

Sabbatical Report-
Secondary Senior Managers Sabbatical
Term 4 2013

Lynette Parish
Deputy Principal
Matamata College

The development of a strategic plan for the school library, to enable it to successfully function as a centre of e-learning and help to raise literacy levels across the school.

Acknowledgements

The Principal and Board of Trustees of Matamata College for allowing me time off.

The Teacher/Librarians of Albany Senior Secondary School, Ormiston College, Papamoa College and Tauranga City Library.

Matamata College students who completed surveys and questionnaires about reading and use of the Library.

Background

In my Senior Manager's role at Matamata College I have responsibility for the strategic resourcing of ICT across the school and I am SMT Liaison for the Library.

It was becoming clear to me that while the financial support for ICT in the school was increasing each year, at the same time there was no decrease in budgeted expenditure for the Library, yet usage of the resources in the Library was diminishing rapidly.

A change to our timetable in 2013 meant the end of a once weekly 20 minute slot for Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading (USSR) and at the same time, the English Dept dropped the Personal Reading Standard from the Level 1,2 and 3 courses.

This led to a huge drop in the number of books issued and the Library was rapidly becoming just a nice, comfortable warm space to work in. With a BYOD policy throughout the school, why not convert the Library to a "Learning Commons" type space where students had access to desktops, and benches with power for chargers for their own devices?

But alongside this, the asttle data from our contributing schools revealed around 40% of students were entering Year 9 below Level 4 of the Curriculum in Reading.

Therefore the challenge for me was to find ways that the resources of ICT and the Library could combine to increase use of the Library as the centre of literacy in the school.

Methodology

1. A questionnaire for a selection of Yr 9 -13 Matamata College students to determine levels of use of Library
2. Internet based research to identify school districts in the UK and USA which also had declining use of the Library and to find out steps they were taking to turn things around
3. Visits to libraries in "new build schools" with Modern Learning Environments
4. Work with the Matamata College Librarian to develop the strategic plan

1 The questionnaire (copied below)

The results of the questionnaire made depressing reading, and revealed that around 90% of students across Years 10-12 did not miss USSR at all. Furthermore, more than 60% of them had not taken a book out of the Library during the year (the survey was done in October). Most students simply said they did not like reading, while some said that they read at home

When asked what they would like their ideal library to look like, there were obviously a range of answers such as:

“it would have a canteen in it”

“lots of beanbags and Lazyboys”

“areas for people to discuss and talk”

“interactive games and activities”

“magazines and music playing in the background” etc

but many of the students said that it would look like it looks now, with lots of books in it. Students commented that they would like certain books – nearly all of which are already in the Library.

This was a significant point for me because the school Library has all of the shelving around the walls, rather than mobile shelves in the middle, and I think this makes it difficult for students to find the books they are interested in.

I have frequently seen students enter the fiction section of the Library, be pressed by the teacher to choose a book, and subsequently pick at random from the shelves.

It was this behaviour that I thought could be modified by the use of digital technologies, since for many people, choosing books (or movies) is now an on-line experience – for example using Amazon, Fishpond or Mighty Ape websites to choose texts based on reviews and recommendations from others who might share the same tastes.

2. Internet Based Research

From my research it was clear that Library Improvement experiences varied from country to country. In the UK, a report published by the National Literacy Trust (www.literacytrust.org.uk), based on the Commission set up by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council to look at ‘School Libraries: A plan for improvement’, made the point that “many of the mechanisms for improving schools will change and will be operating within a climate of straitened resources”.

Consequently one of their strongest recommendation was for school libraries to be working in partnership with Public Libraries. Something as simple as on-line catalogues could mean that the local school and public libraries were not doubling up on suitable books for children’s and young adult fiction.

In the USA, there was a lot of exciting change happening in libraries to make them 21st Century learning environments and a recognition of the power of the Internet to provide much of the traditional knowledge found in school libraries.

“With the digital revolution, information access, use, and communication have changed along with the definition of literacy. Accessing and collecting information is easier, but effectively using it has never been more difficult. And more than ever students and staff need collaborative, flexible and creative spaces that provide expert instruction and technology and literacy support. The school library, or learning commons, continues to be an integral part of the academic and cultural life of a school but the way it is being used is changing—it is an exciting, engaging place to be!”

From <<http://www3.sd73.bc.ca/general/content/school-libraries-are-transforming-21st-century-learning>>

Many American libraries were also looking at opening up during the long summer break to encourage students to keep reading, since there is a noticeable drop off in literacy scores after the summer break.

The best website I accessed was that of “The Daring Librarian”, a woman called Gwyneth Jones,” *a Google Certified Teacher, an elected member of the ISTE Board of Directors, and the author of the award winning Daring Librarian blog. Jones is also a Library Journal Mover & Shaker, a Gale/Cengage New Leader, and was named the Best of the Best and a Visionary Leader by Teacher Librarian Magazine.*”

She begins each school year at Murray Hill Middle School, Maryland, with a message to families of her school and makes the Library a lively, vibrant place:

Dear MHMS Families,

Our MHMS Daring School Library Media program has some exciting opportunities in store for your kiddos this year:

- *Our program will be promoting the very best of young adult literature with activities designed to help students enjoy stories even more.*
- *We will be doing our very best to get (or keep) every kid “hooked on reading” by recommending specific reading materials to each individual.*

- *We will be adding 400 or more of the latest and most exciting new titles for our young readers, including quality non-fiction to help meet Common Core requirements. We will also be adding more to our impressive Digital Playaway book collection.*
- *At each grade level, students will learn research and computer skills including use of tools like Edmodo, Google Apps for Education, Career Puppy, Noodletools, QR Codes, and much more.*
- *We will be working with classroom teachers to help infuse technology and research skills into all areas of the curriculum.*
- *Library lessons will stress good Digital Citizenship, helping your kid make safe and ethical decisions when using the Internet.*
- *We are planning lots of special events including virtual author visits, curated Art installations, and virtual connections with schools from around the country & maybe the world!*
- *We are looking for students to join our MHTV studio contributing to our daily live news show created FOR kids BY kids!*
- *If you would like to volunteer to help in the library, please let me know. We would love to have you!*

<http://web.hcpss.org/~gajones/>

Her use of blogs, videoed book trailers and QR codes gave me a good base to build on when writing our school's strategic plan.

3. School visits

Ormiston Senior College- - Manukau 23/10/2013

<http://www.ormiston.school.nz/>

Albany Senior High School – Albany 24/10/2013

<http://www.ashs.school.nz/>

Papamoa College – Tauranga 12/11/2013

<http://www.papamoacollege.school.nz/>

I chose “new build “ schools which had a focus on providing students with Modern Learning Environments, and quickly realised that the provision of Learning Commons areas and the BYOD policies of these schools meant that in fact their libraries were quite a bit smaller than the libraries in traditional schools. More flexible timetables meant there was not necessarily the pressure on the Library space that traditional schools had.

Ormiston College had made some changes to their Library policy in the short time it had been open to ensure more of a learning environment in that space, and had moved to follow a model by David Thornburg (‘Campfires in Cyberspace’ by David D. Thornburg, <http://tcpd.org/Thornburg/Handouts/Campfires.pdf>) which broke the Library up into a metaphorical Watering Hole, Mountain top, Sandpit, Cave and Campfire depending on the learning taking place. This, along with a Library Access Pass and the planned “Independent Learner’s Licence” had made a difference to the use and success of the Library.

Albany Senior High School’s Library showed me the importance of the right people in the right place. Although this is one of the very few Senior Secondary schools in NZ, when I visited, the Library was featuring books around the theme of Halloween and zombie and dystopian literature. The whole front of the Library was decked out in black and red and included wonderful (homemade) collages and models in black and red, of zombies, vampires and associated images. This proved very attractive to the students and book issues had risen accordingly. Both the Librarian and the Library Assistant worked hard to make the place relevant for the students.

ASHS uses the open source “Koha” Library Management System and this allows a large amount of independence for student borrowers.

Papamoa College was slightly different from the other schools, in that the majority of their students were from Years 7 and 8 so the Library had more of a Primary School library feel to it. A major focus in this library was on the provision of DVDs and Audiobooks to support student literacy. Where there was a print version of the Audiobook or DVD, this was highlighted for the students. Papamoa College had a big focus on Student Librarians and a student Book Club, where the members had the privilege of borrowing newly purchased books and then giving feedback to other students using the Library.

The visits to these schools were interesting – in most cases there had been a radical change in the design of learning spaces, but this was not the case for the Library.

4. Writing of Strategic Plan

This was the last stage and necessitated me collaborating with the Matamata College Teacher /Librarian to formulate a plan which was able to be implemented at the beginning of February 2014 WITHOUT the assistance of extra funding, since the budgets for 2014 had been completed by mid-November.

During Term 4 I had been working with a Yr10 class to create book trailer videos which they then converted to QR codes, just to make sure it would work without any problems.

Coincidentally our Library Assistant resigned, so we were able to employ a new Assistant with ICT skills and a willingness to try new things to increase Library patronage.

The plan was completed, shared with the relevant staff and is shown below.

Conclusion

After 20 years as a Deputy Principal, I really enjoyed the time out, away from pastoral concerns of students, to follow up on my shared interests of literacy and digital technologies. It was enlightening to see schools using their Modern Learning Environments and I now see that the Matamata College Library can lead the way for the whole school in pushing the boundaries for student thinking and learning.

References

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<http://www.lrs.org/data-tools/school-libraries/impact-studies/>

<http://www3.sd73.bc.ca/general/content/school-libraries-are-transforming-21st-century-learning>

<http://www.pinterest.com/misshedutton/qr-codes-in-school/>

<https://sites.google.com/site/tscommoncore/school-librarians-and-common-core>

Strategic Plan for Matamata College Library

Actions to be Taken	Outcome	By whom	When	Cost
Moodle Library page to be set up and linked to Athenaeum online catalogue	Students can access Moodle at home and all around the school. E-books can be borrowed and downloaded online anywhere, anytime.	PH with help from ited.co.nz	Feb2014	Nil
Book reviews to be created and videoed by Yr 10 classes and QR codes created	Students engaged in reading with a purpose – to produce a video for a real audience.	Yr 10 English teachers and their students	By end of Term 2 2014	Nil
QR codes to be stuck on books	Students begin to use MOBILE DEVICES to assist them in choosing books they are interested in.	Library Assistant	By end of Term 2 2014	Nil
QR Code Scavenger Hunt to be planned for first week of school for Yr 9 students	New entrants to the school have an interactive introduction to the Library. Activity is competitive and fun.	PH, Teacher Librarian and Library Assistant	1 st week of school 2014	Nil
Bookmarks to be designed and printed to generate student interest	'Mashup" bookmarks are generated linking Library resources and external resources such as web links identified by QR codes.	Yr 10IT Teacher and class	By end of Term 2 2014	Printing costs (good quality laminated card)
Research Resource to be placed on Student Help page on Moodle which is scaffolded according to literacy levels	Students and teachers are introduced to differentiated literacy levels in resources such as Google search and Wikipedia	PH	During Term 1 2014	Nil
Digital signage to be planned for monitor for Library	A TV is set up looping curriculum links and with a world wide RSS news feed.	Teacher in Charge of School Network.	2015	\$1000 - \$1500

2013 Reading this year

1. We have not had USSR this year. Have you missed it?
2. Have you taken a book out of the school library this year? Fiction, non-fiction or both? How many?
3. Have you read a book from home, or the town library, or from a friend? If so, how many?
4. Have you done reading responses in class? If so, how did you choose your books?
5. Do you read the daily newspaper (eg Herald or Waikato Times) and/or local newspapers such as The Scene or The Chronicle?
6. Do you read e-books?
7. Do you read pages on the internet (ie websites, not social networking sites like Facebook)) connected to your school subjects?
8. Do you read pages on the internet connected to your sports or hobbies?
9. Do you read magazines associated with your sports or hobbies?
10. What would your ideal school library look like?

