Embedding the Library Across the School
**Verb**

**Embedding**

Fix (an object) firmly and deeply in a surrounding mass.

Implant (an idea or feeling) so that it becomes ingrained within a particular context.
Attitude

Positive
Friendly
Service Orientated
Collaborative
Aristotle said:

Pleasure in the job puts perfection in the work.
Di Ruffles (current SLAV President) in a *Synergy* Interactions piece wrote:

**it is crucial that teacher-librarians and school libraries maintain their focus on building relationships within their learning communities. Personal contact is still the key to maintaining the dynamic hub of intellectual curiosity and cultural life which is the school library.**

Where the library is fully integrated into the life and ethos of the school, the potential benefits that a good professional partnership with the teaching staff can bring to the quality of teaching should not be underestimated.

‘The Beating Heart of the School’ Libraries All Parties Parliamentary Group, CILIP, Great Britain, 2014
The Role of the Teacher-librarian

Personal Competencies

The teacher-librarian:

✓ is committed to program excellence;
✓ seeks out challenges and sees new opportunities both inside and outside the library;
✓ sees the big picture;
✓ looks for partnerships and alliances;
✓ creates an environment of mutual respect and trust;
✓ has effective communications skills;
✓ works well with others in a team;
✓ provides leadership;
✓ plans, prioritizes and focuses on what is critical;
✓ is committed to lifelong learning;
✓ is flexible and positive in a time of continuing change.

Ken Haycock (2003)
The Crisis in Canada’s Schools: The Case for Reform and Reinvestment.
Carol: We did tease out the qualities that the principal and the teachers mentioned about their school librarians, and one is, ‘she’s not judgmental about us, we feel safe, we feel comfortable in going to her to ask a question or to collaborate.’
Carol: The librarian never says ‘no’ was the phrase we heard over and over again. For instance, the teacher felt, when asking for the materials they needed, that the librarian did everything she could to help them, and she listened to what they needed. There wasn’t a preconceived idea of what a good library is, and the type of collection to build. It wasn’t isolated like that. It was completely open, where the librarian was flexible and ready to listen and let her library become what people needed it to be. These librarians were very different people, but they were all very open-minded. They were good listeners. They were not judgemental. They were helpful. They were highly skilled. Definitely there were commonalities in attitude, personality, interpersonal skills, vision.
Always say ‘Yes!’

SERVICE ORIENTATED
EXTERNAL PROFESSIONAL NETWORKS

With limited time to participate in professional collaboration with colleagues and peers during the school day, a substantial number of school librarians and other educators are participating in professional learning networks on their own time.

School librarians indicated that this type of professional learning is an effective support component of their professional learning.

51% of school librarians reported seeking and sharing ideas at least weekly in online networks and communities, compared with 23% of educators overall.

Working Together is Working Smarter (Infographic) National Centre for Literacy Education and American Association of School Librarianship, 2013
Leadership

Modeling Best Practice
Creating a Cohesive Team
Knowledgeable
Leadership

In order to play an instructional role successfully, school librarians must exercise leadership to create the sort of working environment they need to help students and teachers succeed. Specific activities which define such leadership include:

- meeting frequently with the principal,
- attending and participating in faculty meetings,
- serving on standards and curriculum committees; and
- meeting with library colleagues at building, district, and higher levels.

POLICIES AND PROGRAMS
Teacher librarians, as highly accomplished educators:

• contribute to their colleagues learning through mentoring, coaching, and modeling sound teaching practices,

• initiate ideas, strategies and discussions about effective teaching to improve educational outcomes for students,

• teach, collaborate, listen, advocate, innovate, create, share with students and staff,

• model and build capacity for lifelong learning, and

• demonstrate leadership capabilities.

ASLA Futures Paper, 2013
Gary Hartzell in his presentation ‘What’s it Take?’

Librarians empower others, and their contributions get swallowed up in what those people do. Teachers and students take what librarians give them and fold it into their own products and performances. The librarian’s work gets absorbed into the student’s research project or into the teacher’s lesson and becomes their own. The integration is so complete that it’s very difficult to distinguish the librarian’s contribution in the finished work.
Think about the unique values that libraries add to the school environment. In this age of budget reductions and accountability, school librarians must be able to articulate the unique and essential added values of the school library.

These impacts vary by school, but I have found certain ones resonate well with many different constituencies:

- the teaching of critical and creative thinking skills,
- the teaching and fostering of grit and perseverance,
- the development of a school wide culture of reading,
- the nurturing of social and emotional development in all students,
- and the connector/leadership role of the school librarian.

I strongly maintain that the only way we will remain viable as a profession (and sleep with clear consciences) is to offer **indispensable services** no one else in society can or will.

Craft the message around children and learning, not around the school library itself. Amazingly, our messages are often more similar to “support the school library because it’s a library” than “support the school library because it enables all children to develop the skills they need to learn on their own.” It is important to build these messages around data gathered..... so they can be based on authentic evidence.

• Conduct sustained advocacy, not sporadic reactions to crises

• Develop relationships with those who have an interest in student success and empower them to be active partners in advocacy

• Craft the message around children and learning, not around the school library itself

• Collect stories

• Use multiple formats to deliver advocacy

SOLUTIONS

SAVE THEM MONEY!
A school library is the heart of the school and is visible in the everyday functioning of the school. It is also a nest for culture and knowledge and thus forever changing. The school’s plan of action is visible in the school library. The library is open, tolerant and cooperative.

Learning and Teaching

Outcomes Driven
Student Focused
Evidence Based
We do not learn from experience . . . we learn from reflecting on experience.

John Dewey
We can no longer afford to complete a program evaluation once every five years and have the results thrown in a drawer and never looked at until the next formal assessment. Our assessments need to help us improve our practice, to serve as indicators for our planning efforts, and to be an integral part of our communication efforts with our teachers, administrators, parents and communities.

Doug Johnson, 2007, ‘What Gets Measured Gets Done’
Evidence-based practice should guide the services and programs of a school library and provide the data needed for improvement of professional practice and for ensuring that the services and programs of a school library make a positive contribution to teaching and learning in the school.

IFLA, January, 2015
If our work is not built on evidence, what then is driving our practice?
