
Editorial: Connecting is at the Core of Teacher Librarianship

Marcia A. Mardis

The Florida State University, USA

This issue of *School Libraries Worldwide* is centered on the theme of “Connections: Teacher librarians linking learning, leadership, technology, and society.” As Malcolm Gladwell (2002), wrote in his influential book *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*, “Connectors are the people who ‘link us up with the world ... people with a special gift for bringing the world together’” (pp. 38, 41). As the editor for this issue, I asked our contributors to use this definition as a point of departure in considering the many connecting roles of school libraries and librarians. This theme must have struck a chord in the teacher librarian community because this issue is 146 pages—the longest issue of *School Libraries Worldwide* since 1995! This issue could not have happened without the invaluable assistance of Dr. Dianne Oberg from the University of Alberta and Angela Austin from the Florida State University.

When we selected this theme, we were initially summoning Gladwell’s influential work. Connectors, he argues, are one of three types of people who can make big differences. Mavens and salesmen are the other two types. As Figure 1 (Armano, 2006) illustrates, connectors connect people to one another; mavens share their expertise; and salesmen encourage people to be open to gaining new knowledge and persuade them to integrate this knowledge into their lives and work.

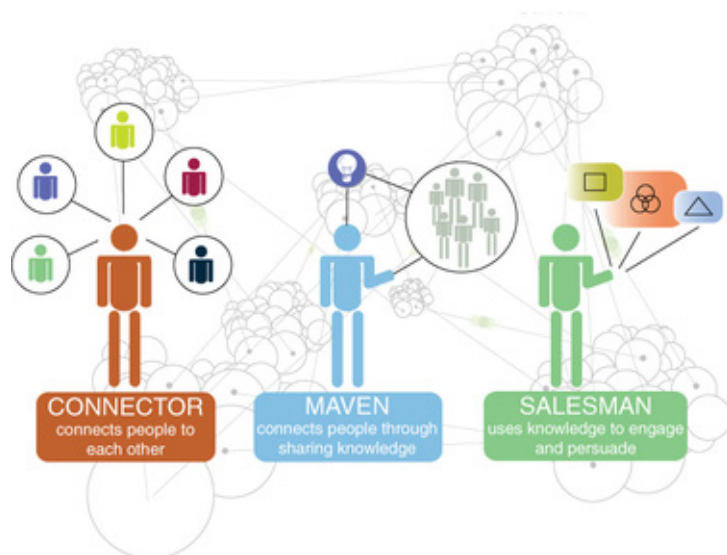


Figure 1. Connector, Maven, and Salesman from Gladwell’s *The Tipping Point* (2001) as Illustrated by Armano (2006).

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Unless I'm missing something, Gladwell's people sure sound a lot like teacher librarians. In fact, while I really like the characters depicted in Figure 1, I think there is one piece of the illustration missing: the characters should be holding hands. While not every connector has the expertise to be a maven or the desire to be a salesman, there is little point in having knowledge that is not shared through connecting with other people.

Another piece I would like to see added to the graphic is the connection between people and information. As builders and maintainers of collections, teacher librarians recognize that information exists in a wide range of non-human formats and that we are expected not only to be the mavens of this information, but also to champion, or sell, this information, to our stakeholders and make vital connections between information and its users.

Teacher librarians find themselves at many other tipping points, too. As I contemplated this theme more fully, I realized more ways that we connect with our expertise and our advocacy and marketing. Take, for example, the infusion of ICT in schools. Teacher librarians have not just connected kids and educators to the Internet and to technology, in many instance, they manage the actual physical connections by managing bandwidth and networks. In rural communities, teacher librarians connect the community outside of the school's walls to information and technology. Every day, teacher librarians help children to make connections between the world and their in-school learning and help them to find their own connections to colleges, workplaces, and life outside of school.

This issue demonstrates many other types of connections. Ruth Ash-Argyle and Snunith Shoham explore the differences preparation experiences make in the connections between teachers and teacher librarians in Israel. Melissa Johnston reports on how, as mavens of technology, teacher librarians can be leaders in its implementation in schools. Maria Cahill looks at how teacher librarians can connect with child care workers and some of our youngest library users. Joanna Kluever and Wayne Finley present a case study in connecting school and public libraries and the points of advocacy necessary to make this type of partnership succeed. Sarah Buchanan is also concerned with the library facility, but from the point of view of library features that connect to architectural history and are designed to support user needs. I, along with my talented and wonderful doctoral students, synthesized research about teachers' classroom information needs, connected those needs to new educational initiatives, and explore the enabling factors and potential opportunities for teacher librarians. In her paper, Sue Kimmel asks us to think about the boundary-spanning role of the teacher librarian by using the concept of boundary objects. That is, proceeding from the point of understanding that all library stakeholder project their own expectations onto their wants and needs for library experiences and that it is vital we honor these diverse perspectives. Zorana Ercegovic focuses on teens' perceptions of image content and tagging choices as insight into their information seeking behavior. Vicki VanTuyle and Sandra Watkins shed light on the importance of connecting to the school administrator to support and encourage a strong school library program. Finally, Taghreed AlQudsi-Ghabra charts the landscape of public school libraries in Kuwait, showing us all points of connection between our home countries and the management of the growing presence of school libraries there.

We hope this issue will provide you an opportunity to enjoy researchers' work relating to connections and connectors in school libraries and that we all remember that the school library is a place where connections are made, grown, and extended. I challenge you to identify an effective teacher librarian who does not exemplify every one of Gladwell's characters. No wonder numerous studies and testimonials have demonstrated that we "can make a big difference"!

References

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Author Note

Marcia A. Mardis is the Co-Editor of School Libraries Worldwide and an Assistant Professor at the School of Library and Information Studies at The Florida State University (FSU) in Tallahassee, Florida. She is also Associate Director of the Partnerships Advancing Library Media (PALM) Center at FSU.