School libraries Instructional materials centers Instructional materials personnel

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Abstract
The library media center and the role of the library media specialist continue to change. In 1945, the School Libraries for Today and Tomorrow recommended that libraries provide reading centers, library skills centers and a center for information provision (Morrill, 1995, p. 33). By 1994, Fred D'Ignazio in the article "Beyond Multimedia: The Active Library Media Center" states that the library has to go beyond its technical role of 'Book Center' or 'Media Center' to a 'Human Communications Center' (Morrill, 1995, p. 33). The place called the library media center changes its function. The person in charge, the library media specialist, must also change.
THE ROLE OF THE LIBRARY MEDIA SPECIALIST
IN TECHNOLOGY IMPLEMENTATION

A Graduate Review
Submitted to the
Division of Educational Technology
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of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Education

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The library media center and the role of the library media specialist continue to change. In 1945, the School Libraries for Today and Tomorrow recommended that libraries provide reading centers, library skills centers and a center for information provision (Morrill, 1995, p. 33). By 1994, Fred D'Ignazio in the article “Beyond Multimedia: The Active Library Media Center” states that the library has to go beyond its technical role of ‘Book Center’ or ‘Media Center’ to a ‘Human Communications Center’ (Morrill, 1995, p. 33). The place called the library media center changes its function. The person in charge, the library media specialist, must also change.

The library media specialist no longer manages a media collection, but rather integrates technology into the curriculum and actively facilitates ideas and activities (Morrill, 1995). There are many opportunities for the library media specialist to integrate technology into the media center. But he/she must also be a leader in the implementation of technology into the rest of the school. These new opportunities for access challenge school library media specialists to be aware of new developments, recognize those appropriate for their library media center programs, and provide the leadership and expertise for their incorporation into the instructional program of the school (AASL & AECT, 1988).
Research Questions

This paper reviews the current literature to find answers to the following questions:

1. What role should the library media specialist take in the area of technology?

2. Does implementing technology also involve purchase, staff development and repair of the technologies?

3. If a technology coordinator or computer coordinator are employed by the district, what role should the library media specialist assume?

4. What part of the job must the library media specialist reassign or eliminate if he/she take on a very active role in the area of technology?

Technology has become an integral part of education. Some districts have hired technology coordinators or computer coordinators. Others have set up technology committees to assist in implementing technology. Still others do not have a plan for technology implementation, but purchase and place technology randomly.

This paper reviews the literature and provides for the library media specialist general guidelines for the role he/she should have in technology integration. This review is limited to the school library media center.
CHAPTER 2
Review of Literature

Various sources were consulted to gather information about this topic. They include Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) documents, the Internet, journal articles, books and other sources.

Current literature reveals that the library media specialist should have an active role in technology implementation. The exact definition of that role has not been given. Instead, the literature gives a variety of suggestions to fit individual needs.

The following authors do not agree completely, but they do encourage an active leadership role in technology implementation. McKenzie (1994) describes library media specialists as pilots, information mediators, information technology managers and curators. The Callison (1993) article for technology implementation identifies the library media specialist as an active participant in each of the four steps. Wright (1993) makes the role of the library media specialist dependent upon the schools characteristics according to one of the four models. These four models are fad model, avoidance model, the status quo model, and the educational change model.

Current literature points to the necessity of the library media specialist as the leader in providing access to information, teaching information use and evaluation skills, partners with teachers in the use
and implementation of technology, information technology managers and as keepers of existing materials.

Providing access to information and resources is a long-standing responsibility of school library media specialist. However, the importance and complexity of this function have increased dramatically in recent years, in part due to the revolution in information and instructional technologies (AASL & AECT, 1988). The library media specialist should continue to provide information. The sources of information now must include current technologies. It is the responsibility of the library media specialist to have access to the new technologies. These might include CD Roms, on-line services, distant education, on-line catalogs, and telecommunications.

It is not only important to have access to the current technologies but also be able to use and understand them. The enterprising media specialist learns to navigate the Internet before anybody else in the school, knowing that they can then provide guidance to both students and staff as they tackle this often frustrating information source (McKenzie, 1994, unp.). This last statement applies to any information source. It is our duty as library media specialists to understand how to use the source and where to apply it. This is not always an easy task to accomplish. We must always attempt to be on the information edge for our students and staff.
When we begin using the new information sources with students and staff we must teach them how to wade through the enormous amount of information. School library media specialists move from teaching location skills to teaching information use and evaluation skills (Callison, 1993). The amount of information available will continue to increase. The information a student or staff member finds may not answer the question. It is the library media specialist’s responsibility to guide them and teach them how to determine the information they need. Because more information is not always better, the smokestack agenda of showing children how to find information by “looking things up” will be shifting to the task of showing children and teaching staff how to navigate through oceans of data purposefully, how to find that information which will cast light on the questions being studied (McKenzie, 1993).

The type of school in which a library media specialist works helps determine how the library media specialist approaches the instruction of information use and evaluation skills as well as the use of the technologies. Wright (1993), breaks down all schools into four models. These are suggested models according to Wright’s (1993) theory.

**Fad Model**

The first model approaches technology, all programs, activities and personnel by following the current fad. Wright (1993), gives the following suggestions to library media specialist who find themselves in this model.
1. Know what the fads are.
2. Find teachers who work hard to equip their students with the necessary skills to be successful in the emerging society.
3. Offer to teach others the skills they need to use computer-related technologies successfully in their teaching or administrative work.
4. Promote the human and traditional aspects of the library media center program: story telling, authors' visits, field trips, etc., (pp. 27-28).

Avoidance Model

The second model that Wright (1993), describes is the avoidance model. This is defined as the resistance to innovative technologies that is usually based in fear. The library media specialist can help implement technology into this system by maintaining a humane attitude. Using a wide variety of sources to assist students and teachers in finding information. Keep a sense of humor while using technologies especially if the technology fails. The library media specialist should use the technologies to free up time so that he/she can assist students and teachers in the use of the technologies.

Status Quo Model

The library media center in this third model, status quo, is in use only on a regularly scheduled basis. Access to the resources at other times is severely restricted. This model greatly reduces the amount of time the library media specialist has to do anything besides teach
classes. The rest of his/her responsibilities are to be accomplished before or after school or on his/her own time. Wright (1993), gives the following suggestions:

1. Find sites where the teachers and library media specialist are cooperatively working in ‘block schedules’ rather than assembly-line classes; then encourage visiting that school as a staff development activity.

2. Find out about area and regional professional meeting agendas and urge staff and administrators to attend professional meetings where alternatives are presented by outside experts.

3. Get on the school planning team for end-of-year and beginning-of-year development activities.

4. Find a teacher who needs your assistance with resources and do some cooperative planning that requires altering the lockstep schedule.

5. Review again the administrative and maintenance activities in the library media center and cut whatever can be cut to a bare minimum.

6. Restructure your own library media program so that you avoid on topic, large group instruction whenever possible (pp. 30-31).

Educational Change Model

The final model is the educational change model. This model shares a vision of using the power of technology to enhance the thinking and learning skills of administrators, teachers and students. This is the
only model that can assist in true reform if that is the goal of the administrators, teachers and library media specialist.

The library media specialist in this model will be reading about what is available and deciding what it means to this school. He/she will also attend conferences outside the normal library media or technology area. Also getting together with teachers and library media specialist and develop scenarios of how you could solve problems and do a better job together.

Curriculum

No matter what model is in place in a library media specialist's school, information skills need to be taught within the context of the subject matter. In many schools today, the library media center is limited to a once a week visit by a whole class. The class is usually taught an isolated skill with little reinforcement. When students are taught how to evaluate information it must be done in the context of an assignment or personal need, not in isolation. Any media or technology instruction taught outside this context is worthless (Wright, 1993).

As a teacher of information use and evaluation, library media specialists must redefine how and when the library media center is used. Flexible access scheduling is one possible way to provide current information and technologies at the appropriate time. Buchanan (1990) defines flexible access scheduling the following way. The media center is accessible to individuals, small groups, and classes so that students and
staff may browse, explore, use and circulate print and non print materials at the time of need or interest. There is cooperative planning by the teachers and the media specialist for the use of materials and facilities in instruction. Relevant information skills come from classroom activities, taught at the time of need or interest, and following a scope and sequence based on the curriculum needs of the school.

Through flexible access scheduling integration of technology into the curriculum is achieved by the cooperation of the teachers and the library media specialist. True curriculum integration requires time-- to plan with teachers, to assemble materials and equipment, to teach cooperatively with teachers, to cooperatively evaluate what happened in instruction, to evaluate the library media collection, and to make changes on the basis of that evaluation (Wright, 1993).

Before library media specialists can teach others how to use the technology to gather information, they must have the technology available. When a technology system is added to a school, the library media specialist should be assisting in the decisions. They may work closely with the technology coordinator or computer coordinator or alone. In many districts such designs are created by systems people who have relatively little instructional experience. Media specialists are in a particularly strong position to safeguard the educational vision of the school as they influence the design of these systems (McKenzie, 1993). Most school library media specialists have handled a wide variety of
technological hardware and software over the years (Wright, 1993). This past experience as well as current interest gives the library media specialist the understanding that is needed to assist in purchasing technology.

Wright (1993), gives the following strategies to assist the library media specialist in the plan and purchase of technology.

1. Make a collaborative assessment of current systems
2. Do consumer research on developments
3. Discuss, establish and implement local guidelines
4. Select only technologies that support instructional priorities (pp. 49-62).

Other Roles

After the purchase the library media specialist should also have an active role in the set-up and use of the system. There are many questions that may arise about the need of the current system and how best to utilize the system. A well-informed library media specialist should be able to answer the questions. The rest of Wright's (1993) guidelines will assist the media specialist to utilize the technology. These include:

1. Model appropriate behavior in the use of technologies
2. Restructure education as technologies are integrated
3. Acknowledge the rapid change is here to stay
4. Combat negative attitudes toward technology with interaction and openness
5. Deal with the public nature of technologies
6. Use technology to avoid doing the same old thing (pp. 62-68).

The library media specialist continues to be challenged in the purchase and integration of technology in schools. After the purchase there are many new challenges that the library media specialist must confront. These include the repair and troubleshooting of the hardware and software. One way to handle repair/troubleshooting is to become well acquainted with the documentation that is available with each product. There are also numerous books on the market that can give helpful hints. Two suggestions are *Mac and Power Mac Secrets* by David Pogue and *Upgrading and Repairing MACs* published by Que. The best solution is to have a repair contract with a local computer store. They may have more experience in the repair of the newest technologies. If the last option is not available, and the product is under warranty, the company that produces it may have a plan available for purchase. The position of the library media specialist is always changing. This is just a new challenge in the ever changing job description.

With all the new changes, the library media specialist must hold on to the old. This does not mean he/she should do things the same old way, but instead protect the artifacts of various kinds. These may include pictures, objects, taped interviews and books. While the quality of
formats keep improving, a videodisc image of an oil painting is not the same as the real thing (McKenzie, 1994).

The print media that is housed in the library media center is still an important part of the library media specialist position. There needs to be a balance among the print media and technology. The time honored tradition of introducing students to literature (print media) with book talks and dramatized readings deserves protection (McKenzie, 1994).

The balance is not always easy to obtain or maintain. It requires the media specialist to rethink current tasks. There are tasks that can be handled by teachers or support staff. It would be impossible to continue all of the traditional roles and add the technology roles. We need to stop providing certain clerical services so we can be free to work directly with students and teachers, showing them how to integrate technology into the curriculum (Morrill, 1995). The basic point is the necessity of adjusting roles to meet the challenges of new technology (McKenzie, 1993).
CHAPTER 3
Conclusions and Recommendations

A consensus exists among experts that library media specialists can and should play an integral role in technology implementation. The library media specialist has always had the role of information specialist, teacher, and instructional consultant. Technology provides a new way of assisting in these roles.

The key to successful integration of technology is an active library media specialist. This active role consists of continued access to information, teaching information use and evaluation skills, partners with teacher in the use and implementation of technology, management of the technology, and keeping existing materials.

Successful integration of technology also depends upon the structure of the library media center. A flexible access schedule will free the library media specialist to provide relevant learning experiences. It has been suggested by Wright (1993) that students retain more if they have been taught a skill in the context or an assignment or personal need. The library media specialist must work with teachers to provide such experiences.

The library media specialist should continue to be the driving force in technology implementation. This may require the library media specialist to rethink his/her current role. Print media still must play an important role in the library media center, but it should not limit the use of
technology. Media specialists can maintain a leadership role as schools move into the next century with school media centers serving as the core of an active learning program dedicated to student inquiry, investigation and research (McKenzie, 1994). Library media specialists can not sit back and let someone else implement technology. If library media specialists do let someone else take over, their future is nonexistent.
References


