

School media centers are, in my opinion, special libraries and should be managed as such. Unfortunately, my disappointing personal experience with school media centers as an English teacher since 1993 has only been reinforced by my attempt to research best cataloging practices in the field. There is much information available to school media specialists and teacher-librarians in regards to developing curriculum and collaborating with teachers, but very little in regards to information management. It seems that budget concerns, time constraints, and man-power affect information management within the school media center to a greater degree than in most other libraries (Tennant).

To be absolutely honest, much of what I have learned in this 7300 class in regards to cataloging is completely foreign to me personally and professionally. I have much to learn and am eager to learn so that I may be able to serve my patrons, whether they are the general public or elementary to high school students, in the most progressive way possible. I have taught at several schools both public and private and ages elementary to high school. In every case, I was sorely disappointed by the library-media services provided the students and faculty. Not only were there limited programs and services available to students and faculty, most of the books and equipment were outdated. I didn't know enough to realize that they should have progressed beyond the card catalog. Now I know that each of these schools should have had an OPAC (Online Public Access Catalog) available for effective and efficient use of resources. Furthermore, several schools I am currently familiar with should have already begun

cataloging electronic information packages through metadata programs such as Dublin Core or GEM (Adamich). I know that Thomas County Central High School is building a new media center this summer and the superintendent has stated that it will offer cutting-edge services. The story just ran in the paper two days ago and I am very interested in speaking to the media specialist, Jim Rehberg, as to what type of software and cataloging system they use. I am most interested in whether they are including electronic information packages in their OPAC records or are still going to use Internet search engines as a primary source of research.

Even though I have not taught full-time since 2003, I have taught part-time and as a substitute teacher and have seen first-hand that students are still wasting an excessive amount of time searching for relevant information on the Internet in order to complete assignments. Teachers, librarians, and media specialists are still relying too heavily on basic Internet search engines in order to bookmark websites for student assignments when it would be more efficient and user-friendly to catalog needed websites so that they are accessible through the OPAC (Christensen). Roy Tennant is probably the most outspoken person in the field in regards to the need for more modern library service. He believes that highly trained catalogers are the key to helping the field progress. Tennant also believes that catalogers need the support of administration in order to be able to take the time necessary to "...learn how to create, manage, and exploit new metadata (Tennant)." School media centers are in an even more challenging position as they are often staffed with one certified person, one non-certified person, and various student volunteers. The certified media specialist is expected to

focus on curriculum first, may or may not be trained as a cataloger, has very limited time, and a limited budget. I imagine that switching from a card catalog to MARC or learning and using Dublin Core or GEM could create a huge backlog within the school media, which would limit services to students. I do not accept that this excuses any library, especially school media centers, from providing the best information retrieval possible.

It must not be overlooked that a major stumbling block to modernizing the school media center is that of the certified staff long out of school (Tenant). I know this is a sensitive subject and the media specialists I have known have been more than defensive about their lack of technological savvy. I spent five years directing an equity in technological access program for at-risk students. At the time, our independent computer lab was state-of-the-art and my students were trained in hardware maintenance and repair and the latest multi-media software programs. I tried to develop a partnership with the school media specialist, but she was not interested in technology and staunchly defended her position. It was not unusual to start up one of the media center computers only to find that it hadn't been turned on in nearly a semester. This scenario is all too common and should not be tolerated. Just this last October when I was acting as a substitute teacher, the media specialist needed my help to clear the print jobs accidentally okayed by an overzealous student. For years, this media specialist thought that she just had to let all the print jobs print and did not realize that she could cancel the print jobs. If these professionals do not use the equipment for

basic services, how can they possibly learn to manage information in a more efficient manner?

I hope to learn all the different aspects necessary to provide the best services possible to my students and faculty in the future. It is obvious from what I have researched that information management is the foundation to exemplary service. Students and faculty deserve a 21<sup>st</sup> century media center staffed by certified professionals willing and able to stay abreast of the latest services, technologies, and innovations in their field.

### Works Cited

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