Chapter 89
Embedded Librarianship:
A High School Case Study

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ABSTRACT

This case study chronicles the learning experiences of 10th grade Honors Literature/Composition students who participated in a 2009-10 learning initiative, Media 21, at Creekview High School. This program, spearheaded by school librarian Buffy Hamilton and English teacher Susan Lester, provided students a learning environment facilitated by both Hamilton and Lester in which Hamilton was "embedded" as an instructor. Media 21, rooted in connectivism, inquiry, and participatory literacy, emphasized students creating their own research "dashboards" and portals, the creation of personal learning networks to help students engage in their learning experiences, and to evaluate a diverse offering of information sources more critically.

INTRODUCTION

Media 21 (http://portal.cherokee.k12.ga.us/departments/technology/media/default.aspx), a technology endorsement program for Cherokee County School District school librarians, is a local initiative designed to provide school librarians support for enhancing the learning environment of the library and increasing the level of technology integration into collaboratively designed learning activities between school librarians and classroom teachers. Participants take courses on learning pedagogy and technology tools for learning; the capstone project is the culminating learning experience in which each school librarian develops an information literacy project in his/her school.

Hamilton utilized her participation in the program to initiate a collaborative partnership with Susan Lester in which she was embedded into the daily life of two sections of 10th Honors World Literature and Composition for approximately 120 of the 180 days of the academic year. Hamilton's Media 21 initiative at Creekview High School provided students a unique opportunity

to be part of a collaborative partnership between teachers and students in which collective intelligence, the crowd sourcing of research and learning experiences, and inquiry took center stage in a participatory environment. Hamilton and Lester functioned as sponsors of traditional transliteracy as they scaffolded students' efforts to build their ability to read, write, and create content across multiple forms of media. The chapter explores how students used an assortment of tools and resources for learning, reflection, and content creation as part of the class research experiences as well as personal information seeking needs. The chapter also examines how students used traditional, authoritative sources of information as well as emerging forms of social scholarship for research and content creation of personalized research portals.

BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

In 1989 the American Library Association defined information literacy as "a set of abilities requiring individuals to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information" (Association of College and Research Libraries, 2009). While these fundamental skills are still at the heart of information literacy instruction, the nature of that information and the strategies for evaluating it are rapidly changing; the Read/Write Web and Web 2.0 technologies are disrupting many traditional, long-held concepts of authority. We are now in what Michael Jensen calls the "era of information abundance," as a result of this abundance, Jensen asserts, "…we are witnessing a radical shift in how we establish authority, significance, and even scholarly validity" (Jensen, 2007, p. B6).

Social networking and social media are responsible for these shifts in which any author may be valued as an "expert" in the production of scholarly knowledge. What does this mean to

librarians and our interpretation of "information literacy?" Laura Cohen says, "We can no longer be content to train students to understand the difference between peer-reviewed journals and popular magazines, to appreciate the value of books, newspapers and reference sources, and to understand how to evaluate garden variety Web sites" (Cohen, 2007).

The debate over what counts as authoritative information parallels similar arguments about what counts as literacy and reading. Literacy is no longer confined to traditional print materials as we now recognize multiple formats. In their American Educational Research Association paper, "Towards a Transformative Pedagogy for School Libraries 2.0," Asselin and Dorion maintain, "Within multiliteracies, 'new literacies' refers to new forms of texts—or post-typographic (digital) forms—and new ways of using text to shape new ways of thinking such as wikis, mash-ups, zines and scenario planning but may include media literacy and digital literacy…" (Asselin & Doiron, 2008). Henry Jenkins defines new media literacies as "…social skills developed through collaboration and networking. These skills build on the foundation of traditional literacy, research skills, technical skills, and critical analysis skills taught in the classroom" (Jenkins, 2006, p. 4).

School library media specialists function as sponsors of literacy (Brandt, 2001, p.19) by promoting traditional forms of information literacy—as well as new literacies—to encourage many voices of discourse and representations of information. Our conversations about authority and information evaluation reflect my personal paradigm shift and resulting effort to position new literacies as an integral element of learning. To embed information literacy as an essential standard in every subject area, we must collaborate with subject-area teachers to foster an inquiry-based approach to learning that dovetails perfectly with the use of social networks, new media, and information commons as part of students' personal learning networks and syntheses

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