The Researcher's Perspective

From Face-to-Face to Distance Education: The Story of Two Canadian School Library Educators

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This paper explores the story of two Canadian school library educators and their experiences in one online program over the past ten years. Beginning with stories from the authors own school library experiences and teacher-librarianship education, the paper moves on to explore the successes and challenges of an online teacher-librarianship program. The authors discuss the impact of technology on the learning and teaching experiences. They also highlight some tensions and challenges and opportunities for the future of school library education in Canada.
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Introduction

Once upon a time, two little girls loved their school libraries and their teacher-librarians. But did they live happily ever after?

Jennifer's Story

The 1970s and 80s were the hey dy of school librarianship in Canada. Jennifer was able to learn from a wonderful teacher-librarian working full-time in her Kindergarten to Grade 8 Elementary School. In preparation for university, her teacher-librarian at Park Street Collegiate Institute in Orillia, Ontario, taught all students how to find articles in the "Green Books" (*Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature*), select relevant information, organize an essay, paraphrase, and correctly cite sources. While she didn't realize she wanted to be a teacher-librarian until after her education degree, Jennifer had wonderful experiences learning in well staffed, well-stocked, flexibly scheduled school libraries. Jennifer completed a Bachelor of Education degree in 1988 and spent two years teaching in remote Northern Ontario communities before deciding she wanted to be a teacher-librarian. To that end, Jennifer enrolled in the MLIS program in 1990 at the University of Western Ontario. If you wanted to do graduate work in 1990, you needed to leave your job and go to university full time. The Library School was a distinct entity (a faculty) within the university and there was no

apparent collaboration between the Faculty of Education and the Graduate School of Library and Information Studies.

The MLIS program prepared her for work in libraries in general but there were very few elective courses in the area of children's services and resources and no courses that spoke specifically to the role of the teacher-librarian. After graduating in 1991, Jennifer accepted a position as the teacher-librarian in Inuvik in the Northwest Territories. It took only a few days to realize that she was unprepared for the collaborative program planning and teaching role of the teacher-librarian.

To learn more about the role of the teacher-librarian, she enrolled in an additional qualification course (School Library Specialist) in Ontario. Teacher-librarians in Ontario take three courses (Part 1, Part 2 and Specialist) to become teacher-librarians. This one course, while interesting and more focused on teacher-librarianship and research in the field, did little to prepare her for building a quality school library program.

Her interest in learning more about school libraries led her to begin a PhD program in 1995 in Aberdeen, Scotland and she completed her PhD in Library and Information Studies at the University of Alberta in 2000. While a PhD student in Edmonton, she took her first online class in the fall of 2008 in the new Teacher-Librarianship by Distance Learning program and taught her first course (School Library Information Materials) in the summer of 1999 for the same program.

Her first academic position (2000-2001) was at the State University of New York at Albany where she was hired to work with students who wanted to be school library media specialists. Many of the students in this specialization were not teachers. They were students who had a first degree (a Bachelor of Arts for many of them) who loved children's literature and wanted to be librarians in school libraries. Certification for school library media specialists required them to do a practicum in a school library for a semester and Jennifer was responsible for supervision of these placements.

In July 2001, Jennifer returned to the University of Alberta to be an Assistant Professor and the Coordinator of the Teacher-Librarian by Distance Learning program. At that point, the TLDL program had very few students (about 15) in the program and was accepting students into both a Diploma in Teacher-Librarianship and a Master of Education in Teacher-Librarianship. Students in the diploma could complete all of their courses online but students in the Master of Education degree needed to come to campus (or to take courses at universities closer to home) to complete required courses in curriculum and research methods.

More than ten years later, Jennifer continues to coordinate the Teacher-Librarianship by Distance Learning program. The program has grown and there are now have over 60 students in the Master of Education degree and the diploma program is no longer offered. Jennifer's story highlights just a few of the changes in the past 20 years in teacher-librarianship education in Canada. Now another story.

Joanne's Story

Joanne decided to become a teacher-librarian when she was six years old after her first interactions with Mrs. Wolf, the teacher-librarian at her elementary school. Becoming the youngest library helper in the history of Rosedale Public School helped solidify this dream. Joanne remembers participating in special library programs (Paddington Bear parties with

marmalade, the contest to read Stephen Cosgrove's Serendipity books), the research projects (learning about pioneers in grade 5 and the Calgary Olympics in 1988), and the daily trivia contests that were all organized by Mrs. Wolf. This early love affair with the library lasted through elementary and high school, where Joanne continued to volunteer in the school library and was even known to help other students with their research projects and reference questions! Looking back, Joanne realizes that her early learning experiences were greatly improved with access to a school library that was welcoming, open, stocked with a good collection of materials, and served by a full-time teacher-librarian for most of her elementary school years. It was these experiences that cemented her goal to become a teacher-librarian one day.

After graduating from high school, Joanne completed Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Education degrees in 1996 and an MLIS degree in 1998 from the University of Alberta. The Library School was (and remains) a department within the Faculty of Education and at the time there were opportunities for students in the School of Library and Information Studies (SLIS) to take courses in other departments. Luckily for someone who was interested in school librarianship and youth services, SLIS also offered many courses on children's services, children's and young adult literature, and school librarianship. In fact, it was during the two years that she was a student at SLIS that the Teacher-Librarianship by Distance Learning (TLDL) program at the University of Alberta got its start. Joanne was in the first group of students to take these new online courses in subjects such as information literacy, educational technology, and Canadian children's literature in 1997 and 1998.

Upon graduating in 1998, Joanne thought she had the requisite skills and knowledge to take on a joint position in a school-housed public library in Alberta, working as both a public librarian and a teacher-librarian. It did not take long to realize that an MLIS (even with courses in school librarianship and children's literature) did little to prepare her for the day-to-day realities of being a teacher-librarian.

Personal professional development, including workshops, membership in professional associations for teacher-librarians, and networking helped fill some of the gaps and provided some support for Joanne's fledgling career as a teacher-librarian. A change in jobs to become a consultant working with public and school library staff expanded Joanne's network and continued to provide professional development opportunities, but it wasn't until 2002 when Joanne met Jennifer Branch and became involved in the Teacher-Librarianship by Distance Learning program that she truly started to understand the complexities of being a teacher-librarian and how to develop effective school library programs.

Beginning in 2003, Joanne worked part time as an instructor in the Teacher-Librarianship by Distance Learning program and over time taught and developed a number of courses for the program (in some cases, revising courses she had previously taken as a student!). In an effort to learn more about contemporary school and public libraries, Joanne returned to the University of Alberta in 2006 to pursue a PhD in Elementary Education. This further formal education, combined with many positive and rewarding interactions with practicing teacher-librarians and teachers who are enrolled in the TLDL program, have helped Joanne fill in some of the gaps in her original graduate education and feel like she has a better sense of what it means to be a teacher-librarian in today's school libraries.

After graduating with a Ph.D. in 2009, Joanne began looking at options for working as an academic in school librarianship in Canada and has found the options somewhat

limited. Opportunities for teacher-librarianship education in this country are limited to the TLDL program at the University of Alberta, a graduate level program based out of the Department of Elementary Education, a diploma in teacher-librarianship offered by the Faculty of Education at the University of British Columbia that is taught by sessional instructors, and the additional qualification courses offered by Ontario universities. With no academic job opportunities on the horizon, Joanne became one of a new breed of academics, an "itinerant professor" who works on contract, teaching courses on a part- time basis for a number of universities.

Now three years after graduating with a Ph.D., Joanne continues to teach seven or eight courses a year in the Teacher-Librarianship by Distance Learning program as an Adjunct Assistant Professor. In addition, Joanne teaches one or two courses a year as a sessional instructor for the School of Library and Information Studies at the University of Alberta. She also works as a part-time instructor in the diploma program for the University of British Columbia, teaching two or three courses a year, and as a lecturer at San Jose State University's School of Library and Information Science, teaching two courses a year. The itinerant professor model seems to be increasingly common for new academics in the school library field and while challenging to juggle multiple courses, different online learning management systems, and varied expectations (on the part of students and universities), this teaching have given Joanne many opportunities to learn and grow as an instructor and as a teacher-librarian.

TL-DL History and Teaching Philosophy

With these two stories providing a personal context for some of the changes in teacher-librarianship education over the last twenty years, it is time to now look at one specific program that provides graduate level training in teacher-librarianship in Canada. The Teacher-Librarianship by Distance Learning (TLDL) program at the University of Alberta has been providing online educational opportunities for teachers and teacher-librarians for 15 years. The program was built on a social constructivist foundation where students and the instructor(s) would co-construct the experience in the online "classroom." The program's philosophy was, and continues to be, "high-touch" and "high-structure." This means that instructors are present online; answer questions quickly; facilitate discussions; and guide learning experiences. All courses have similar expectations in terms of assessment practices, readings, workload, etc. This has changed and evolved over the years as instructors met regularly to discuss current realities in school libraries as well as the possibilities that technology offers for collaboration and sharing of new knowledge. Small group discussions have always been an important part of the student learning experience.

To be accepted into the Master of Education program, students need to be qualified teachers (Bachelor of Education degree) and have a minimum of one year of successful teaching experience. However, many students are experienced teachers who have ten or more years of teaching experience when they join the program. Most of the students in the program are already working in school libraries and enroll to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to build successful school library programs. A few students every year come into the program wanting to be teacher-librarians but not working in a library. These tend to be less experienced teachers who are looking for more expertise in a subject area to find a permanent teaching position. This is a drastic shift from twenty and thirty years ago when

the majority of students were not working in school libraries when they were registered in teacher-librarianship education programs.

Changes in Technology Available for Teaching and Learning

In 1997, when the Teacher-Librarianship by Distance Learning program began, the technology available to instructors and students was very basic. Email was still a new technology and databases existed on CD-ROM! The learning management system that was adopted for TLDL (a very early version of WebCT) required instructors to be able to edit HTML code. Those first TLDL courses were text heavy and relied on very simple group discussions. Courses in those early days were highly structured and the structure of the course was often determined by the limitations of the learning management system and the slow Internet connections available to many students and instructors. Dial up Internet was a challenge for many students in those early years of the program, and continued to make TLDL courses difficult for students in rural parts of the country up until fairly recently.

Similarly, in 1997, course assignments still needed to be submitted on paper, sent to instructors by mail (or sometimes delivered in person). In an attempt to build community in these early TLDL courses, instructors asked students to mail photographs of themselves to the instructor, who then photocopied the photos and mailed the resulting "face book" back out to the class. Because of the complexity involved in putting courses online in 1997, especially the amount of HTML coding required, TLDL hired a programmer to do the initial coding and to get the courses set up.

Over the years, learning management systems became less clunky and instructors no longer needed to know HTML code to effectively post their content. In the early 2000s, while the TLDL courses remained highly structured, with an emphasis on text-based lectures, instructors were also relying more heavily on large and small group discussions to personalize the learning experiences for students.

For many years, TLDL carried on happily with simple revisions to courses and regular meetings with instructors and the coordinator. But things really changed in the fall of 2007. Joanne had been teaching *EDES 545 Information Technologies for Learning* for TL-DL for 3 years. Jennifer had just come back from parental leave and was teaching EDES 545 for the first time. It was an exciting time in terms of new technologies to explore. Jennifer had blogged while living in Salzburg on parental leave to keep in touch with family and friends. Joanne created a Voicethread of her children singing Happy Birthday to their Granddad, Jennifer was reconnecting with old friends on Facebook, Joanne created a wiki for the Alberta School Library Council to share information with teacher-librarians across the province, and they both shared bookmarks on Delicious.

After just a few weeks of teaching EDES 545 in the fall of 2007, it became clear that the students seemed VERY reluctant to try the new tools. In fact, when given choice in assignments, only one student chose to explore blogs, wikis and podcasts. While Joanne and Jennifer were learning to create podcasts, building wikis, social bookmarking, sharing photos on Picasa and Flickr, and blogging for personal and professional purposes, TLDL graduate students seemed to be only interested in PowerPoint and Webquests.

It was clear that TLDL had a problem. EDES 545 *Information Technologies for Learning* was the only "technology" class in the whole Teacher-Librarianship by Distance Learning program. How could TLDL send graduates out into school libraries as leaders in inquiry,

resources, technology and multiple literacies if all they were learning about was PowerPoint?

As Jennifer taught the course that fall, conversations started to revolve around the need for teacher-librarians to be leaders in terms of learning new technologies. It was also clear that teacher-librarians should be supporting teachers and students as they used these new and emerging tools for collaboration, resource-sharing and organization, information access (think Wikipedia), and the creation, presentation and sharing of new knowledge.

What TLDL needed to do was help teacher-librarians become not only comfortable with some current Web 2.0 tools but also willing and able to try other new tools as they were developed. And for that the course, and the program in general, needed a new approach.

PLAY! Jennifer and Joanne soon realized that the way instructors were integrating new and emerging technologies into their own lives was by playing with them. It was clear that the reason that some young people were becoming so skilled in the new and emerging technologies was because they were taking a playful approach. It became apparent that there were two components to helping teacher-librarians become school leaders in the area of technology integration for teaching and learning. The first was that students in TLDL needed to play with the tools themselves – to imagine how they might use the tools for their personal and professional lives. Then, and only then, could they start to imagine how they would use these tools in their schools, libraries, and classrooms.

To make this happen for students in the TLDL program, the authors introduced a course entitled *Exploration of Web 2.0 for Teaching and Learning* in the Winter of 2008 and then revamped EDES 545 class to focus on the integration of technology. The Web 2.0 course became a pre-requisite for EDES 545.

When developing the new course, Jennifer and Joanne, who were the instructors of the course, looked to very interesting work being done in the United States to help library staff learn more about Web 2.0. The program called *Learning 2.0* was developed by the Charlotte Mecklenberg Library System and had librarians complete 23 Web 2.0 tasks as part of their workday. The instructors for the course felt that this model was one that would work with teacher-librarians.

From this program, the instructors selected tools that they felt were important for TLDL students to be play with. One key resource at the time and to this day continues to be Will Richardson's *Blogs, Wikis, Podcasts and other Powerful Tools for Classrooms* (2010). The book provides students with a starting point for learning about the tools and thinking about the implications for teaching and learning.

Jennifer and Joanne were not experts in Web 2.0. They were playing with the new technologies and felt that TLDL students needed to be doing the same thing. In the winter of 2008, Jennifer taught the new class for the first time. Those first students knew very little about these new tools; many hadn't even heard of the term Web 2.0. Those first few weeks were very scary for the students. Playing with the technology was a new concept. However, students quickly adapted to the weekly schedule of read/research, play and blog about it.

The class also had a discussion component where students come together to talk about some overarching issues related to technology and education. These included topics such as managing information overload; getting and staying organized in an online world; customizing and personalizing online spaces; reading online; and the importance of voice in

blogging. In addition to giving students an opportunity to discuss these bigger technology-related issues, the discussions also gave students a chance to reconnect with one another and to build their personal learning networks starting with the members of the class.

At the end of the Winter 2008 semester, Jennifer received great feedback on the class. Students were more comfortable, more knowledgeable, and more able to take a playful approach to new and emerging technologies. Jennifer and Joanne learned later that these students came to be seen as technology leaders in their schools and districts because of their learning in the course.

New and emerging technologies have allowed students and instructors in the TLDL program to experiment with new technologies in the context of the course content, the presentation of course material, and assignments. For example, Joanne creates course websites using wiki programs for almost all of the courses she teaches. Through these websites, she curates information, encourages students to share resources with one another, and extends their learning experiences during and beyond the course. Joanne also uses tools such as Twitter and Facebook to share content and resources with students regularly. Using course specific hashtags, she re-tweets information that is relevant to courses and may be of interest to students. Other instructors model and teach the importance of information organization and management for personal and professional learning using tools such as Diigo, Evernote, and LiveBinder. To support differentiated instruction, students in the TLDL program are encouraged to experiment with multiple formats for assignments, group presentations, and knowledge creation. For example, students use digital storytelling and presentation tools such as Animoto, iMovie, Prezi, Voicethread, and SlideRocket to share their new learning with instructors, their classmates, and the world. To model the use of these tools, instructors develop lectures and other teaching resources that are shared with students on the course site and in the course wikis. All of the TLDL courses are now infused with technology, which provides students in the program with a model of how to successfully integrate technology across the curriculum.

Review of the TLDL Program
Another change in the TLDL program in particular, and in school library education in general, has been a focus on the leadership role of the teacher-librarian. To that end, TLDL now only offers a Master of Education degree and no longer accept students into the diploma program. In Britain, the United States and Australia most, if not all, of the teacher-librarians/school library media specialists (SLMS) will have a Master's level degree. Most will have a Master of Library (and Information) Science/Studies (MLS/MLIS) degree. In the United States, most states have certification requirements for SLMS that expect a Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) and a MLS/MLIS degree. The same is true in Australia. In Britain, many of the school librarians will have a MLS/MLIS degree but not necessarily a teaching certificate and or B.Ed.

In Canada as a whole, a very small number of teacher-librarians will have an MLIS degree or a Master of Education degree in Teacher-Librarianship. In a recent survey of teacher-librarians in Canada (Branch and de Groot, 2011), only 10 of 178 had an MLIS degree and only 10 more had a Master of Education degree (although not necessarily in teacher-librarianship). In western Canada, we have many more teacher-librarians with a post-graduate diploma. The courses tend to be at the 300-400 undergraduate level.

In Ontario, the requirement for training is a School Library Specialist; three courses completed after a B.Ed. and some teaching experience in a library. The authors believe that this is NOT enough for teacher-librarians in the 21st century. To be a teacher leader, you need to have the same degree as other school leaders. The M.Ed. degree in Teacher-Librarianship at the University of Alberta includes a research methods course to help prepare students to locate, read and evaluate educational research, a curriculum foundations course to help students understand the history and development of curriculum, and a final capping experience that allows students to share and reflect on a topic of interest that develops during the program.

At the same time that the Web 2.0 course was being developed and taught for the first time, the TLDL program was successful in an application for a Fulbright Senior Specialist and Dr. Marcia Mardis joined the Faculty of Education as a visiting faculty member in October of 2008. Dr. Mardis was instrumental in the writing of American Association of School Librarians' new *Standards for the 21st-Century Learner* and is a prominent researcher and educator in the area of school libraries. This was a chance to work with a leader in the field and take a good hard look at the TLDL program. In preparation for Dr. Mardis' visit, Jennifer and Joanne surveyed all of the recent Master of Education in Teacher-Librarianship graduates. As reported in Branch and de Groot (2009), recent graduates were asked to think back on their TLDL program and to list issues/topics/challenges that they felt they needed to learn more about and things that they learned that were not particularly relevant to the work they do in school libraries. This research found that teacher-librarians see technology as an integral part of their schools and feel this needs to be reflecting in teacher-librarianship education. The variety of technologies, both hardware (e.g. Smartboards, data readers, ipods, and other handheld devices) and software (e.g. webpages, electronic pathfinders, databases, and e-books), were of concern to many recent graduates. Many recognized that the changing nature of information and communication technology requires that courses need to evolve. Recent graduates also indicated that they need more opportunities in their education to explore and discuss the issues arising from the proliferation of new technologies. These issues included digital citizenship, copyright, privacy, intellectual property and electronic publishing. While TLDL courses can offer students the opportunities to discuss a variety of issues, this also lead to a belief that there is a need for continuing education. This may explain, in part, why professional learning networks and social networking for teachers and teacher-librarians are growing. These findings support the direction of the *Standards for the 21st-Century Learner* (AASL, 2007) and the ISTE (2008) *NETS for Teachers*.

Another theme that emerged was that teacher-librarians are taking on leadership roles in schools and recent graduates felt that this needs to be reflected in teacher-librarianship education. The TLDL program needs to provide opportunities for teacher-librarians to explore, discuss and reflect on change, school reform, assessment, advocacy, action research and evidence-based practice. Respondents also indicated that they are taking on leadership roles in the area of literacy and need the background theory to support this role. The leadership role of teacher-librarians needs to be infused across all courses in the program.

Recent graduates indicated that the role of the teacher-librarian in the 21st century is evolving quickly and even a Master of Education degree is not enough to keep up with the changing demands of the job. As a result, there is a need for formal and informal continuing

education opportunities. As leaders in schools, teacher-librarians need to model lifelong learning and should try to seek out personal professional development that complements and expands on their graduate education.

Using these findings and pulling student learning outcomes from 2008 course outlines, the TLDL curriculum was re-visioned. Seven courses were imagined that combined, revised and re-imagined certain topics from the 2008 program as well as adding totally new courses. For example, TLDL saw a need for a new course in multiple literacies with an emphasis on reading. Instructors also realized, from both the survey and reading current books, articles and blogs, which the leadership role of the teacher-librarian needed to be the integral part of every course. The review also highlighted that allowing students' choice in assignments was making learning meaningful for TLDL students (Barranoik, 2004).

Participatory Culture and Connectivism
It wasn't long before the impact of the Web 2.0 course began to be felt in other areas of the program. Students began to use what they had learned in the Web 2.0 course as ways to collaborate, organize information and share new knowledge in other courses. Jennifer and Joanne were first influenced by the ideas of Jenkins (2007). In *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century*, Jenkins et al. describe participatory culture as:

A culture with relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing one's creations, and some type of informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to the novices. A participatory culture is also one in which members believe their contributions matter, and feel some degree of social connection with one another (at the least they care what other people think about what they have created). (p. 3)

Connections are the Foundation of Participatory Culture.
The work of Siemens (2005) has also influenced the TL-DL program. Siemens (2005) proposed Connectivism as a new learning theory for the digital age. The principles of Connectivism are as follows:
   • Learning and knowledge rests in diversity of opinions.
   • Learning is a process of connecting specialized nodes or information sources.
   • Learning may reside in non-human appliances.
   • Capacity to know more is more critical than what is currently known.
   • Nurturing and maintaining connections is needed to facilitate continual learning.
   • Ability to see connections between fields, ideas, and concepts is a core skill.
   • Currency (accurate, up-to-date knowledge) is the intent of all Connectivist learning activities.
   • Decision-making is itself a learning process. Choosing what to learn and the meaning of incoming information is seen through the lens of a shifting reality. While there is a right answer now, it may be wrong tomorrow due to alterations in the information climate affecting the decision. (Siemens, 2005, para. 3)

Emphasizing the connections within the TLDL program and providing opportunities for teacher-librarians to connect locally and globally through personal learning networks is a key learning outcome of the program.   These two ideas, participatory culture and

Connectivism, form the foundation of the program implemented at the University of Alberta to prepare teacher-librarians for their work in schools and school libraries in the 21st century.

Conclusion

So what are the key changes in school library education in Canada in the past twenty years?

1. School library education comes to students in 2012 - no more moving to Edmonton or London, Ontario. A teacher wanting to be a teacher-librarian can work full-time or part-time and do graduate work from anywhere in the world. TLDL has had students from all provinces in Canada and from several countries around the world.

2. Canadian teachers can choose to do the online MEd in Teacher-Librarianship from the University of Alberta or an online Diploma in Teacher-Librarianship from the University of British Columbia. Both of these programs provide more focused school librarianship education than was available twenty years ago or even now in Canadian MLIS programs. Alternatively, teachers may choose to complete an MLIS in a face-to-face program in Canada or online from a number of American universities.

3. Technology has made it easy to connect, teach, learn, share, and present from anywhere in the world. Instructors and students create digital content every day and make the learning experiences in online programs richer than they were 15 years ago. Web 2.0 tools are easy to use, easy to learn, and students and instructors can choose which tools best fit each learning outcome. However, instructors and students new to online learning and school library education may find all the possibilities overwhelming. Jennifer and Joanne are grateful that they had the time to be able to play with these new technologies as they were introduced.

4. When graduating from library school in the 1990s, neither Jennifer or Joanne felt like they were going into their schools as leaders. Many TLDL students in 2012 come to teacher-librarianship education already working in school libraries and already acknowledged by administration and colleagues as having the potential to be a school leader. The Master of Education in Teacher-Librarianship provides opportunities for these students to explore problems of practice, create meaningful assignments, and apply new learning right away in schools and school libraries. Education is no longer disconnected from the work that teacher-librarians are doing in their school library programs.

5. Because most students in TLDL are working in school libraries while studying, there is a much stronger connection to the day-to-day realities of being a teacher-librarian. This enriches the experiences of instructors and other students. It provides real-world examples, supports deep thinking and rich discussions, and helps those students not currently working in libraries learn more about the profession. Theory and practice are connected.

6. When Jennifer and Joanne attended library school there were very few part-time students. Programs were designed for full-time students and classes were offered during the day. For Jennifer, there were no courses available in the MLIS for those wishing to be teacher-librarians. Joanne was able to take a few courses more directly

related to teacher-librarianship.   TLDL prepares teachers to be teacher-librarians. Unlike MLIS programs where students are preparing for work in many different types of libraries and information, the TLDL program focuses solely on the role of the teacher-librarian.

7. Recent graduates recognize that they will need to continue to learn after their formal education is complete. Graduates of the TLDL program understand the value of formal and informal ongoing professional learning. The TLDL program introduces students to the concept of a personal learning network (PLN) and this is one way that current students and graduates can stay connected to issues, new technologies and experts. Local and global connections are developed through the TLDL courses and students are encouraged to build and maintain these networks after graduation. Instructors in the TLDL program model the development and importance of personal learning networks by curating information, talking about issues related to building PLNs, and requiring students to incorporate their own PLNs into the classroom environment.

So what does the future hold for school library education in Canada? Currently, there are several different options for teachers wanting to be teacher-librarians, such as additional qualification courses, a diploma in Teacher-Librarianship, a M.Ed. in Teacher-Librarianship, or an MLIS. These programs are affordable, accessible and deliver quality education. As the number of teacher-librarians continues to decrease and the importance of the role continues to diminish, programs may no longer be viable. This will be compounded by the recent retirements of several Canadian senior professors in teacher-librarianship, shrinking higher education budgets and an increasing shift toward for-profit online education.

Technology will continue to have a profound effect on school library education. Thinking back to ten years ago, many students did not have access to high speed broadband and now wireless and 3G access is ubiquitous in many parts of Canada. Some of our students have never known a time without a computer in their lives and in their homes. Mobile computing is driving software development and a TLDL app is currently being developed. Students are also beginning to demand access to course content and discussions through their mobile devices, which require changes to learning management systems and a shift in thinking about course structure and content delivery. The ease of communicating and collaborating allows more group work, group presentations and community building. The learning management system (Moodle) is only one small part of the student experience. Students and instructors in TLDL collaborate, communicate, and interact with one another across a variety of platforms, including Google chat, Skype, a Facebook group, a wiki, a Twitter hashtag and a blog.

Just as the technology is changing the way school library education is offered in Canada, the needs and expectations of students are also changing. Increasingly, non-traditional students in graduate programs are driving program expectations and course delivery. A tension exists between the needs of the students who want professional development and flexibility in their programs and the expectations of instructors who want to provide students with rigorous graduate-level courses. This is especially challenging in a for-profit higher education model.

The increasing availability of online school library education programs can only be a good thing for students who will then have greater opportunities to develop a global

perspective about school libraries. We must safeguard accessible, affordable, and public school library education to ensure these global learning opportunities develop and grow.

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