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Subject: The future of school librarianship   **Topic:** Discussion: Write your own Op-ed
Author: Lita Brown   **Date:** March 22, 2012 8:33 PM

The future of librarianship?

Although a majority of k-12 students still attend traditional brick and mortar schools, an increasing number of students are giving online learning a try. There were over 1,800,000 enrollments in distance education courses in K-12 school districts in 2009 – 2010, with 74% of these enrollments for high schools [http://www.inacol.org/press/docs/nacol_fast_facts.pdf].

Given the research by Keith Curry Lance and others [http://www.lrs.org/index.php], it is hard to deny that an active library program increases student learning. Academic achievement is higher in schools where library media programs have quality collections, library media specialists take an active role in curriculum and instruction, information literacy is taught, and information technology is used effectively. Knowing this, why are the virtual schools using a passive library model? The "Library Media Center" for these schools is merely an information repository, a wall of links, albeit a usually attractive wall.

While reading for pleasure is a big part of being a librarian, librarianship is not just about the books. We are instructional partners, which should be especially important considering the heightened concern about student learning. We teach internet safety, social media skills and how to evaluate with whom, or what, you are communicating. Librarians are the teachers whose job it is to teach 21st-century literacy and technology skills to their students. We teach lifelong learning skills, such as where to find the information you need and how to share it; how to obtain information from images and videos; and making the most of print and electronic sources. We are teachers of teachers, working with faculty to ensure that these skills are infused throughout the entire curriculum. The school librarian works with classroom teachers to support and co-teach, among other things, important test-taking skills, such as comprehension, analysis, synthesis and communication of information and ideas from multiple sources and formats [http://www.newsday.com/opinion/oped/baaden-school-librarians-are-indispensable-1.3141330].

The current generation of k-12 students has no memory of a time before Google. While these students may be more tech savvy than their parents, their need for information literacy skills is greater than for any generation before. While students may be able to hack themselves around the school's internet filter, they do not know how to formulate a good search query or make sense of what they find. It is the librarian's job to teach students how to evaluate websites and how to efficiently search for information, making more productive use of their time. Not teaching our students how to search for information is an injustice on par with not teaching them how to read.

Researchers are studying children, information and technology. What their results are telling us is that we need professionally trained librarians to teaching information literacy from an early age. Our 'digital divide' isn't actually digital, it is informational. It isn't not about access; it's about agility [http://articles.latimes.com/2010/mar/21/opinion/la-oe-scribner21-2010mar21].

We know that professionally trained librarians with active library programs make better students. So, why are we not only cutting library programs in brick and mortar schools, but leaving them out of the online schools entirely?

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Subject: Re:The future of school librarianship | **Topic:** Discussion: Write your own Op-ed
Author: Milton Stephenson | **Date:** March 25, 2012 10:28 PM

Lita you made some very valid points in your op-ed, particularly in regards to how the media specialists' job is to teach students how to gain information literacy and how to utilize informational technology. Your piece did a good job of explicitly explaining how and why the media specialist is important and also framing the question about why these skills are not used in online courses.

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Subject: Re:The future of school librarianship | **Topic:** Discussion: Write your own Op-ed
Author: Lita Brown | **Date:** March 26, 2012 12:54 PM

Thanks, I appreciate the feedback!

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Subject: Re:The future of school librarianship | **Topic:** Discussion: Write your own Op-ed
Author: Adam Fite | **Date:** March 30, 2012 9:17 PM

You say "Not teaching our students how to search for information is an injustice on par with not teaching them how to read."

I say "Amen!"

There is absolutely so much junk that exists today right at the fingertips of students. Before the Net got so big, books were the (or at least a) primary source of information. Not everyone is going to take the time to write a book and have it published. Thus, books tended to be much more reliable sources for information. And although there are books that are full of junk too, it doesn't compare to the junk that any average Joe can crank out on a blog or wiki...

I've always said it's not necessarily what you say, but how you say it.
If someone gives their opinion about something and states unresearched "facts" based on their beliefs, and for some reason it spawns a following because of the way they presented this information, this could very well become "correct" according to some people.

I'm not certain if that made any sense to anyone, but basically I'm saying that just because you read something in a few places on the Internet doesn't necessarily mean it's valid information. It might just mean that one person said it, and then other people repeated it not knowing any better. I wish there was an easy way to seek out and ban false information from the Internet.

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Subject: Re:The future of school librarianship | **Topic:** Discussion: Write your own Op-ed
Author: Kenneth Kenny Blum | **Date:** March 31, 2012 11:12 PM

I always tell my students, "I can make a webpage. YOU can make a webpage." That doesn't mean anything I put on that page is true!

We do have to teach students how to filter.

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