

Collection Mapping

Saskatchewan School Library Association

THE MEDIUM – SPRING 2010

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SASKATCHEWAN SCHOOL LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

Collection Mapping

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Introduction

Over the course of the 2009 – 2010 school year, I, as the Learning Resources Consultant, and our school-based library staff conducted an examination of our school library collections. The need to collect data and to scrutinize the collections arose from the work of a newly established, division-wide School Library Selection Committee. The results of the collection mapping process identified specific tasks for both the division and schools. This paper outlines the process, the findings, the recommendations and the future actions of the collection mapping process.

School Library Selection Committee

As part of its long-term focus on school libraries, the Living Sky School Division intends to build library collections to meet the learning resource requirements of new curricula, the interests and abilities of students and the professional needs of teachers. To this end, we created a division-wide selection committee consisting of a library technician and a teacher-volunteer or the teacher-librarian from each participating school. We have 24 school libraries in our division, four of which are staffed by teacher-librarians. Nineteen schools chose to participate on the School Library Selection Committee.

Purpose

The purpose of the committee was to lay the foundation for:

1. Professional selection of school library resources
2. School library collections to meet the needs of the new curricula
3. School library collections to meet the diverse learning needs of each school
4. Regular reporting during staff meetings about learning resources and how to access them
5. A collection development plan for each school
6. A school library website used and accessed by staff and students

This committee was formed based on two aspects of the School Division's Operational Plan – Higher Literacy and Achievement and Equitable Opportunities for Students – and *Connections: Guidelines for School Libraries in Saskatchewan*. Specifically, we targeted the guideline, “manage the resource collection through the evaluation and selection of learning resources that will support the curriculum, and meet individual and group needs.”

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Rational and Purpose

When we began talking about books, resources and collection development, it became apparent that a more in-depth look at school library collections was required. We needed specific data to share with teachers, administrators and decision-makers at the division level to support requests for funding. It also became apparent that, while our library technicians were eager to build quality library collections, they were not knowledgeable (nor should they be) about new curricula. As well, the teacher-volunteers on the committee were not aware of the extent or quality of their school library collections.

Knowing that it would be an impossible task to tackle an examination of the full library collection, we decided to focus our attention on the ability of each library to meet the needs of the new middle year's curricula. All but one of the libraries had been extensively weeded in a move to automation or reconversion during the previous two years.

Methodology

A two-stage process was developed: the first was data collection; the second was a visual examination of the library collection.

Data Collection

The library technicians and teacher-volunteers or teacher-librarians completed a survey (see appendix A) that asked twelve questions about their library. The individual who provides program support for our L4U Library Catalog completed a breakdown of the library collection by publication date (*Appendix B*).

Visual Examination of the Collection

Once the data was collected, I spent a day in each library with the library technician and the teacher-volunteer or the teacher-librarian to complete a visual examination of the collection using the Ministry's *Foci across Areas of Study for Grades 6-9* as our guiding document. We looked at each section of the library to determine its currency, applicability and usefulness to the middle year's curricula. We bounced back and forth between the catalogue, the curriculum documents and the shelves – reference, non-fiction, fiction, picture book, DVD and VHS materials, and the professional collection. We pulled books from the shelves to examine in detail, sometimes discarding items as we worked. The connections and overlap between different curricula become more apparent as we worked through the *Foci* document and the collections.

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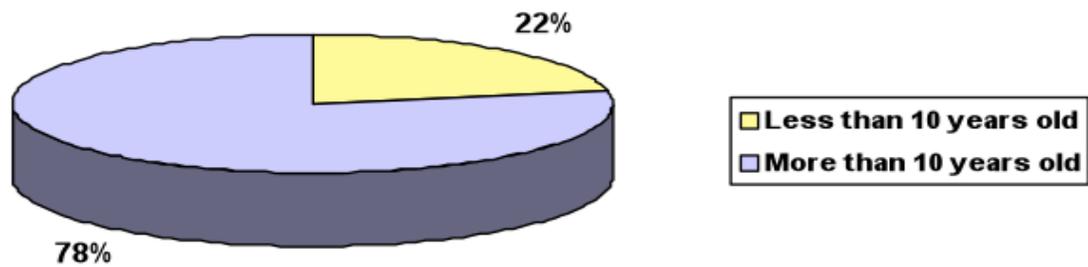
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Findings

Aging and Irrelevant Collections

Although we physically examined the collection with the new curriculum in mind, the statistical data reflects the complete library collection. The quantitative data revealed dated collections in all school libraries. Physical examination exposed huge gaps. These gaps were due to both age and the fact that, although the resources related to topics on the middle year's curricula, they were written at the level of younger students. *None of the collections met the requirements of the new curricula.*

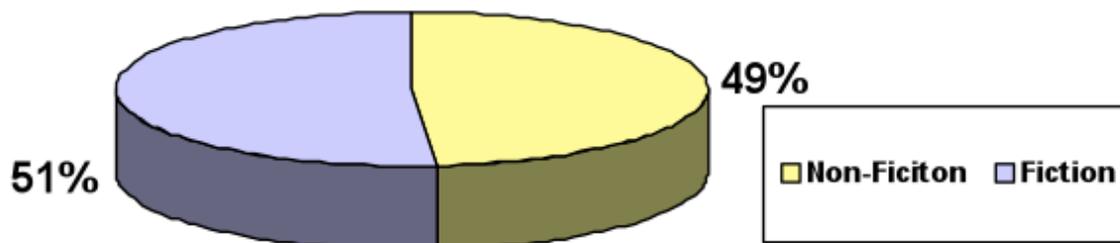
Library Collection by Date of Publication



Fictions vs. Non-Fiction

The findings also revealed that the collection was nearly half fiction and half non-fiction contrary to the provincial guidelines that recommend a 15-30 percent fiction and 70-85 percent non-fiction.

Percentage of Collection Fiction & Non-Fiction



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Teacher-librarian vs. Library Technician

Examination of the collection revealed several differences between libraries staffed with professional staff and those staffed with library technicians. Budgets were much larger in school libraries staffed by teacher-librarian and while not necessarily more current; the collections were more inclined to meet the needs of the middle year's curricula. During the extensive weeding undertaken within the past two years, teacher-librarians were concerned about decimating library collections. "We need to keep some titles on the shelf", they would say. Teacher-librarians were very aware of curricula needs and upon completion of the collection mapping process already had a plan in place to fill gaps in the collection.

Library Use

Anecdotal evidence from discussions with the library tech, the teacher volunteer and other teachers who passed through the library to view a ULS book display revealed that students from grade six and higher seldom used the library for research. Other than during scheduled book exchange periods, few students select personal reading materials in the library.

Virtual Library

The majority of the school libraries had developed a small web presence through a wiki or a page within their school web site but most expressed concern that the site was not used the way it could be.

Library Space

Discussion of the library space came up in almost every facility with most library techs and teacher-volunteers expressing dissatisfaction with the shelving, its arrangement and the layout of the library. Their frustrations were not without merit as in several cases the shelving was unattractive, unstable and had become storage for the school. In some libraries, the circulation desk was small, poorly designed, and did not accommodate the daily work of the library technician. In other cases, it sat in a position that did not correspond with the flow of library traffic. Generally, the library personnel felt that their library lacked a welcoming environment for their students.

Recommendations

Recommendations were based on whether the library was staffed with a teacher-librarian and library technician or only with a library technician.

Libraries with a Teacher-Librarian

In each case where the library was staffed with a teacher-librarian, there were instant connections with the curricula and recognition of the immediate need to fill the identified gaps. Teacher-librarians talked about collaboration with teachers and shared student research and inquiry projects. They were knowledgeable about their students reading interests and built collections around those interests by encouraging students to recommend books for purchase.

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They were keen to build strong virtual libraries and sought out links that met their student and teacher needs. In these schools, the obvious focus was on the development of a **school library program**.

The following is a summary of the recommendations sent to principals of schools with teacher-librarians:

Continue to build a library program that meets the literacy, reading and research needs and interests of all students.

1. Maintain or supplement the current healthy budget to create a collection that meets both curricular and reading interests of students with a specific focus on
 - a. Curricular related non-fiction to meet the specific research/inquiry curricular needs of the students – especially in the science and social science areas
 - b. Multi-media materials such as DVD's and CD's for circulation to students particularly in the areas of dance and fitness routines – e.g. hip hop, Pilates, yoga.
 - c. The establishment and maintenance an annual weeding schedule
2. Continue to provide access to research resources via the school library web site
 - i. Ministry resources
 - ii. Division resources (e.g. Discovery Video)
 - iii. Teacher-librarian selected resources
 - iv. Resources recommended by staff and the Learning Resources Consultant
3. Focus the teacher-librarian role on that of *instructional leader* supporting teachers by
 - a. Collaboratively designing and teaching inquiry-focused lessons and units which
 - i. utilize the above resources and,
 - ii. integrate the inquiry-process skills embedded in the ELA outcomes

Schools Without Teacher-Librarians

The following is a summary of the recommendations provided to principals of school without teacher-librarians. Without a teacher-librarian, there cannot be a library program. Therefore, the first recommendation outlines how to build a quality recreational reading collection housed within a comfortable, welcoming **reading centre**. The second recommendation describes how teachers can meet the research and inquiry needs of their students by using a virtual library and the supports provided by the Learning Resources Consultant.

- 1) **Meet the literacy and reading needs and interests of all students though the establishment of a reading centre by**
 - a) Increasing the current budget to create a collection that meets both curricular and reading interests of students.
 - i) Purchase novels, chapter books, graphic novels, and picture books
 - ii) Build special collections that appeal to the readers of non-fiction; sports, space, animals, drawing, etc.
 - iii) Purchase curricular related non-fiction to address the interests of students as they encounter the topics in the classroom. These materials are **not** specifically for research needs.

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- iv) Purchase DVD's and CD's for circulation to students particularly in the areas of dance and fitness routines – e.g. hip-hop, Pilates, yoga.
 - b) Designing a warm and welcoming library/reading atmosphere by
 - i) Purchasing furniture such as beanbags, couches, chairs, reading lamps and coffee tables.
 - ii) Providing a budget that enables the purchase of baskets, display shelving and holders, posters, book-related toys and other book/reading promotional items – but does not deduct from the book/resources budget
 - iii) Reducing and rearranging library shelving to allow easy access and to facilitate attractive book-store type shelving
 - c) Regularly cull the collection with professional input. Even more stringent weeding is needed.
 - d) Consistently emphasize the role of the professional staff in selecting resources for the library by
 - i) Encouraging and providing time for them to participate in book displays and other opportunities to view possible purchases for the school library.
 - ii) Inviting the Learning Resources Consultant to speak to staff about new resources through book talks and materials recommendations.
- 2) *Meet the research and inquiry needs of all students by*
- a) Providing access to research resources via a *Virtual School Library Page*
 - i) Ensure that the library tech works closely with the Learning Resources Consultant to create a well-organized page to display
 - Ministry resources
 - Division resources (e.g. Discovery Video)
 - School-based online resources and tools
 - Other resources that are recommend by staff and the Learning Resources Consultant
 - b) Assisting professional staff to understand the skills students need to meet the inquiry focus embedded in the new curricula by
 - a. Providing workshop and staff development time to work with the Learning Resources Consultant
 - i. To use the above resources and,
 - ii. To learn more about the skills required to use online resources and to complete the inquiry process such as those embedded in the ELA outcomes.

Actions

Division Level

Resource Selection

- *ULS Grade 6 -9 Fiction Display:* I took a selection of novels and graphic novels to each school and while the library staff and I were doing the collection-mapping, teachers and students viewed and recommended titles for their library.
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- *ULS Fall Display*: An arrangement has been made with United Library Services to do a fall non-fiction display with titles based on the *Areas of Foci* and the needs we have addressed during the collection mapping process.
- The division will purchase one database to supplement those provided by the Ministry. If monitoring shows that it is well used, further databases will be considered in the future.

School Library Selection Committee

Funds are approved to allow the committee to continue its work for another year. We will focus on the development of the virtual school library and the use of social media to share resources. For example, see our *Diigo* [social bookmarking] group page, http://groups.diigo.com/group/lsky_libraries. We also use *Yammer*, a microblogging tool, to share favourite or new-found links, and each person on the committee has created a start pages such as *iGoogle* or *NetVibes* listing rss feeds and links to a wide variety of book blogs and other selection tools.

Reporting

A final report on the process to senior school division administration will guide the creation of a philosophical statement about school libraries, assist in policy development, and lead to a renewed interest and support for the role of the school libraries in the age of digital information.

School Level

A written report outlining the process and containing the recommendations has been given to each school administration. The school-based budgeting and decision-making will determine how those recommendations are fulfilled. Contact will be made in the fall to highlight my role in helping teachers understand the skills students need to meet the inquiry stance and inquiry processes of the new curriculum.

Conclusion

Our school libraries, particularly those without teacher-librarians, languished within our schools. The collection mapping process highlighted the school library and gave new emphasis to its importance in the school. The library techs have responded with enthusiasm and energy. It has been a delight to hear the satisfaction in their voices as they describe student and teacher excitement when books selected from the display arrive. They have devoted many hours and a great deal of physical labour, to rearrange their libraries based on our discussions and enabled by the intensive weeding. Space has opened up because shelves have been removed and relocated around the walls. Circulation desks were re-arranged or built. New display ideas have taken hold and library furniture purchased to create a warm and welcoming atmosphere. Appreciative comments from students and staff have been very affirming for the library staff.

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The collection-mapping process turned out to be much more than data collection. It has helped re-ignite passions about libraries, books and reading. It provided opportunities for one-on-conversations about the changing nature of information and made our teacher-librarians and library technicians more aware of how their jobs must change to meet the information needs of our 21st century students.



SPIRITWOOD HIGH SCHOOL'S NEWLY REFURBISHED READING NOOK

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Appendix A

SCHOOL LIBRARY

Collection Mapping: Step I

Data Collection Form

School Name: _____

Grade Levels: _____

Number of Students: _____

PART I (Completed By Teacher-Volunteer And Library Tech)

- 1) Total library collection _____
- 2) Library resources budget \$ _____ = \$ _____ /student
- 3) Does your library collection contain at least 4,000 items or 20 items per student – whichever is greater?
YES NO
- 4) List periodicals purchased by the library:
 - a) Students _____
 - b) Professional _____
- 5) List online subscriptions purchased by the school (e.g. *BrainPop*).
- 6) List Ministry databases made available to students on the school/school library Web site.
- 7) Is the *Discovery Education Streaming Video site* link provided on the school/school library Web site? YES NO
- 8) List and provide the dates for encyclopedia sets kept on the library shelves that are older than 5 years.
- 9) When was your collection last weeded? _____
- 10) Does the library circulate Audio Visual Equipment? (e.g. TVs, DVD players)? YES NO
- 11) Does the library circulate computer peripherals? (e.g. cameras, iPods) YES NO
- 12) Is your library responsible for maintaining and circulating school laptops? YES NO

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Appendix B

XXXXX HIGH COLLECTION MAP			
MARCH 2010			
Percentage of Collection - Non Fiction:			60.22%
Percentage of Collection - Fiction:			39.78%
Percentage of Collection Less Than 10 Years Old:			26.31%
Number of Items With No Publication Date:			338
	Total Number of Items	Number of Other Media Items	Average Age of All Items
	7350	55	1989.26
Reference (General)	204		1987
Reference (Encyclopedia)	2		1993
000	54		2000
100	62		2000
200	26		1988
300	641	5	1997
398.2	45		1980
400	76	1	1991
500	262	3	1994
590	62		1992
600	362	4	1998
700	321	1	1992
800	484	3	1974
900	1002	16	1978
920	382		1965
Archives	39		
Professional	212	17	1997
Text	179		1990
Vertical File	11		
Total Non Fiction	4426		
Story Collection	57		1992
Fiction	2867	5	1988
Total Fiction	2924		
Media Breakdown Totals	55		
Activity Pack	3		
CD	1		
DVD	22		
Kit	9		
Picture	4		
Transparency	4		
Video	12		