Becoming a Celebrity Teacher-Librarian: Moving Towards Self-Actualization and Realization

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This study contributes to our understanding of the early experiences of teacher-librarians and brings in the framework of possible and provisional selves as a lens to examine teacher-librarian identity. Participants told us their strongest memories included professional development, advocacy, professional change, making the library a safe space focused on learning, supporting staff and students in taking risks, and collection development. Barriers and challenges included technology, library time and budget cuts, making changes in the library, and sharing the TL position with another teacher. We saw these teacher-librarians modeling, presenting, providing evidence, creating safe learning spaces, helping staff take risks, becoming more confident in their abilities, and meeting the needs of their school community. Valuable previous experiences included classroom teaching experience, dispositions, understanding the school context, and connecting with administrators. Participants offered several key pieces of advice for new teacher-librarians: promote, advocate, connect, organize, read, build relationships, and know your administration. Participants had many plans for the future including: continuing to build relationships, collection development and programming, continuing advocating for more library time, more technology leadership, and supporting the social/emotional health of students.

Introduction

What do we know about how teachers move from feeling like a novice to acting like an expert? When do teachers begin to say "I am ready to quiet the inner dialogue that convinces me others are the professionals who know more than I do in order to embrace the professional I have become" (Toppel, 2010, p. 65)? What are the dispositions that define an exemplary teacher-librarian (Jones & Bush, 2009; Kimmel, Dickinson & Doll, 2012)? What is the professional life cycle of a teacher who becomes a teacher-librarian (Al-Ahdal, 2014)? While this paper does not attempt to answer all of these questions, these questions do guide and challenge the researchers in their thinking about pre-service and in-service teacher-librarianship education.

In hopes of better understanding the transition from teacher to teacher-librarian, from novice to expert, this study presents findings from a three-year study following five teachers as they transition to the role of teacher-librarian. As instructors in the Teacher-Librarianship by Distance Learning program at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Canada, we are interested in how current students and recent graduates experience the early years of becoming

a teacher-librarian. We also believe that other new teacher-librarians, teacher-librarianship educational programs and researchers will be interested in this study.

Research Questions

The following questions inform this paper:

1. What factors influenced teachers to take on the role of a teacher-librarian?
2. What have been your greatest successes, opportunities, challenges and barriers? What are your strongest memories from your first three years as a teacher-librarian?
3. What previous experiences (formal and informal) have been most valuable in your first three years as a teacher-librarian?
4. What advice would you give new teacher-librarians based on your experiences as new TLs?
5. What do you know now about being a teacher-librarian and where do you go from here?

Conceptual Framework

This paper explores the concept of *possible selves* in the transition from teacher to teacher-librarian (Markus & Nurius, 1986). "Possible selves derive from representations of the self in the past and they include representations of the self in the future" (Markus & Nurius, p. 954). These selves are individual and personal while also being social. This concept is interesting as we look at the crafting of the professional identity of teacher-librarians. Ibarra (1999) introduced the idea of "provisional selves" and suggested that a person transitioning into a new role follows an iterative process of observing role models, experimenting with provisional selves and evaluating provisional selves (p. 787). Ibarra's research examined a business culture, the transition of people within the organization to a new role within that same organization, in much the same way that a teacher transition to the role of a teacher-librarian.

Literature Review

When examining the first year of becoming a teacher-librarian in the Canadian context, Branch-Mueller and de Groot (2014) found that new teacher-librarians attempted to make themselves indispensable by building on their own personal strengths. These strengths include technology, curriculum, inquiry and literacy leadership. The participants became champions of their collections - fiction, popular non-fiction, online databases and web resources. It was clear that for these new teacher-librarians developing relationships with school administration, teachers and teacher-librarian colleagues was essential.

To prepare teachers to become teacher-librarians we have Canadian -- *Leading Learning* (Canadian Library Association (CLA), 2014) and *Achieving Information Literacy* (Asselin, Branch & Oberg, 2003) -- and American -- *Standards for Initial Preparation of School Librarians* (American Association of School Librarians (AASL), 2010) standards, as well as the work of other library organizations around the world. In Canada as a whole, a very small number of teacher--librarians have an MLIS degree or a Master of Education degree in Teacher-Librarianship. In a

recent survey of teacher-librarians in Canada (Branch & de Groot, 2011), only 10 of 178 respondents had an MLIS degree and only 10 more had a Master of Education degree. In western Canada, many more teacher-librarians have a post-graduate diploma. We also have "teachers in the library" - those who are assigned to the school library for a part of the school day but with little or no further education in teacher-librarianship. As a result, in Canada, we have a very diverse group of teachers in the role of teacher-librarian.

AASL's (2007) *Standards for the 21st Century Learner* includes dispositions as learning outcomes along with skills, responsibilities and self-assessment strategies for students in Kindergarten through Grade 12. The work of Jones & Bush (2009) begins a discussion of the most necessary professional dispositions of school librarians (teacher-librarians) and uses the definition of Katz (1993) to define a disposition as "a tendency to exhibit frequently, consciously, and voluntarily a pattern of behavior that is directed to a broad goal" (para. 3). Jones and Bush (2009) suggest that the foundational dispositions for teachers-librarians would include "caring equally about each student, believing that each student can learn, and understanding the equitable access to resources that translates to fairness for all students (p. 12). Kimmel, et al. (2012) continued this examination of dispositions by conducting research with three focus groups of seventy-one practicing school librarians. They found through their analysis the Dispositional Continua as seen below:

> From Expertise to Advocacy
> From Library-based to Community-based
> From Affable to Open
> From Cooperative to Collaborative
> From Ethical to Modeling Ethics
> From Love of Learning to Professional Growth
> From Facilitative to Flexible. (Kimmel, et al., 2012, Findings, para. 1)

The authors believed, "in the context of school library education, we see the need for faculty to model dispositions and also for faculty to create experiences that challenge and scaffold students as they practice behaviors that are evidence of dispositions and to reflect on those behaviours" (Kimmel, et al., 2012, Conclusions, para. 2). As teachers become teacher-librarians, they move along each of the continua. "This offers a way for students [and for new teacher-librarians] to think about themselves in a process of change and these professional dispositions as emerging and incomplete" (Kimmel, et al., 2012, Conclusions, para. 2). These continua provide for a professional growth framework where it is "not a matter of having or not having a particular disposition but of degree and process" (Kimmel, et al., 2012, Conclusions, para. 4). Lynn (2002) presents the notion of a career cycle for teachers. This career cycle moves from Preservice, Induction, Competency Building, Enthusiasm and Growth, Career Frustration, Career Stability, Career Wind-down and Career Exit (Lynn, 2002, p. 180). Lynn (2002, p. 181) described the Enthusiasm and Growth phase when "teachers have reached a high level of competence in their jobs but continue to progress as professionals." Lynn (2002, p.181) described a teacher in this phase:

Hollie, a secondary physical education teacher, can be identifies as being in an enthusiastic and growing phase of her career cycle. She is a master teacher who is competent and self-confident; she is also active in her state physical education organization, attends the yearly conference, and serves on numerous committees. Her students describe her as enthusiastic and as someone who appears to love her job. Within the school district Hollie lends a helping hand to other teachers and organizes workshops for the districts' secondary physical education teachers. Enthusiastic and growing teachers like Hollie not only experience high levels of job satisfaction, but also tend to have a positive impact on the climate of the school community.

We need to pay attention to "family support structures, positive critical incidents, life crises, individual dispositions, and avocational outlets" (Lynn, 2002, p. 179).

There is much research about teacher identity and pre-service preparation to help inform the experiences of new teacher-librarians (for example, Battey & Franke, 2008; Florio-Ruane & Williams, 2008; Horn, Nolan, Ward & Campbell, 2008; Olsen, 2008; Thomas & Beauchamp, 2007). Thomas and Beauchamp highlight that the success and well being in a new profession is dependent on a strong sense of professional identity. Horn et al. (2008) tell us that "teaching identities are an ongoing project and this identity construction is a productive place to connect to novice teachers' own learning goals" (p. 70). Battey and Frank remind us that "we do not develop our identities in isolation" (p. 128) and that "local communities limit the variety of practices that teachers have access to" (p. 129). Forio-Ruane and Williams (2008) encourage us to examine "the stories of our own paths and the stories of the paths taken by others...as a significant part of the development of one's identity not only as a teacher - but as a member of the larger teaching profession" (p. 8). Enyedy, Goldberg and Welsh (2005) remind us that teachers may struggle with "multiple conflicting beliefs, goals and knowledge" (p. 91). Olsen encourages the inclusion of learning and teaching autobiographies, conversations about contradictions and paying formal attention to personal and emotional effects of identity transitions (p. 38).

Dotson and Jones (2011) reported three major trends about leadership development in their survey research of 149 recent school librarian graduates ("graduates of a southeastern US university over a five year period)" (Method, para. 2). The first trend reported by the researchers was that school librarians continued "to be very traditional in their approach to teaching and learning" (Dotson & Jones, 2011, Findings, para. 1). A second trend found that "less than 30% of participants indicated that they served on Media and Technology Advisory Boards or committees" and findings showed school librarians "to be somewhat static in their approach to the role of technology leader, a role for which ideally they should be prepared to fill" (Dotson & Jones, 2011, Findings, para. 2-3). The third trend reported by Dotson and Jones indicated:

Approximately 70% reported serving on a Leadership Team or School Improvement Team. These encouraging figures, looking specifically at librarians serving on teams or in groups, purposely directing the programs and administration of their schools, highlight the presence of the librarian in leadership of the school community and further

indicate the significance of preparation of school librarians for leadership upon graduation and entrance into the field. (Findings, para. 5)

Research about the unique professional learning needs of teacher-librarians indicates that "interaction with other school library professionals is not a regular occurrence" (Mardis & Hoffman, 2007, Online focus groups as a motivator for decreasing educator isolation section, para. 2). Providing opportunities for teacher-librarians to reflect and connect resulted in both "a sense of shared circumstances (I am not the only one like this) and the opportunity to learn of successful strategies for school librar[ies] that had immediate relevance (I want to try that out here)" (Mardis & Hoffman, 2007, Online focus groups as a motivator for decreasing educator isolation section, para. 2). This study allows new teacher-librarians to reflect on their experiences, make connections between previous formal and information learning and their new role, and think about their new identities.

Methodology

This research project followed five new teacher-librarians for three years. The five teacher-librarians included in this research are working in a variety of school settings, including elementary, junior high school, and high school libraries. They have all been classroom teachers in the past and at the time that this research project began, were all currently enrolled in, or recently graduated from, a graduate level teacher-librarianship education program. This research paper presents the findings from all three years of the study. Individual interviews were completed three times in year one (September 2012, January 2013, and June 2013). In year 3, an online focus group was held with three of the five teacher-librarians, while the other two participants contributed individual responses to the questions by email. The focus group meeting was transcribed with the additional individual responses added at the end of the transcript. The transcripts were then analyzed, by looking for common themes and trends that emerged across questions and throughout the comments (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Miles & Huberman, 1998).

Findings

This study followed five new teacher-librarians through the first three years of their transition from classroom teachers to teacher-librarians. The purpose of the study was to better understand how new teacher-librarians experience the transition from the role of classroom teacher into the role of teacher-librarian. This paper focuses on all three years of the participants' transitions to being new teacher-librarians. This paper also looks at the data specifically related to the new teacher-librarians "gaining attention and acknowledgement-- about not being like everyone else" (Gabler, 1994, pp. 10, 13). This section presents findings using six overarching interview questions to organize the findings and uses representative quotes to support the key ideas and themes from each question.

What Factors Influenced These Teacher-Librarians to Take on the Role of a Teacher-Librarian?

The first research question asked what factors influenced these new teacher-librarians to take on the role of a teacher-librarian. Two participants indicated that instability was one factor in

deciding to become a teacher-librarian. Declining enrollment and yearly layoffs meant that these two classroom teachers were looking for more stable teaching positions in their district.

One participant indicated that it was exposure to the role of the teacher-librarian that excited her, "*Two days after being assigned to the library for one block of prep-time for a full-time teacher-librarian, I knew this was the place for me.*" For another participant, it was "*working in the school with a TL that was a mentor and collaborator*" that was the reason for wanting to pursue further education in teacher-librarianship. She stated, "*I wanted to do an M.Ed. but I didn't want to go into administration.*"

For several participants, the move to teacher-librarianship was based in a need for professional change. One participant spoke about "*loving to read and wanting to share my love of reading.*" Another talked about wanting to do more inquiry-based learning and wanting to share that with others. A third participant was offered a district librarian position and was tempted to take it until she realized that she was committed to "the teaching piece" of the role rather than the administration piece.

One participant spoke at length about being in a specialized position (French Immersion teacher) and wanting to be more of a generalist. She wanted a more senior leadership role, desired a change, wanted to renew her skills, wanted to develop another area of expertise, and learn more about technology. All of this led her to seek out new opportunities in a different role.

What Have Been Your Greatest Successes, Opportunities, Challenges and Barriers? What are Your Strongest Memories from Your Three Years as a Teacher-Librarian?

The second question asked participants to reflect on the greatest successes, opportunities, challenges and barriers they experienced in the early years of their new roles. This section summarizes the findings for all these aspects of the question.

Successes

Successes for the teacher-librarians included: literacy/reading initiatives, research and information sharing, good rapport with staff, physical and virtual library space changes, and feeling welcomed, praised and rewarded for their work.

The theme of literacy/reading initiatives came out as a success for several of the new teacher-librarians. This included silent reading promotion in the school (DEAR), collection development in the fiction section, and increasing circulation. One teacher librarian told us that her greatest success was being able to "*focus on literacy. I love talking about new books and the kids are always surprised when the library has the newest book.*" Another new teacher-librarian that she loved "*developing her role in the school for readers' advisory.*" After putting a lot of effort into collection development, this teacher-librarian could report that "*circulation statistics were way up for fiction and recreational non-fiction.*" One teacher-librarian noted that her successes included "*leading the school's professional book club.*"

One teacher-librarian felt that a success was that she was "*more confident in her abilities to help students with research.*" This confidence allowed her to start "*recommending information and forwarding information to other staff members.*" Another teacher-librarians commented on how she had developed a "*good rapport with staff.*" A third teacher-librarian worked with 36 of 42

teachers over the year on projects and saw this as a huge success. A fourth new teacher-librarian told us about the woodshop teacher in her school who went to the administration to insist that they needed to keep the teacher-librarian "*because she hasn't missed a beat.*" That same teacher-librarian felt that she was "*making good connections with LA and SS teachers.*" Two of the teacher-librarians felt that one big success for the year was "*providing professional development for other teachers.*" These successes helped to increase the time in the school library for one new teacher-librarian from "*four blocks out of eight to five.*"

Several new teacher-librarians shared their excitement in improving the school library space. One completed "*weeding to allow for some renovations to occur.*" Another created a section for board games and "*built a board game collection for students and teachers.*" A third felt that "*creating a welcoming space where students want to be*" was her greatest success. Other successes for the new teacher-librarians included their work in building their libraries virtual spaces. One was excited about "*initiating the process of getting access to databases for students.*" Two more were pleased with their work building their library websites.

Opportunities

Participants identified many opportunities for their first years as a teacher-librarian. They were excited to be working will teachers and enjoyed collaborating. Comments included opportunities to mentor new staff and work with teachers "*you know but haven't worked with.*" One participant added, "*People are happy to work with me.*" One participant saw that building a reading culture in her school was a huge opportunity because of very low circulation statistics. Three teacher-librarians mentioned that the first year as a teacher-librarian provided them with the opportunity to reinstate silent reading initiatives such as DEAR (Drop Everything And Read).

One participant said that her greatest opportunities were a supportive administrative team and "*working with an amazing library tech with similar goals and vision.*" Two participants talked about inquiry learning/project-based learning opportunities in their schools. Another new teacher-librarian felt that having a flexible schedule allowed her so many opportunities to make a difference in the school library. One participant felt that the first year as a teacher-librarian provided her with "*opportunities to continue to expand my educator's toolbox, expand or add to my own experience, and work with the whole school body.*" For her it was a chance to have an impact.

Another theme that emerged from this question was interactions with teachers. One participant stated, "*I was so gung ho that first year that I scared away teachers.*" She elaborated, "*I tried really hard to connect with people and I learned over time that I needed to find a few people and start with those.*" Another participant realized she would,

> [P]ay less attention to the crabs in the bucket and focus on those who are willing to collaborate and the people who are enjoying their job and pay less attention to those who are unhappy in their job, pessimistic and not willing to move forward, and cynical.

She continued that, "*it is easy to feel discouraged so find five or six who are willing to try new things and focus on those people.*"

Barriers and Challenges

All of the new teacher-librarians articulated barriers and challenges they saw in their new role. One teacher-librarian was filling in for another on leave and so the biggest challenge was the library was not "her space." She told us that the previous TL was much loved and staff would always say, "*Susan always…. Susan would never….*". This theme of staff resistance came out as a barrier in several of the interviews. One teacher-librarian suggested to a fellow teacher, "*Hey, we could try this….*", but the other teacher was quick to reply, "*No, I do this on day 67.*" Another new teacher-librarian noted that, "*Staff responses haven't always been positive.*" A fourth commented that, "*It takes time to develop relationships with staff.*" Several new teacher-librarians also noted that understanding the role of a teacher-librarian was also a barrier to their work. One teacher-librarian shared that, "*Administrators don't know what the role is.*" Another teacher-librarian worried about being perceived as competent. A third teacher-librarian felt that she struggled with the stereotype of a librarian.

Technology was another theme that came out of the interviews with the teacher-librarians. One teacher-librarian reported that the school and school library have low access to technology. Another was concerned with bandwidth and the blocking of social media sites. A third said that lack of connectivity was a big issue in the school library. One participant stated that the technology department was a big challenge. The teacher-librarian has to "*work around them because they make everything complicated.*" Another teacher-librarian shared these concerns and noted that poor wifi and the current set-up of Chrome Book tablets meant she rarely had "*the tools that I want where I want them.*" A third teacher-librarian felt that her school had "*19th century technology for 21st century learning.*" Another teacher-librarian commented that her library assistant struggled with using any technology.

A challenge for one teacher-librarian was the physical space. For another teacher-librarian, a challenge was the logistics of taking over a new space including passwords and learning about the library management system. Two teacher-librarians expressed concerns about budget issues in the school. One teacher-librarian noted that while there is enough money for this year, "*I am concerned about the budget going forward.*" Several teacher-librarians were concerned about time and finding time to do everything. This included the large amount of clerical work when there is insufficient support staff, "*I am not a clerk; I am a teacher.*" Another teacher-librarian noted that she struggled to find enough time to do everything. A third teacher-librarian commented that, "*time management is a challenge trying to determining which projects to take on that will have the most impact.*" For one teacher-librarian, the biggest challenge was keeping up with the momentum of change.

Four of the teacher-librarians only work part-time in the school library and had teaching responsibilities for the other part of their time. One participant spoke of trying to do "*1.0 on a 0.5 position.*" Similarly, another participant noted in her school library there is "*less funding and more teaching time each year (almost 50% decrease in budget in the past three years and 40% teaching time increase (three classes added).*" One participant wanted new shelving in her library and the "*woodwork teacher and his classes created fabulous shelves, but this being grieved by the union. If the union was to have created the shelves it would have cost $10,000 and/or would have never happened.*" One participant shares responsibility for the library with another teacher who was not trained as a TL. The teacher in the library took a clerical approach was not collaborative and made the space "*uncomfortable for students.*"

Another challenge had to do with knowing more about the logistics of the school library. One participant wished she had known more about:

> [E]verything clerical - that was the biggest hurdle in the first year learning curve. I appreciated all of the TLDL courses on research and online presentation tools, but I feel that the cataloguing course was outdated to how we actually catalogue new materials. Plus, even something as simple as 'put all the labels in the same spot on each book' would have been a good thing to know. In our district, if a library has a TL, there is usually no clerical staff, so we have to do that all ourselves.

Another participant felt she was "*well prepared for the big picture but I could have used a crash course in Follett Destiny.*" This same participant would have liked to know more about using a spreadsheet program like Excel for budget management. Another participant stated, "*I had no idea how to use the library circulation program. I needed a great deal of learning and felt like the library clerk had power over me.*" Another participant noted that because she had a reliable and competent library technician, she did not know nearly as much as she should.

Strongest Memories

Two participants who work in the same school division agreed that one of their strongest memories was doing professional development sessions together for teachers. These two participants also spoke of the memory of their presentation to the Board of Trustees to advocate for the use of the teacher-librarian in the division. This presentation took the form of a Prezi and four teacher-librarians spoke to a different role of the teacher-librarian. These two participants had not known of any other group that has made a presentation to the board. One participant noted that, "*What science teachers do is well understood and their courses are required. What teacher-librarians do is seen as optional and it more incumbent on us to prove our worth, especially when it is not understood.*" One participant noted that it has been great "*connecting with other TLs in the district and learning how the 'seasoned' ones run their libraries.*"

One participant explained that her strongest memories is of the "*incredible professional change - a new way of interacting with people.*" She stated she has "*made the library her own and is seen as the information leader in the school.*" Another participant explained,

> I feel like I am still 'making my path.' The first year I came in and changed a lot of how the library was perceived - this year has been a time of ensuring that the library can be a casual place that is still focused on learning. Watching students take ownership over the space has been a true success and joy.

A third participant also commented that a strong memory was "*continued connections with a significant number of students who see their space as a 'safe' area.*"

One high school teacher-librarian looked back on the importance of "*helping staff learn to take risks in trying new technologies and working with me.*" She realized, in retrospect, "*how much guidance we have to do a teacher-librarians, how we have to help students and teachers know that it is okay to make mistakes, play with new technologies, and play with ideas.*" Another TL participant stated "*I am more confident in my abilities as a research coordinator… I actually did not realize that many educators do not encourage proper research techniques, documentation of sources, etc.*"

Several participants spoke about their collections when reminiscing about their first years as teacher-librarians. One participant was

super excited about our move to using LibGuides for the virtual learning commons - we are supporting a full course (Planning 10) as well as numerous lessons across the curricular areas. I am excited about our new games (we have class sets of Settlers of Catan and Carcassone) and we have hosted a variety of MakerEd activities. I'm excited that students choose to be in the library!

Another participant remembered when she started in the library and found out that only 16 books were circulating per month. *"I spent my first six months on collection development. I knew I could make a difference."* Another participant is excited about lunch clubs - specifically *"Minecraft/gaming club and girls gaming club."* She has also created a professional resources collection, after consultation with teachers.

What Previous Experiences (Formal And Informal) Have Been Most Valuable in Your First Three Years as a Teacher-Librarian?

All of the new teacher-librarians spoke about the importance of the learning in their graduate programs. Two spoke specifically about the "Web 2.0 course" and one stated that the course was paradigm shifting. The importance of understanding educational research was felt to be important for one teacher-librarian. This was seen as crucial for knowing how to assess results of standardized tests. One teacher-librarian felt that being in the Teacher-Librarianship by Distance Learning program had given her a wealth of knowledge and information and had made the transition smoother. One teacher-librarian noted that discussions with colleagues in graduate courses had been very important.

One new teacher-librarian spoke at length about her previous teaching experiences. She explained that having 20 years of classroom teacher experience was essential for her new role. She described that her teaching in French immersion was resource-based. Therefore she was very comfortable with teaching with resources. She elaborated that in French immersion *"you are the program and this is the same as a teacher-librarian."* Her experience of *"speaking another language made her better able to make connections with other people."*

One participant clearly indicated that her 20 years of teaching experience with people from five years to 65 years in a variety of settings and countries had been most valuable. She also added that she had strong speaking and classroom management skills and had worked with a variety of people. She was able to get the bigger picture of the needs of her school community. Another participant indicated that *"being able to connect with administration is so important - they have to see you as someone who understands what is going on in the building."*

In the focus group session, the participants had quite a long conversation about the number of years of classroom teaching experience that would be best before becoming a teacher-librarian. One participant felt that TLs needed a minimum of ten years of classroom teaching experience. Another felt that five years was a minimum. She stated that, *"without that time, I wouldn't have had the sense of who I was as a person."* One participant felt that experience along with *"a willingness to try new things and your mindset was also important."* Another participant spoke about the importance of *"soft skills and dispositions"* for being an effective teacher-librarian.

New teacher-librarians spoke of the importance of knowledge of literature, having an English teacher background, and being readers. One new teacher-librarian felt knowing the curriculum was very important in this role. Another spoke about her knowledge of inquiry,

"*inquiry-based learning had a huge role in the success I am having now.*" Several new teacher-librarians spoke about mentorship - from other teacher-librarians in their school districts and from instructors and colleagues in their graduate programs. Several of the new teacher-librarians also spoke about the importance of informal mentorship through following blogs and Twitter feeds of practicing teacher-librarians around the world. Mentors were seen as a critical support system in the first year as a new teacher-librarian. For one teacher-librarian, "*asking big questions and sharing successes and failures with mentors*" was the key to her growth as a new teacher-librarian.

What Advice Would You Give New Teacher-Librarians Based on Your Experiences as New TLs?

One participant listed five key pieces of advice: promote, advocate, connect, organize and read. She told us that it was essential to "*promote my own skills and resources in my library to students and parents in any which I possibly can.*" Several other participants spoke about promoting the role of the teacher-librarian and "*fighting for more TL time.*" In terms of advocating, one participant noted it was essential for new teacher-librarians to "*publish their credentials and dispel the myth.*" Another piece of advice was to connect with "*colleagues who have completed this program. We have quite a 'sisterhood and brotherhood'.*" Another suggestion for new teacher-librarians is to meet regularly and ask questions. One participant states that,

> In my first year I was growing my PLN - adding Twitter contacts, seeking out mentors and basically trying to expand my circle. While I am, of course, open to new contacts, I basically know who my PLN is and how to access help and support when I need it. I find I am more able to offer support than in my first year and that people are 'adding me to their circles'.

Another participant also highlighted the importance of connecting with other TLs in district and on Twitter.

One participant has been assigned more classroom teaching time and, as a result, she stated

> I am not relying on other TLs as much this year. I feel really overwhelmed this year with the amount of teaching (and the needs of the group I have), that I honestly felt like stepping out of the library position. It is difficult to be a part-time teacher and a full-time TL so I have really focused on the teaching aspect.

Staying organized was another suggestion to help new teacher-librarians. One participant remarked that "*you can't do everything*" and "*you invariably have to cut back on your list.*" She cautioned new TLs to "*not get frustrated and find balance.*" Another participant noted that, "*due to increased teaching load, I really have to manage my time and several of the clubs/events I sponsored in the past, I have had to let go of.*" Another participant recommended setting up a good filing system and creating a clear budget. She also suggested that TLs "*be prepared to report out to your administration at the end of the year because you have to justify your job.*" The final piece of advice from one participant was to read. Several participants indicated that "*knowing your collection*" is key to being a successful TL. One participant stated that, "*the best thing I do in the library is that if a student comes in looking for a book, I can find one for them pretty quickly that will suit them or peak their interest.*" Another participant suggested that it is essential to "*keep reading - students and staff should know what you are reading - advertise it, put up a sign.*" One participant is

celebrating that she "*finally has an administrator who reads - a new vice-principal who was a high school English teacher and who supports the need for a TL.*"

In addition to promote, advocate, connect, organize and read, other study participants added essential pieces of advice. One participant highlighted the importance of building relationships. She suggested that it is critical to "*identify the people on staff who are going to be receptive to you and then you have to hone in on those who will bear a lot of fruit.*" Another suggestion is to "*get to know your administration so you know what you can do for them and what they can do for you.*"

What Do You Know Now About Being a Teacher-Librarian and Where Do You Go From Here?

To continue this same line of questioning, we asked participants to tell us what do you know now about being a teacher-librarian? One participant stated, "*You are the program - forget the computers, collection, the furniture - the library is you. You have the ability to make, or not, a vibrant library program.*" Another participant concurred stating, "*the program is the TL - the TL is the program.*" One participant indicated that she was "*more confident and willing to say no if I feel that something is not pedagogically sound. I will challenge less than stellar practice when necessary. I know my collection and my staff much better, so I feel I am better able to meet students' and teachers' needs.*" Another participant stated,

> [N]o matter how hard you work, there are people who think that the teacher-librarian has the cushiest job in the school. I thought I had to prove my worth by long days - I realized that there will always be those who think that TLs are kindly ladies who do nothing more than sign out books to keener readers. Letting go of trying to make everyone respect the work we do has freed me up to focus on my work on what matters and makes the most sense for my students and space.

Participants had many plans for the future including: continuing to build relationships, collection development and programming, continuing advocating for more library time, more technology leadership, and supporting the social/emotional health of students. One participant highlighted that in TLs work in the school library in the future they will "*keep building relationships and focus on those that want to learn, take risks and bring their kids to the library.*" Another participant highlights the importance of working with teachers and being a part of the leadership team while a third will continue to focus on "*whole staff learning that is thoughtful and well-planned.*" One teacher-librarian has been involved in a collaborative time initiative for her school and she is looking forward to continuing to "*tweaking, determining what is working and what isn't, determining what needs more or less structure - especially because one third of the teachers are hesitant.*"

Several teacher-librarians plan to continue to work on collection development - even if this is a summer project. One participant uses the summer "*to learn more about my collection and where I want to take my collection in the future.*" Another teacher-librarian looks forward to "*weeding the non-fiction section...starting in June. I hope to finish it before we return in September. Yes, I may put in some time over the summer.*" Because of declining enrollment in several of the school districts where these TLs worked, one participant vowed to "*continue advocating for more library time and continue to justify what I do in the library and why it is worthwhile.*"

Several participants are looking forward to Google Apps being implemented in their school districts. One participant is going to get Google Certified Educator training this summer. She is *"kind of fatigued about the next tech tool,"* but sees the introduction of Google Apps to be a great leadership opportunity for her. Another teacher-librarian *"will be creating more online courses. I am working to create full courses on LibGuides that will be supported by our Learning Center teachers. These courses will keep funding in our schools. I am wrapping up Planning 10, and will do Family Studies 12, Earth Science 11, Science and Technology 11 and AW Math 10 next year."* One participant expressed concerns about how to support the social/emotional health of students in her school. She is seeing abuse, anxiety, depression, parental alcohol abuse and wants to offer a social/emotional support program such as Mental Health First Aid for teachers and staff.

This study followed five new teacher-librarians through the first three years of their transition from classroom teachers to teacher-librarians. This section presented the findings from this research using representative quotes to support the key ideas and themes from each question. The next section will connect the findings to the existing literature, further identifying key themes and trends.

Discussion

This study endeavours to document the experiences of five new teacher-librarians as they transition into their new roles and to understand their experiences as new teacher-librarians.

The first research question asked what factors influenced these new teacher-librarians to take on the role of a teacher-librarian. Participants indicated that instability in their teaching role, exposure to teacher-librarians, desire for change, sharing a love a reading and/or inquiry-based learning, and desire for more of a leadership role in the school were some of the reasons to become a teacher-librarian. Participants listed many opportunities for their first year as a teacher-librarian. They were excited to be collaborating with teachers, building a reading culture, promoting literacy initiatives, and trying to have an impact on the whole school. These findings remind us of the importance of a strong sense of professional identity (Thomas & Beauchamp, 2007).

The second research question asked participants about their greatest successes, opportunities, challenges, and barriers. Successes for the teacher-librarians included: literacy/reading initiatives, research and information sharing, good rapport with staff, physical and virtual library space changes, and feeling welcomed, praised and rewarded for their work. As Olsen (2008) noted, it is essential to pay formal attention to personal and emotional effects of identity transitions. Celebrating successes and understanding barriers and challenges were a part of the ongoing identity construction for these new teacher-librarians (Horn et al., 2008).

Participants identified many opportunities for their first years as a teacher-librarian. They enjoyed collaborating, building a reading culture, working with a supportive administrative team and amazing library support staff. Being a teacher-librarian provides opportunities to work with teachers in new ways. Enyedy, Goldberg and Welsh (2005, p.72) state that because "identity is directly linked to both one's history and one's membership in

multiple communities of practice, one's identity is always both in progress and dependent of the particulars of the context."

All of the new teacher-librarians articulated barriers and challenges they saw in their new role. These included: filling in for a teacher-librarian, working with teachers, lack of understanding of the role of the teacher-librarian, technology and connectivity issues, library design and space issues, the amount of clerical work, time and priority management and debunking stereotypes about librarians. These struggles with conflicting beliefs, goals and knowledge mirrored the work of Enyedy, Goldberg and Welsh (2005). The teacher-librarians had a clear sense of the work they should be doing in their school libraries and struggled when they were unable to do that work (Branch-Mueller & de Groot, 2014, Discussion, para. 2). In year 3, when these same teacher-librarians speak of challenges and barriers, they see and imagine working around them. They consider the importance of balance, letting things go, focusing on those teachers who want to learn with them, and working with administrators to make things happen. These teacher-librarians appear to be in the enthusiastic and growing phase of their career life cycle (Lynn, 2002).

Participants indicated that their strongest memories included professional development, advocacy, professional change, making the library a safe space focused on learning, supporting staff and students in taking risks, and collection development. These findings mirror the work of Kimmel, Dickinson & Doll (2012) where we see teacher-librarians' strongest memories and successes in the areas of advocacy and professional growth. We see these teacher-librarians modeling, presenting, providing evidence, creating safe learning spaces, helping staff take risks, becoming more confident in their abilities, and meeting the needs of their school community.

The third research question asked participants to share with us what previous experiences were most valuable in their first three years as a teacher-librarian. Responses to this question included classroom teaching experience, dispositions, understanding the school context, and connecting with administrators. As Olsen (2008) noted, it is essential to pay formal attention to personal and emotional effects of identity transitions. Celebrating successes and understanding barriers and challenges were a part of the ongoing identity construction for these new teacher-librarians (Horn et al., 2008).

The fourth question asked participants to think about the advice they would give new teacher-librarians based on their own experiences. One participant identified five areas to focus on: promote, advocate, connect, organize and read. The other participants in the focus group heartily agreed with this list and added that they would advise new teacher-librarians to build relationships and get to know your administration. All of these pieces of advice were really suggestions for dispositions, which Katz (1993) defined as "a tendency to exhibit frequently, consciously, and voluntarily a pattern of behavior that is directed to a broad goal" (para. 3). The broad goal in this case is to build a strong library program that is properly staffed, well funded, and allows for the teacher-librarian to collaborate with teachers and provide professional development for teachers.

To continue this line of questioning, we next asked participants to tell us what they know now about being a teacher-librarian. Participants in the focus group were clear that the work teacher-librarians do is the school library program. Participants' responses indicated a new level of confidence and comfort in the role and an understanding that they each have to

focus on things that can make a difference in terms of teaching and learning in the school. These responses demonstrate a movement along the continua presented by Kimmel, Dickinson and Doll (2012).

Based on what they knew at the end of their first three years, participants had clear goals for the future and had plans in place to reach those goals. Their future plans built on the findings from interviews during their first year as teacher-librarians (Branch-Mueller & de Groot, 2014). The researchers found that:

New teacher-librarian built on their own personal strengths - whether it was inquiry, literacy or relationships with teachers. They were trying to make themselves indispensable. The participants all mentioned that they were becoming curriculum experts and were demonstrating that they could be technology leaders in their schools. The participants were championing their collections - whether is was readers' advisory for fiction and popular non-fiction or sharing resources from databases and the web. In the interviews, the new teacher-librarians highlighted the importance of developing relationships and building a support system (mentors). It was also noted that these new teacher-librarians were taking advantage of opportunities and championing the role of the teacher-librarian in their schools and school districts. (Branch-Mueller & de Groot, 2014, Discussion, para. 2).

By the third year of this study, the teacher-librarians were moving from their "provisional selves" (Ibarra, 1999) into their "possible selves" (Markus & Nurius, 1986). They were becoming confident, competent advocates for themselves and their programs. They were trying to balance the realities of the school context and their desire for positive change and growth in terms of teaching and learning possibilities. These teacher-librarians "are the program" in their school libraries.

While this is a very small group of teacher-librarians, it is a hopeful sign that graduates of the Teacher-Librarianship by Distance Learning program at the University of Alberta seem to be bucking some of the trends identified by Dotson and Jones (2011). They are involved in technology and other professional development, school-wide collaborative learning time, and technology leadership. They are also clearly focused on the leadership role in the school and recognize that relationships with administrators are key. It is clear that all courses in teacher-librarianship education "should incorporate components of leadership development and the use of emerging technologies (Dotson & Jones, 2011, Discussion: Charting the Change, para. 7).

Implications and Conclusions

As instructors in a program that educates teacher-librarians, we feel it is essential for us to understand the experiences of teacher-librarians as they transition from being classroom teachers. We also believe that new teacher-librarians, other teacher-librarianship educators, and researchers in the area of school libraries will be interested in the findings of this study. This paper contributes to the research about new teacher-librarians and builds on the work of Branch-Mueller & de Groot (2014) by providing an understanding of teacher-librarians in their third year in the role. There is very little research about the first few years of becoming a teacher-librarian and nothing looking at teacher-librarians in the Canadian context. This study

contributes to our understanding of the early experiences of teacher-librarians and brings in the framework of possible and provisional selves as a lens to examine teacher-librarian identity.

Several themes emerged to help us better understand how new teacher-librarians experience the first three years as teacher-librarians. Participants told us their strongest memories included professional development, advocacy, professional change, making the library a safe space focused on learning, supporting staff and students in taking risks, and collection development. Barriers and challenges included technology, library time and budget cuts, making changes in the library, and sharing the TL position with another teacher. We saw these teacher-librarians modeling, presenting, providing evidence, creating safe learning spaces, helping staff take risks, becoming more confident in their abilities, and meeting the needs of their school community.

They considered the importance of balance, letting things go, focusing on those teachers who want to learn with them, and working with administrators to make things happen. Valuable previous experiences included classroom teaching experience, dispositions, understanding the school context, and connecting with administrators.

Participants offered several key pieces of advice for new teacher-librarians: promote, advocate, connect, organize, read, build relationships, and know your administration. These suggestions provide more evidence to "meet the challenge for the school library profession to identify experiences that will foster dispositions, to encourage school librarians to exhibit and reflect on these behaviours, and to create assessment measures that will form a basis for conversation and professional growth" (Kimmel, Dickinson & Doll, 2012, Conclusions, para. 5). As teacher-librarian educators, it is helpful to know that some of the participants needed to know more about clerical responsibilities including budgeting software and library management systems. This will allow us to put into our Master of Education program experiences (e.g., Follet Destiny training, support groups, transition policies, mentorship, and job-shadowing opportunities) that will better prepare teacher-librarians for the early weeks and months as a new teacher-librarian.

Throughout this research, the researchers were heartened by the confidence of the new teacher-librarians. Providing opportunities for mentorship between more experienced graduates of our program and new teacher-librarians can support new teacher-librarians "to become a professional committed to both personal growth and contributing to the growth of the profession" (Kimmel, Dickinson & Doll, 2012, Conclusions, para. 4). Participants had many plans for the future including: continuing to build relationships, collection development and programming, continuing advocating for more library time, more technology leadership, and supporting the social/emotional health of students. Understanding the progress of the next steps in their development of "possible selves" (Markus & Nurius, 1986) tells the researchers that we must come back together with these teacher-librarians after five years and ten years in the profession.

This study will inform classroom experiences, assignments and projects in pre-service teacher-librarian courses, the professional development experiences required for new teacher-librarians, and the way we model the role of the teacher-librarian in pre-service teacher-librarianship programs. More broadly, this research may also help school districts and professional associations develop formal and informal learning experiences and mentorship

opportunities for new teacher-librarians. Most importantly, this study will help new teacher-librarians understand the experiences of those that went before them as they navigate the shift from teacher to teacher-librarian.

Gabler (2003) stated that "in many respects, celebrity is just ordinary….life writ large and more intense. Celebrity doesn't transport us from the niggling problems of daily life. It amplifies and refines them in an exciting narrative context" (p. B9). Like J. Lo, Beyonce and Lady Gaga, these teachers were "enacting a kind of modern parable of identity" as they became teacher-librarians (Gabler, 2003, p. B9). We all can relate to changing identities and in these teacher-librarians' stories and experiences, we "somehow manage to find ourselves" (Gabler, 2003, p. B9).

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