

Chapter 21

A High School Librarian's Participation in Supporting Information Literacy on Her Campus

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The ability to navigate the web and to use technology effectively and efficiently is no longer an option but a requirement in schools and in the workplace. Information literacy is widely accepted as embracing rapid advances in technologies and recognizing the multiple literacies required of students living and learning in this century. Information literacy has grown to include traditional literacy, computer literacy, media literacy, and network literacy. School library media specialists in the twenty-first century face both challenges and opportunities in the recent high expectations of information literacy. Among the challenges is keeping up with changing technologies and taking the necessary steps to ensure students and teachers have appropriate access to resources and instruction. Opportunities include the chance to transform today's library into a resource center of the future where information literacy can be easily obtained. Welcome to the world of Ms. West, a middle school teacher turned high school librarian, and see how she ponders upon her new role as being the instructor/specialist of information literacy skills on the campus, a reading advocate and provider of reading materials, as the manager of the resources both information and library resources, and lastly being a collaborator with teachers concerning information literacy issues.

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BACKGROUND INTRODUCTION

Information literacy has been defined as a set of abilities requiring individuals to recognize when information is needed and to have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use information effectively. Information literacy has grown to include traditional literacy, computer literacy, media literacy, and network literacy. The significance of information literacy on high school campuses has become increasingly important in the last few years. The ability to navigate the internet and use technology tools effectively is becoming a vital necessity to prepare students for higher education and as they prepare to enter the business world. In order to help students and teachers, librarians—also known as library media specialists—are gradually expected to become active disseminators of technology usage, attitudes and the perceptions of information literacy on their campuses. The librarian of tomorrow will be required to provide the resources and instruction necessary to keep up with changing technology demands.

Teachers need to possess information technology abilities in order to prepare students in these skills. Libraries and librarians are central to making this a reality.

THE CASE

Meet Ms. West, who is the new school librarian at Carter High School. A previous middle school language arts teacher, Ms. West went through trainings and recertification processes to become a high school librarian.

Since she has taught middle school for over 10 years, working on a campus is not new to her. What is daunting to her is her new role and new identity as the school librarian. More than ever, students of all ages are expected to be able to perform using computer technologies. Teachers must be able to use the technologies to input attendance, grades, and to present lessons in the classroom. And school staff members are expected to be able to find the right information, organize it properly, and display and communicate that information through various media such as newsletters, portals, Web sites, wikis and blogs.

This is especially challenging when facing the high-schoolers who are called “the Internet Generation”. The Internet Generation is the first to grow up with the Internet, providing a number of resources from downloading music to blogging. Cell phones are also in wide use, along with other gadgets such as electronic games. The Internet Generation takes the Internet for granted, accepting the utility of services such as Google, online chatting, online shopping, e-mailing, Wikipedia, MySpace, Facebook, and streaming videos.

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