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Editorial

School Library Education

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The articles in this issue represent a microcosm of the issues confronting teacher-librarian education for developing countries and developed countries. At first glance, the professional literature appears divided between two camps. Authors from westernized cultures have offered articles on contemporary school library issues such as leadership, information literacy skills, collaborative partnership with classroom teachers, and the use of the Internet for seeking information and online courses. In this issue, we also hear from authors in the developing country of Botswana about its basic need for skilled teacher-librarians who can effectively establish and manage libraries and run library programs that encourage information-seeking behaviors among students and teachers unaccustomed to a written literacy and reading culture. However, this apparent difference has qualities of sameness for the profession around the world. Ever present is the question of how teacher-librarians interact with teachers and students to increase the value of using information resources, and thus help them acquire the skills for using information for content-learning, problem-solving, and decision-making.

The issues confronting teacher-librarians in developed countries and those facing teacher-librarians in developing countries all require that teacher-librarians take on the mantle of leadership. Vansickle's article discusses leadership as essential for progress in student-centered and resource-based learning. Although Vansickle writes about leadership expectations for media specialists in the United States, in reality her study demonstrates that media specialists in the US have considerable similarities with teacher-librarians elsewhere. As teacher-librarians, we need extensive development and a basic change of building-level and teacher-librarian philosophy before we can assume a widely held expectation and acceptance that we will provide curriculum leadership. Our service orientation has led us to take a supportive role rather than a leadership role.

Hindes' article discusses the issues, successes, and problems with teacher-librarianship courses taken at a distance via the Web. Education programs in developed countries are looking seriously at this option to reach students who want and need the training, but find the commute to campus unacceptable for a variety of reasons. In addition, the option raises the level of

students' responsibility for their learning and thus encourages development of personal goals and objectives for their education. Hindes discusses a study of her advanced reference course offered via WebCT software with an explanation of her course design and software characteristics.

Asselin reports on her study of an initiative to raise the awareness of fifth-year preservice teachers about the concepts involved in information literacy, resource-based learning, and critical thinking. After two intensive weeks of working with volunteer professional teacher-librarians to plan units stressing these three concepts, her student-participants reported an expanded understanding of the collaborative partnership nature of the teacher-librarian's role with the classroom teacher. This study suggests a model that could be followed by other preservice teacher-librarian education programs to prepare teachers who will work with teacher-librarians in planning units collaboratively that infuse information literacy strategies as needed.

Murray's article on service to the disabled students in Australia's mainstream schools emphasizes the lack of attention paid to this population in our preservice school library education programs, as well as in staff-development offerings. As her study demonstrates, teacher-librarians seem not to be considered key personnel in the education of these students and are left off lists for staff development and briefing meetings on the needs of disabled students. Yet school media specialists and teacher-librarians have to be made aware of the availability of assistive technologies and techniques for making information accessible for application, regardless of impairment, in order to help these children learn. All school populations have students in need of these strategies and technologies and are beginning to recognize the need to serve them more effectively.

To emphasize the commonality of school library education needs, this issue has articles on teacher-librarian training in Botswana through the Department of Library and Information Studies at the University of Botswana and through workshops presented by the Botswana National Library Service. At first glance, the needs of these teacher-librarians appear to be at the level of establishing libraries and library services in their schools. However, these students are being asked to establish libraries that can leap directly to the 21st century by using resources mainly centered on print materials initially chosen for them by the Botswana National Library Service or donated by organizations in Western countries. The problems that accompany such a leap require the kinds of skills and knowledge Western-world teacher-librarians are expected to have.

Metzger studied the condition and resources of community junior secondary schools in Botswana using data collected from teacher-librarian intern students in the Certificate of School Libraries program. He writes about the needs of Botswana community junior secondary school libraries in the areas of facilities, staffing, and finances.

Baffour-Awuah, an officer of the Botswana National Library Service, describes the workshop training support given to community junior secondary schoolteacher-librarians to help them establish and manage their school libraries. These three- to five-day workshops set the ground rules for organization and collection management activities that are practically based in Botswana experiences. Having attended one of the workshops as a guest lecturer invited to participate actively, I can attest to the popularity, quality, and necessity of these workshops.

Jointly with Metzger and Jorosi, I report on our study of Botswana Community Junior Secondary School library programs in the context of their schools. As a Fulbright Senior Scholar, I was asked to teach and research with the Department of Library and Information Studies during the academic year 1999-2000. In October 1999, we toured schools in the northern and eastern areas of Botswana in order to visit teacher-librarian interns and interview headmasters and focus groups of classroom teachers about the library program. We wanted specifically to identify the needs of the schools to enable them to support library programs, the curriculum, teaching methodologies, staffing, resources, student preparation, language influences, and location, all factors discussed in this study report. The report is written in the style of an autoethnography of the trip to set the schools in the context of their environment and the study in the context of the trip. The political and environmental realities of education in rural and urban areas in Botswana, although widely different from most of the schools in Western countries, mirror the Western schools in the kinds of skills and strategies needed by these teacher-librarians. The needs of teacher-librarians assigned almost full classroom teaching responsibilities in addition to their library responsibilities are great. They must learn how to manipulate time and energies for establishing a library and for gaining headmasters' and teachers' support for the library program. They must create a library program among people with a strong oral literacy background who are unused to the benefits of libraries. They have to establish relationships with colleagues for collaborative work on information skills and build a reading culture where none existed even among the teaching staff. These needs demand a close look at the curriculum to determine priorities for preservice education and follow-up inservice educational opportunities and support. Thus the requirements for education of Botswana teacher-librarians are extremely sophisticated, and there are no easy answers to providing that education.

When you read these articles, I invite you to compare and contrast the environmental settings from which each study originated. Think about the realities of these programs and how similar or different the needs for preservice and inservice education actually are. I leave you with these questions: How effectively have we prepared school library students to fulfill the roles and responsibilities of teacher-librarians who bring students into the "Information Age," regardless of where we are in this world? How similar are

Western preservice education needs to those of programs in developing countries like Botswana? Can we learn from each other how to approach these problems? To do so, we need increasing interaction and discussion from teacher-librarians and educators from developing countries. How can the problems and strategies of developing a curriculum to fit the environmental realities of school library programs in Botswana inform other school library education programs, including those in Western countries? When we break away the exterior of these problems, how many of them require strategies similar to strategies required in Western programs, and how many of them are specific to the Botswana environment? Where are the commonalities and differences in these experiences?