would like to learn.
- Students will display final projects and help evaluate the usefulness of the available resources.

What are the instructional objectives of the assignment?
- Students will make choices regarding a specific reptile to research using library resources.
- Students will learn about reptiles.
- Students will work with both the classroom teacher and the LMS in order to achieve success in this project.
- Students will practice Big6 Skills by intentional implementation in this assignment.
- Students will become increasingly familiar with the Big6 Skills
- Students will be able to carry the Big6 Skills into future lessons and use the skills appropriately in other areas of the classroom and LMC.

What Big6 Skills can be incorporated into the lesson?
- **Task Definition:** Students will demonstrate that they understand the assignment. Students will acquire ideas, in consultation with the teacher and LMS, about a suitable final project.
- **Information Seeking Strategies:** Students will browse the LMC to decide what resources they need to complete the assignment. Students may be introduced to using journal articles as a resource.
- **Location & Access:** Students will choose resources from the library media center including electronic, print, and online resources. They will determine what other resources they will need that can be located and accessed during another lesson.
- **Use of Information:** Students will read all available materials and choose the relevant information for use in their own projects.
- **Synthesis:** Students will use their newly acquired knowledge and information to produce the final project they have chosen.
- **Evaluation:** Students will evaluate their work based on available resources, time, and effort. Students will peer review the work of classmates.

How will we integrate this instruction?
- A preliminary review of the Big6 Skills will take place as a large group activity. Then, as students require assistance, ongoing skills instruction will take place individually or in small groups.
- The teacher and LMS will facilitate learning by supporting student choices and guiding students through the Big6 steps.

Big6 Skill 2—Information Seeking Strategies:
What resources will students need to complete the assignment?
- Students will be invited to use all resources of the LMC, including reference materials, online information, the Internet, audiovisual materials, human experts, and print materials.
- Students, teachers, and library media specialists may suggest additional resources that are required for completion of the assignment.

What resources will the teacher and library media specialist need to plan and carry out the instruction?
- The teacher and LMS will make resources available that provide appropriate information for various abilities.
- The teacher and LMS will keep a record of additional materials that may be required.

Do we have resources that present a variety of approaches to the assigned topic and represent several points of view?
- Students will become aware of varying points of view in literature and will need to choose the information that best serves their information needs.
- Students will exercise good judgment and will receive guidance regarding authority and credibility of any information accessed on the Internet.