
Dania Ansenberg: School Librarian, Jerusalem, Israel: A Day in Her Life

Dania Ansenberg is the librarian at Givaat Gonen, a school located in a poor suburb of Jerusalem. Givaat Gonen, which covers grades 1 to 12, has over 1,000 students, many of whom come voluntarily from all parts of the city. Dania has a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy and Sociology, a Master of Arts in Librarianship, and is currently working on her doctoral dissertation. In 1992, she published a book on reading encouragement.

We must not be late! When we are late, the entire school knows it because next to the library door stands a long queue of waiting students. Today, we are expecting a few groups at 8 o'clock. A group of students from the 10th grade will come to learn about the information databases that we have here in our library. In addition, we will show the Internet to those few who haven't used it before, and we will not forget to discuss the fact that they have to critically evaluate the information they find. Once we are certain that they can identify a variety of potential sources of information, we let them apply what they have learned immediately, each one according to the theme he or she has chosen in advance.

With them will arrive a group of grade 6 students. They will have a reading encouragement lesson. The theme of today's lesson is: "Tom Sawyer." First, they will listen to a radio play recorded by professional actors. The children will listen and read the copied text simultaneously. It helps the less competent ones concentrate. Then we will play the telegram game. It goes like this: We give them a long paragraph full of details, an extract from a letter written by Aunt Polly (I assume you know who I mean) to her sister. In her letter, she asks her sister to advise her about how to behave with Tom. As she needs a quick answer, she wants to send a telegram. Now, we explain that in a telegram you pay per word, and that's why they have to help aunt Polly to write *all* the important parts of the letter, but *only* the important facts! The students grasp the idea and convert a letter of over 40 words into a 6-7-word telegram in an amazingly short time. We were practicing summarizing—and enjoying it. At the end of the lesson we will give them a crossword puzzle that includes names and items from Mark Twain's books. I hope we will have enough copies of his books, as the writer's books become more popular after those lessons.

At 10:00 a.m., after the break, we will take down the exhibition that has been displayed for the last two months and begin hanging the new one. The theme of the old one was: things that our readers forgot in books when they returned them to the library. It is hard to believe what treasures we found in between the pages during the past two years: a payment check, money bills, two love letters, one of them a real poem, one rose, one baby sock, a few

postcards, candy wrappings, and even a piece of lasagna pasta (not cooked, if you are wondering).

Today we will begin hanging the new exhibition; the topic is comic strips. This exhibition, which was prepared during the quiet months of the summer, includes a number of sections. The big bulletin board at the entrance to the library (1.5 x 2 m) will be covered with Roy Lichtenstein's drawings, and some information about him and his art. Around the library, on the walls, will hang boards that we had prepared about the history of the comic strips: Superman and Batman, Asterix (including a beautiful colored photo of the two producers of the series, Gosini and Uderzo), and Tin Tin by Harage. (Did you know that he was a fascist? We hesitated as to whether to mention it as we had already shattered some preconceptions about the character of Roald Dahl in an exhibition about him.) There will be a board about Maus by Art Spiegelman—comic strips about the holocaust! And others on the language of comic strips, Israeli painters, riddles, and so on, and so forth.

Above the shelves will "sit" the figures of Asterix, Obelix, Tin Tin, Snoopy, Dennis the Menace, and others, built of hard material. Short comic strip stories will be stuck down to the tables, a different one on each table—it is fun to work in the library! Interesting! To do so we will have to take away this month's poems. Usually, once a month, we stick a new poem (by a good poet) on each table. All is fair in love, war, and the promotion of reading. *We* in this article refers to myself and to Karen Berkman. There are only two of us in the library and we have so much to do.

We believe that it is important that the teachers become aware of our presence and our potential to help them. That's why we will spend the rest of the day on one of the projects that helps us to strengthen the library connection with the teachers. Every month we publish a bulletin directed to the staff. Each issue has a main topic. Once, the subject was the most significant books of the 20th century. Another issue was dedicated to moral questions in our everyday work. For example, one day a student came and asked for our help. He had used a complete thesis that he had found on the Internet. It was a good one, but it didn't include a bibliography, and that was where he needed our help. What would you have done? Yet another issue contained 20 marriage proposals from fiction: from Shakespeare to Garcia-Marquez and from *Little Women* to *Tarzan*.

Today's issue, we have decided already, will be about science books in the library, but what will we write? It has to be attractive.

I believe I can say honestly that almost every day, when we close the library doors at the end of the day, we look back on hours packed with activity, learning, fun, and weariness.