Editorial

Digital Identity: An opportunity for leadership

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My husband Harry has been blogging for over ten years. It’s his hobby and his 1000+ readers enjoy his writing style about topics that interest him like electric cars, Florida State sports, politics and our family. When he began this endeavor upon retirement, he asked me if I would mind if he included me in stories and photos. I said I wouldn’t if he used my nickname and not my real name. I shuddered to think that the first thing that would appear when people googled me might be that video of my failed attempts at surfing in Hawaii instead of a scholarly research article.

I’m not alone in trying to control my digital identity. A Pew Research study (Madden, Cortesi, Gasser, Lenhart & Duggan, 2012) reported that:

- 81% of parents of online teens say they are concerned about how much information advertisers can learn about their child’s online behavior, with some 46% being “very” concerned.
- 72% of parents of online teens are concerned about how their child interacts online with people they do not know, with some 53% of parents being “very” concerned.
- 69% of parents of online teens are concerned about how their child’s online activity might affect their future academic or employment opportunities, with some 44% being “very” concerned about that.
- 69% of parents of online teens are concerned about how their child manages his or her reputation online, with some 49% being “very” concerned about that.

One of the evolving roles that have emerged for school librarians is teaching digital citizenship. This includes not only self-image and identity but also Internet safety, digital footprint and reputation, privacy and security, information literacy, cyberbullying, and creative credit and copyright (Common Sense Education, 2014). The four research articles in this issue of School Libraries Worldwide focuses on these themes.

Linda Cooper in, “Electronic Portfolios to Support the Growth Of Digital Identity in the School Library,” provides us with a good definition and examples of what we know and what we do about digital identity. She articulates how the use of eportfolios empowers a young person to create and recreate a changing identity and observe and reflect on his or her growth.

School librarian leadership is essential to integrating digital citizenship in the curriculum. Susan Celephane finds in her research, New Zealand School Librarians: Technology Leaders? that support from the principal and those in higher management positions enable a librarian to be an
technology leader. She states that not being proactive and up-to-date in their approach is a barrier and the importance for school librarians to take risks and attempt to grow their role.

Leadership roles for school librarians also are a resounding theme in, “School Librarians and the Mandated Implementation of Digital Textbooks in Florida and South Korea: Exploring School Context,” by Ji Hei Kang and myself. Ji Hei is my doctoral student and her dissertation will take this topic even further and be groundbreaking, as digital textbooks will infiltrate many schools. Initial implementation in Florida and South Korea show some noteworthy cultural and educational differences for school librarians’ functions.

In contrast to this digital age, Melissa Johnston and Lauren Mandel remind us that there are still physical libraries that may be daunting to our students. Their research, “Are we leaving them Lost in the Woods with no Breadcrumbs to follow? Assessing Signage Systems in School Libraries,” describes wayfinding - the ability of users of a facility to navigate through that environment to find specific destinations. They argue “in the school library environment this means that student users can find and access the information they need for school related tasks and assignments. Developing wayfinding skills contributes to the development of spatial literacy.”

The topics and approaches are rich in this issue and I hope you enjoy it.

References
