Editorial Relationships

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Relationships are at the heart of most human endeavours; in our field, we are constantly working with others. The theme of relationships was suggested by Editorial Board member and IASL President James Henri. Thank you, James!

I am fond of this quotation about the nature of relationships: "In a relationship, you both give and receive, but the giving and receiving is NEVER equal in this world. If you are giving more than receiving, then by default you become the teacher in the relationship" (Dewey, 2009). As you read the articles in this issue of School Libraries Worldwide, I invite you to think about the nature of the relationships in your work life in school librarianship.

The first article in this issue, selected for open access, examines the relationship between teacher-librarians and principals. My early research focused on the concept of principal support for the teacher-librarian and the school library program (see, for example, Oberg, 1996) and it led to an international study completed in collaboration with James Henri and Lyn Hay from Australia. Donna M. Shannon examines the relationship between principals and teacher-librarians through a study of principals' perspectives of teacher-librarians. She surveyed K-12 principals in South Carolina using an online survey and found that South Carolina principals were supportive of the role of the teacher-librarian as laid out in the United States' national standards and were satisfied or very satisfied with their current teacher-librarian (called school librarian in South Carolina).

The second article examines the relationship between teacher-librarians and science teachers through combining the results of two studies: a study of teacher-librarians' social networks and a survey of science teachers' attitudes toward teacher-librarians. The authors, Barbara A. Schultz-Jones (an LIS educator) and Cynthia E. Ledbetter (a science teacher educator), found that two key dimensions form the foundation for building relationships between teacher-librarians and science teachers: credibility and visibility. Although not a new finding (see, for example, Hartzell, 2002), their work in North Texas builds upon and adds to the evidence base for the importance of teacher-librarians taking an assertive role in developing relationships with the teachers in their schools.

Terrance S. Newell, an LIS educator, examines in his article two different instructional methodologies that teacher-librarians might use in teaching information problem-solving in K-12 settings. The study was designed to examine relationships within two information-seeking methodologies: problem-based learning (PB) and participatory simulation (PS). The students in the PB group worked in a face-to-face environment while those in the PS group working in a 3D computer-generated context. Both groups worked with the same content and with similar
activities having to do with the use of technology in everyday life. Both groups were faced with inquiry-based activities which were ill-structured in nature so that students had to define questions, develop information-seeking strategies, and select appropriate information to create a final product. The study findings, that students in the PB group developed more of a product orientation while the students in the PS group developed more of a process orientation, raise many interesting questions about how information literacy learning is affected by the relationships among the elements of different learning systems and environments.

Jami L. Jones, in her article, proposes a research-based framework to improve student achievement through dispositions of the school librarian, nurturing relationships and supportive environments, and effective instructional practices. Although the framework is an especially important one in terms of addressing the needs of high school students most at risk of dropping out of school before receiving a high school diploma, the framework has potential for improving the academic achievement of all students. Jones revisits from a library perspective the concept of resilience which is extremely relevant to all educators striving to make the school (and the world) a better place for young people, especially those who might otherwise succeed in school and in life beyond school.

The final two articles of this issue draw on Self-determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2008) for their theoretical foundation. This theory holds that in order to be happy and to be motivated to deal with the challenges of life (or learning), human beings have three basic needs which need to be satisfied: the need to be competent or effective, the need to have choice and control over one’s life, and the need to feel connected to others, loved, and cared for. The authors of these two articles have taken very different approaches to doing their research, however.

Sherry R. Crow used a qualitative approach, interviewing in-depth nine children from three different schools in order to answer the question, “What are the experiences in the lives of upper elementary school children that foster an intrinsic motivation to seek information?” These nine children were selected from the participants in a larger study because of their dominant intrinsic motivation style. Crow reports that the nine children (aged 10) reported four kinds of experiences that were related to intrinsic motivation for information seeking: play, point-of-passion experiences, anchor relationships, and working in a group.

The research team of Marilyn P. Arnone, Rebecca Reynolds, and Todd Marshall used a quantitative approach, surveying 1272 eighth grade 13-year old students across 20 states. Their findings indicate that student perceptions of their school librarian’s autonomy supportiveness and their perceptions of the librarian’s technology competence contribute significantly to the students’ perceived competence in information skills and their intrinsic motivation for research. The findings from both studies highlight the important role that the school librarian can play in influencing student dispositions towards engaging in information seeking activities, and likely the learning outcomes that result for the students.

The theme of relationships has been a productive one for this issue of School Libraries Worldwide. The authors of the articles in this issue have dealt with the theme of relationships from the perspective of teacher-librarians and their relationships with others:

- The relationships between teacher-librarians and principals
- The relationships between teacher-librarians and science teachers
• The relationships between the elements of two different instructional systems or approaches (i.e., students, teachers, teacher-librarians, content, technology, books, and so on)
• The relationships that can be developed by the teacher-librarian with students at risk of not completing high school and with teachers and others who can support these students
• The relationships that teacher-librarians can develop with students and teachers that foster intrinsic motivation for information-seeking

It is my hope that you will find something in each of these articles to inspire you in your work and to find new ways to think about the relationships that are part of your work!

References