

FROM

SCHOOL

LIBRARY TO

LIBRARY

LEARNING

COMMONS

A PRO-ACTIVE MODEL FOR
EDUCATIONAL CHANGE



bcteacherlibrarians
BRITISH COLUMBIA TEACHER-LIBRARIANS' ASSOCIATION

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Today's students learn in a dynamic world where information changes and expands as fast as technological innovation. As information grows exponentially in multiple formats, learners are challenged to think critically, search effectively, construct meaning and learning products ethically, and choose from amongst a vast array of resources, tools, and services in order to create possibilities for shaping and sharing new knowledge.

— American Association of School Librarians

School library programs continue to undergo momentous changes that have heightened the importance of technology and evidence-based learning. The focus has moved from the library as a confined space to one with fluid boundaries that is layered by diverse needs and influenced by an interactive global community. Guiding principles ... must focus on building a flexible learning environment with the goal of producing successful learners skilled in multiple literacies.

— American Association of School Librarians

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This document summarizes in part the work, over three years, of two groups of Vancouver teacher-librarians—one elementary and the other secondary—engaged in teacher inquiry. The inquiry groups have described, in both personal and professional terms, the continuum of change by which a school library becomes a Library Learning Commons in British Columbia (BC). They have been joined by voices of TLs throughout BC who have successfully undertaken similar initiatives.

THE INQUIRY QUESTION: WHEN AND HOW DOES A SCHOOL LIBRARY BECOME A LIBRARY LEARNING COMMONS?

INTRODUCTION

While every Library Learning Commons is a school library, not every school library is ready to be called a Library Learning Commons. A Library Learning Commons (LLC) is more than a school library in that it grows to become the busy hub of the school. It is a place where student success is the highest priority, and learning objectives are ambitiously pursued through collaboration between teacher-librarians, teachers, and students. The transformation of a school library into an LLC is one example of how a school can actively address goals of change in response to new kinds of teaching and learning. This transformation is driven by teacher-librarian (TL) staff with an innovative vision for teaching and an advisory council of students, teachers, and parents.

The LLC strives to empower students to be inquiring citizens and lifelong learners. As such, the LLC must provide a safe and welcoming space. It values and enforces inclusiveness and equitable access to

both physical and virtual resources. It promotes a culture of reading, literacy, and technology integration. The LLC offers print and digital collections that support multiple literacy levels, abilities, learning styles, and curricula. In fostering a love of reading, the TL helps students understand and appreciate these collections.

Rather than expecting members of the school to “hush” when inside the new library space, the LLC hums with collaboration and participation. At the same time, it offers both social and quiet spaces to accommodate different learning needs. The LLC is a flexible space, and can meet the needs of individuals, groups, and classes; often simultaneously. Enter the LLC and you will witness much activity—from reading and computer usage to academic presentations and art performances. Overall, the LLC is constantly adapting to new learning needs and new technologies.



MOVING TOWARD A LIBRARY LEARNING COMMONS:

WHAT IS A LIBRARY LEARNING COMMONS (LLC)?

Several important themes underpin teaching and learning in the context of an LLC model:

- Technology has had a dramatic effect.
- Learning needs to be personal and meaningful.
- Inquiry forms the basis for authentic and lifelong learning.
- Collaboration is required of all learners; that is, amongst teacher-librarians, teachers, and students.

THE GENESIS OF A LIBRARY LEARNING COMMONS IS THE SCHOOL LIBRARY PROGRAM, BUT OTHER FACTORS ARE ALSO IMPERATIVE:

- A teacher-librarian (TL) with a vision for teaching and learning transformed by new possibilities.
- A school community open to new ways of working together to enhance student learning.
- A shared valuing of opportunities for informed professional discourse.
- Shared understanding of the role of a qualified TL and the concepts that underpin the K-12 learning commons approach.
- Funding.
- A supportive administrator.

THE LLC AND THE TL STRIVE TO:

- Have an impact on teaching and learning in the school.
- Be the hub of the school, centrally located, and open for class bookings.
- Enrich learning by providing expertise in collaboratively designing and assessing learning and in promoting the love of reading.
- Work with teachers to co-design learning based on inquiry and to provide the contexts for creating new, original, and inspired content.
- Provide balanced, rich, diverse, current, and professionally curated collections of print and digital resources that support multiple literacies and the BC curriculum.
- Support students and teachers as they integrate technology with teaching and learning and as they increasingly access information with a 24/7 Virtual Learning Commons.
- Support goals for learning that are based on current research, unique needs, and well-designed, purposeful, and powerful intentions.
- Provide a learning environment that is welcoming, safe, and engaging; where the old sense of “hush” has been replaced by a new “hub” role and a constant “hum” of activity. It is a busy place with a “yes, we can” attitude from opening to closing.

If you set out to build a Library Learning Commons and it didn't make a difference to the learning or have an impact on teaching, it is not a Learning Commons!

— Sylvia Zubke, Inquiry Conversations, May 2014

A LIBRARY LEARNING COMMONS (LLC):

- Begins within a responsive and dynamic school library program.
- Is dedicated to student-centred learning because successful learners are empowered citizens.
- Produces enhanced student engagement and success.
- Requires funding because it represents a significant school and district investment of time, energy, resources, services, tools, and shared expertise.
- Is a real and virtual space that is managed by the TL and that enables access to tools, resources, and services.
- Provides access that is physical, virtual, intellectual, socio-economic, and equitable.
- Is a welcoming, safe, open, and supportive place that values mobility and flexibility of design both within the space and in the opportunities for learning.
- Is unique in its attention to the particular learning needs of its educational community.
- Is aligned with provincial, district, and school goals for curriculum and with 21st century teaching and learning.
- Is a never-ending project, always “in beta”, as new resources, ideas, and tools differently enable the learning.
- Is embedded in a culture of collaboration.
- Participates in and encourages participation in the culture of the school.
- Engages in a collaborative, self-renewing, and recursive process guided by the professional expertise of the TL.
- Is a program that is grounded in the shared understanding that meaningful and important educational change occurs when there is professional commitment to innovative practice and collaborative implementation of new designs for learning.

Embracing a Library Learning Commons model means being responsive to diverse needs; it requires shared vision and determination. Indeed, this is true of all inspired educational change:

We must take the more vertiginous route that scales the heights of professional excellence and public democracy. For it is this truly challenging path that will lead us to the peaks of excellence and integrity in student learning and its resulting high levels of achievement.

— Andy Hargreaves and Dennis Shirley, 2009



PERFORMANCE STANDARDS: ONE WAY TO LOOK AT THIS

	SPACE WITH A CLERK	LIMITED PROGRAM	SCHOOL LIBRARY WITH PROGRAM	LIBRARY LEARNING COMMONS
ANALOGY				
PHYSICAL AND VIRTUAL SPACE	Space created by others. No program. A room with books.	Shelves can't be moved. No virtual presence. Limited to book exchanges.	Shelves can be moved with effort. Clearly defined sections are present. Library website exists. Multimedia is available.	Shelves and furniture can be easily moved. Multiple spaces for reading and collaborative or independent work. Virtual access 24/7.
TECHNOLOGY	Computers, if any, are used independently of library staff as in a computer lab.	Computers may be related to library functions; few if any other devices.	Variety of tools and devices are available, used as required to serve program needs.	Technology and media are an intrinsic part of a dynamic and responsive teaching and learning program.
ACCESS	Limited supervision by a clerk, like a cafeteria. Often closed. Books may not be tracked.	Classes are scheduled; library closed to others during class. Collection shows lack of funding.	Classes and individuals usually have access when there is a TL available. Collections are well-organized and building.	Students, staff and parents have access to a qualified TL and to resources during and after the instructional day. 24/7 access to the Virtual Learning Commons.
LEARNING PARTNERSHIPS	None.	Few if any learning partnerships. No program as such.	Administrators, teachers, TLs, and sometimes community partners collaborate to advance student learning.	All members of the learning community work together to build virtual and physical learning partnerships in the LLC. These are global, connected, social, cross-curricular and complex.
STAFFING	Little or no allocation of professional staffing.	Part-time TL with sufficient time only to do pre-set book exchanges.	Sufficient qualified or qualifying staffing to enable program and collection development.	Sufficient qualified staffing to enable outreach, collaborative planning, co-teaching, and creation and maintenance of the Virtual Learning Commons.

CHECKPOINT!

Before you invest time and money in upgrading a school library to a Library Learning Commons (LLC), planning for change will ensure success. If a number of the descriptors are not checked, then there is work to be done in your school library. With most checked, you are ready to proceed.

STAFFING AND STAFF RELATIONSHIPS

- The school has a school library program and a teacher-librarian (TL) who will work with a team to plan and implement the LLC project.
- The allocation of TL staffing to the LLC is sufficient to enable the growth of an LLC program.
- The TL has engaged with colleagues to create a flexible, dynamic, and collaborative inquiry-based school library program.

ACCESS

- Students, parents, and staff have equitable access to a qualified TL and resources and space in the LLC before, during, and after the instructional day.
- The learning community has access 24/7 to what will be the Virtual Learning Commons.
- The TL assists the learning community with the changing formats of resources, helping them to acquire skills and knowledge about ethical and effective use as well as equitable physical or virtual access.
- The TL is knowledgeable about the automated library management system; district collections, codes and passwords; subscriptions and licenses; terms of use, copyright and privacy laws; information ethics and academic honesty; and information and other literacies.
- The TL provides access to resources that are current, diverse, and complex and that are available in multiple formats, and for different learning styles and abilities and purposes.
- Criteria for the TL's selection of resources are grounded in his or her understanding of the needs of the school and its culture, the BC curriculum, and Canadian culture.
- The TL and the LLC are included in all plans for literacy development; reading is foundational for student success, and students like to read books that they have chosen from a wide range of quality literature and information books.

21ST CENTURY TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The administrator recognizes that investing in an LLC is an investment in 21st century learning and in student achievement.
- The TL has successfully made the case to staff that transforming the school library into an LLC requires additional funding.
- The TL works collaboratively with teachers to promote and support technology-rich resource-based and inquiry-based teaching and learning.
- The TL is encouraged to participate as a professional in the learning community; from the unique view inside the learning commons, the TL shares responsibility for assessment of behaviour and learning.
- The LLC provides a variety of professional development opportunities and resources; the TL provides a context and content for professional and pedagogical conversations.

COLLABORATIVE CULTURE

- The administrator is key to the collaborative culture of a school; LLC culture begins with the support of the administrative team for the development of teaching and learning partnerships.
- The TL builds and cultivates learning partnerships amongst staff, students, and parents, and extends these partnerships to both local and global communities.
- Staff and students place value on being a collaborative community; the LLC is both a key to this and a reflection of this.

TECHNOLOGY

- Students and staff have sufficient and equitable access to current production and presentation hardware and software to enable technology integration with teaching and learning in the LLC.
- Technology is understood to be a tool that enables learning, connection, creativity, construction of meaning, and knowledge production.
- The TL is a member of the school's technology committee.
- The technology committee understands that an adequately and professionally staffed LLC is the most equitable site in the school for access to technology.
- The technology committee, guided by the TL, prioritizes access to a range of technologies in the LLC, including students' own devices.
- The TL ensures students and staff are responsible users who are technology literate and media aware.

INFRASTRUCTURE

- The facility has robust internet access and good technical support.
- It has sufficient electrical outlets on different circuits.
- Tables and chairs are easy to move and to reconfigure to provide workspaces for individuals, small groups, and whole classes.
- There are comfortable seating spaces for quiet reading, story-time, and shared reading.
- There is a flexible presentation space in one or more instructional areas that have computer access.
- The TL has undertaken a thorough assessment and weeded the existing print collection in order to reduce its footprint and increase instructional capacity.
- The retained collections and on-going selection of resources support the school's unique local learning needs, the provincial curriculum, Canadian culture, students' reading interests and abilities, and students' development of an expanding worldview.

CORE VALUE: ACCESS

ACCESS IS KEY TO CREATING A LIBRARY LEARNING COMMONS

The notion of access needs to be deconstructed to reveal its complexity: access encompasses physical, intellectual, real, virtual, socio-economic, and cultural access, and other dimensions. In its capacity to empower young learners to be inquiring citizens and lifelong learners, such access is both extremely personal and significantly political.

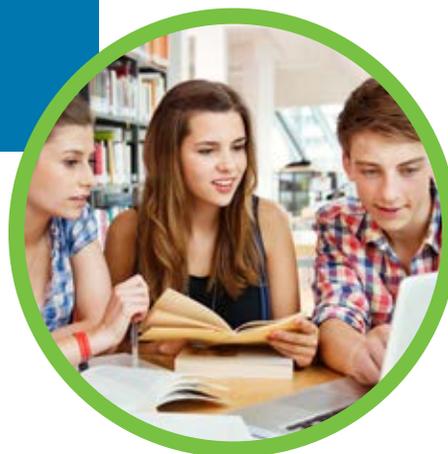
Furthermore, at its most political level, ensuring access to the LLC is the most democratic and cost-effective investment of scarce educational funding, staffing, technologies, and resources. Here, in an LLC, when staffing is sufficient, service-oriented, flexibly scheduled, qualified, and thus accessible, the entire educational community is welcomed and supported. Rather than competing for scarce resources, staffing, and funding, the LLC is a place where these are optimally shared.

Principles of equity of access ensure that all students and other members of the learning community, with different abilities, interests, and backgrounds, of diverse social groups, and with a full range of learning, informational, reading, technological and digital skills, interests, and needs, are able to access appropriate resources, expertise, and tools.

“What a school thinks about its library is a measure of what it feels about education.”

– Harold Howe, former US Commissioner of Education, 1967

- **ACCESS TO RESOURCES** is ensured when a teacher-librarian is provided with sufficient time to provide service by:
 - Selecting, managing, curating, and promoting a variety of print and digital collections.
 - Building and maintaining a Virtual Learning Commons that is available 24/7.
 - Being open and available to ensure that students understand and appreciate the differentiated, rich, and diverse collections.
- **ACCESS TO EXPERTISE** includes (but is not limited to) the services of a qualified teacher-librarian who has good technical and technological support and who is enabled by sufficient staffing to:
 - Plan, work, and teach collaboratively with other teachers, support staff, and experts in the community.
 - Co-create and implement technology-enhanced, inquiry-based, innovative, and creative learning opportunities.
 - Ensure a culture of “yes, we can” and a vigilant practice of inclusion.
- **ACCESS TO TOOLS AND RESOURCES** for learning is provided by a qualified teacher-librarian to:
 - Digital tools, like databases, ebooks, subscriptions, software and educational applications, printers, scanners, cameras, and new/emerging technologies and devices.
 - Print sources such as books, magazines, and reference materials.
 - Opportunities for students to receive professional support for intellectual access.



CORE VALUE: STUDENT SUCCESS

AT THE HEART OF IT ALL IS STUDENT SUCCESS

In a Library Learning Commons, the program is constructed around themes of inquiry, knowledge construction, meaning making, and original content creation; the themes are underpinned by designs for learning that feature:

- Lively and current fiction and non-fiction collections.
- The integration of technology.
- Diversity, differentiation, and inclusiveness.
- Collaboration amongst students, teachers, teacher-librarians, and experts from the community.
- Innovation, creativity, and exploration of new information and ideas and, importantly, new ways of teaching and learning.
- Assessment that is qualitative, formative, and worthwhile.
- Evidence of engagement with teaching and learning, a “buzz” of activity that may include such concurrent activities as reading, quiet study, the use of computers and other devices, presentations and performances, group work, whole-class instruction, and professional conversations.

A Library Learning Commons is a program first, one that occupies both real and virtual spaces. An Advisory Team of students and other learning community members is a key component. The LLC has multiple uses and features furnishings that can be reconfigured to meet, often simultaneously, the learning needs of groups, individuals, and classes. It is energized by exploration; it is welcoming and central to learning in the school. The old “NO” (Ø) signs are gone.

The physical space is flexibly managed and booked by the teacher-librarian, who places value on the real conversation about how best to support the students as an important relationship-building opportunity. Virtual services extend, enhance, and enrich the physical program; they do not replace it. The virtual space is managed, curated, and made accessible by the teacher-librarian. It is developed collaboratively.

In a Library Learning Commons, everyone is a learner, including the teacher-librarian; everyone benefits from opportunities to engage in meaningful conversations about reading and inquiry, teaching, and learning. Students, teachers, parents, administrators, and community members gain their own “star status” when they enter the Library Learning Commons.

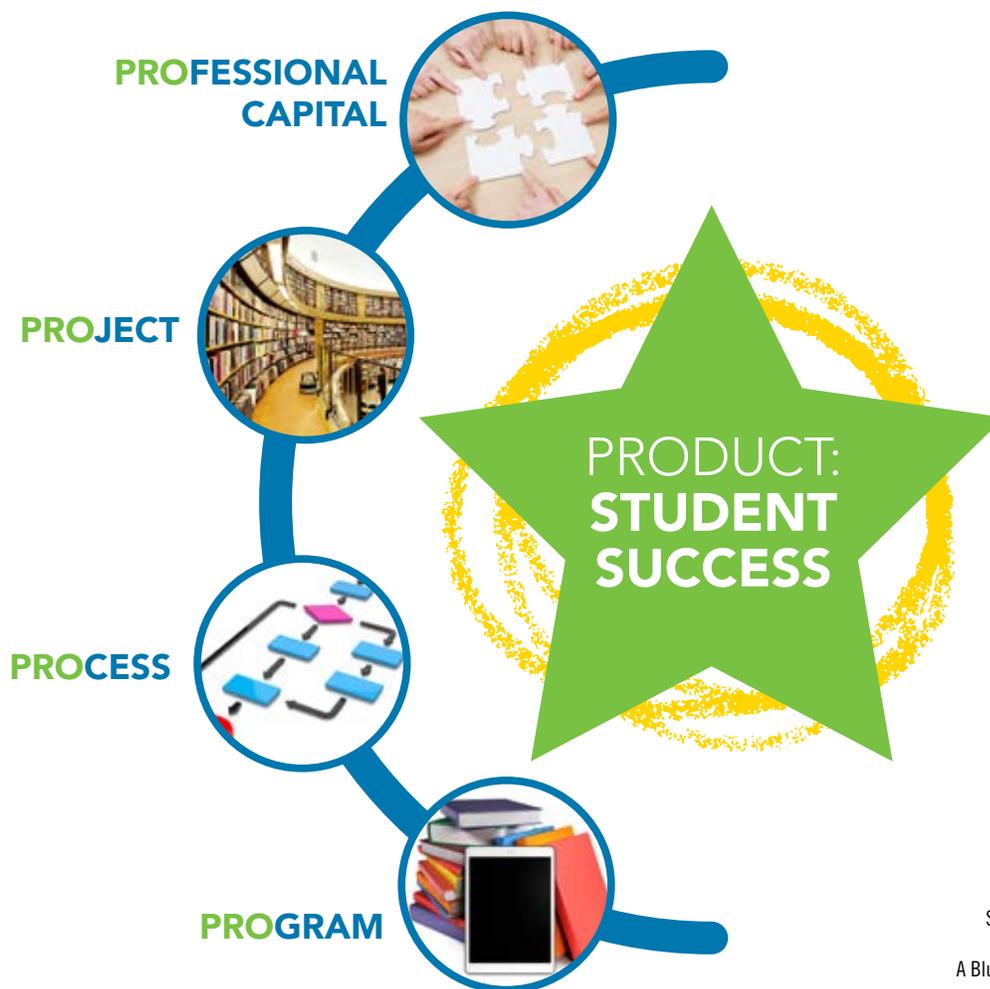
A willingness and ability to embrace these themes is central to the process of moving forward along the continuum from a school library to a Library Learning Commons.

“The feel of the Library Learning Commons is one of busy-ness: teaching and learning happen here! It’s about ‘hum’ and ‘hub’, not ‘hush’!”

– Moira Ekdahl, BCTLA Executive meeting, April 2012



THE PRO-ACTIVE MODEL FOR SCHOOL-WIDE CHANGE



© BCTLA
Source: Forgeron et al, LLC: A Secondary Perspective
Shifting To A Library Learning Commons:
A Blueprint For Pro-Active Systemic Educational Change

Goals for change are aligned with evidence from current research and with school, district, and provincial goals. The shift is an integrated and active one, driven by the PROs and by a team, under the direction of a TL, that includes in its vision an understanding that the shift incorporates these five aspects:

PROFESSIONAL CAPITAL: Throughout the project, there is a dual focus both on new and innovative practice and on the roles and powerful professional relationships that foster innovation, build trust, and encourage success.

A PROJECT: It begins as a project driven from within a school library program or as part of a district or school-wide project. Such projects need to have “grassroots” grounding and, as the impetus, a transparent intention to transform teaching and learning.

A PROCESS: The architects of the project, whether district, whole school or library-based, recognize that the transformation is a never-ending process of renewal, does not happen overnight, and is more than refurbishing a space.

A PROGRAM: The district, school or learning commons project intends to explore and build new technologies, resources, and methodologies into instruction, with a focus on inquiry, innovation, and access.

THE PRODUCT: Student success is the clear and intended outcome of the project, the developing program, and the professional focus on shared understandings and best practices.

PROFESSIONAL CAPITAL

The role of a teacher-librarian should be clearly defined to include instruction (i.e., literacy and reading promotion, inquiry-centred and resource-based), library management, school-wide leadership and collaboration, community engagement, and promotion of library services.

– IFLA School Library Guidelines 2nd ed.

A CULTURE OF COLLABORATION

The teacher-librarian works with other professionals in the community to create and manage a program that is open and accessible; dynamic, innovative, and creative; welcoming and safe. Collegial relationships and collaboration are essential to program growth.

The TL values and encourages teacher participation in program design; the TL is a teacher who:

- With the Advisory Team, establishes and regularly reviews protocols for effective and respectful negotiated use of time and the space; the protocols are shared with and shaped by the community.
- Grounds collegial relationships in trust and expects to have time and opportunities to engage with teachers in collaborative curriculum and program development, networking, teacher inquiry, research, and other professional activities.
- Is a respected teacher whose work to build and enable LLC program development is recognized as an essential and driving support for teaching and learning, and an important extension of learning for every classroom, teacher, and student.
- Is strongly supported by a visionary administrator; sufficient staffing gives capacity to “grow” the LLC program; sufficient funding sustains acquisition of resources and technologies driving the program; value is placed on the role of the TL in building a school’s collaborative and participatory culture.
- Is similarly supported by parents, frequent users of the space who share in enacting school goals for teaching, learning, and student success.

How are collaborative communities established? They do not just happen. Someone must lead the move Teacher-librarians need to view the concept of collaboration in its largest scope, beyond simple collaboration between the teacher-librarian and individual teachers of grade-level groups to school-wide acceptance of collaboration with the teacher-librarian as a natural and obvious practice. – Joy McGregor, 2003

PRACTICE AND BEST PRACTICES

Teachers and staff work, read, meet, and engage in professional conversations about practice and collaborate for teaching and learning. In utilizing the LLC as a site for sharing best and new practices, teachers recognize that:

- The TL, as an active participant in the school community, is a teacher whose leadership is integral to on-going professional development:
 - This includes the culture of reading, literacy, technology integration; differentiation of and equitable access to resources; ethical and effective access to resources; inquiry-based reading and learning; assessment, etc.
- Just as TL staffing is the key to building and maintaining any successful school library program, so professional staffing is essential to transforming such a program into a Library Learning Commons program; therefore, teachers would not assume the duties of the TL nor would they use the services of a volunteer or any other person assigned to do the work (BCTF Members’ Guide, 3.P.02).
- Time is spent with the TL as an expert participant in designing learning and in working with classes to integrate multiple resources and technologies into inquiry-based learning.
- Collaborations include conversations about new ideas, innovation, and current research into practice, as well as exploration and assessment of new practices.
- Professional conversations about the implementation of co-designed practices and projects address:
 - The unique learning of students: inclusion, diversity, differentiation, adaptations, multiple literacies, etc.
 - Resources and tools: seamless, appropriate, and ethical use of technologies, evaluation of resources, etc.
 - Assessment of and for learning: scaffolding the learning of some, as well as considering and reviewing the progress of students’ inquiries, constructions, and creations, etc.

THE LLC AS A PROJECT

The LLC Project begins in one of three ways; as a response to:

1. A school-initiated focus on examining many aspects of current practices.
2. A district-initiated focus involving schools possibly networked together.
3. A teacher-librarian-initiated effort based on research and changes in school library practices.

The key features of the Project—district, school-wide or school library-based—include a teacher-librarian and:

1. A collaborative and participatory school culture.
2. A shared vision for change, an important piece of which is the transformation of a dynamic and responsive school library program into a learning commons.
3. An assessment of the unique learning needs of the school and the community.
4. A common understanding about the nature of educational change and the role and potential of an LLC in transforming teaching and learning.
5. An Advisory Team guided by or including the teacher-librarian; the Team is grassroots support in spearheading change and includes interested teachers, staff, students, and the administrator, their mandate being to create active, student-centred, and technology-enhanced learning contexts.
6. An agreement to work together to change the ways that learning opportunities are created and implemented.

Additional dimensions for the project of transforming a school library into an LLC that the teacher-librarian ensures are included:

- Sources of funding and a budget for technologies and furnishings.
- Most importantly, long-term sustained district, administrator, and parent support for LLCs as essential for 21st century learning.

THE LLC AS A PROCESS

All participants in planning the project understand that transformation is more than simply refurbishing the space; it includes committing to, planning, and implementing long-term plans for:

- Professional development that focuses on and provides sufficient time for learning collaboratively about new technologies, integrating technology with teaching and learning, re/inspiring the culture of reading, using resource-based and inquiry approaches to learning, and experimenting with innovative teaching and assessment practices.
- New, more flexible designs of the space that are shaped around multiple uses and the learning needs of individuals, groups, or classes: designs that are informed by research and visits to LLC sites.
- A timeline and a budget, as well as a plan for scouting out, applying for, and securing additional funding.

To facilitate the process of planning, the TL (assisted by district and other school library and facilities experts), undertakes assessments of, and makes recommendations for, changes, where needed, in:

- The print collections: weeding is important to reduce the print collection footprint and increase the instructional capacity of the space.
- The infrastructure: anticipate the changes; assess the number, distribution, and/or condition of electrical outlets, lighting, bandwidth, Wi-Fi, storage, paint, flooring, window coverings, furniture and fittings, such as shelving, circulation desk, etc.; check catalogues and other LLCs to create a wish list for furnishings, etc.
- Digital tools, resources, and emerging technologies: be sure to include circulation software, and security systems as appropriate.

PROGRAM: THE LIBRARY LEARNING COMMONS

LLC PROGRAM ATTRIBUTES

The teacher-librarian works with the school community to create and manage a program that is:

- **OPEN AND ACCESSIBLE:** under the management of qualified Tls, little gets in the way of its being open and available for students to use; the program extends to times when classes are not in session, that is, before, during, and after school; it can be booked for after-hours use for related functions, like district workshops, and parent meetings.
- **DYNAMIC, INNOVATIVE, AND CREATIVE:** there is a tangible busy-ness and constructive feel that is focused on engagement with reading and active learning; play is a feature.
- **WELCOMING AND SAFE:** the LLC is a special place in the school; in its “hub” role and location, it attracts and invites teachers, other staff, and students to engage with reading, technology, teaching, learning, and conversations about them; while it is often a retreat from busy hallways and classrooms, it is a context for working, not a lounge or an alternative to the school cafeteria.

TLs’ PROGRAM VALUES

- Collegial relationships and collaboration; connections over collections (Lankes).
- Equity of access: in this place, everyone can be included and is encouraged to participate.
- Responsiveness to community input through the Advisory Team, surveys, conversations, recommendations, etc.
- Reading, reading, reading; reading improves with reading; reading improves with access to books; reading anything improves reading; reading is positively correlated with learning success (Krashen).
- Technology integration.
- Inquiry-based learning (Stripling; see BCTLA’s *The Points of Inquiry*).
- Shared understanding, shared vision, shared tools and resources, shared time, shared expertise; professional development for teachers.

THE LLC SPACE AS PROGRAM

The program is not severable from the space; form follows function, such that the LLC program is designed for new ways of teaching and learning; it features:

- **UP-TO-DATE TECHNOLOGIES** that enable exploration, production, presentation, inquiry, communication, and creation; there is a multi-media production centre (a “green room”) for viewing, recording, and creating new works; students can also bring their own technologies.
- **DIFFERENT SPACES** intended for students to occupy and configure to their own learning needs, including quiet reading or study areas and informal social learning areas for individual or group work.
- **CENTRES** that may at different times be used for reading, collaboration, innovation, presentation, research, and making things.
- **CONCURRENT USES**, as the space is flexible enough to be reconfigured and to host more than one learning “event” at a time; it is not unusual for things to happen here, like human library, art exhibits, small-group music and drama performances, speakers, author visits, poetry readings, teacher meetings, etc.
- **INFRASTRUCTURE DESIGN** with improved sightlines, ease of workflow and movement, and greater technological capacity.
- **STUDENTS AND TEACHERS** who work in the environment, as service providers to make things happen, as consultants to the program, or as independent learners.
- **TEACHERS AND STAFF** working, catching up on reading, meeting, engaging in conversations about teaching and learning; students can see teachers at work here.
- **OPTIMIZED USE OF SPACE**, primarily instructional and curricular, but also including recreational, extra-curricular, professional, and community-based.

The Points of Inquiry, BCTLA’s guide and framework for inquiry-based learning and inquiry-based reading is a companion document that provides more detailed information about how to develop and advance the school library or LLC program.

PROGRAM: THE VIRTUAL LEARNING COMMONS

AN ESSENTIAL AND COMPLEMENTARY COMPONENT OF THE LLC PROGRAM

THE DIGITAL COLLECTION

The real and virtual dimensions of the LLC program are essential and complementary components. Print and online resources and tools support unique and diverse learning needs, interests, and abilities.

TLs are teachers who select, manage, and promote the effective use of resources. In selecting resources, TLs apply the same criteria for both print and digital collections:

- Are they current and capable of being kept current? Are they relevant?
- Do they have particular authority for the subject matter? Are they credible and reliable? Are they “quality” products?
- Do they reflect or add a fair balance of perspectives? Are they global, local, provincial, Canadian? Are they respectful?
- Do they provide coverage of the subject that meets students’ needs, interests, and abilities?
- Do they contribute to deeper understandings and meaningful inquiry? That is, do they go beyond information location and recall? Are they readily accessible, affordable, navigable, appropriate, safe, and more?

THE VLC PROGRAM VALUES

The virtual collections of tools and resources are essential to inquiry and to 21st century learning; they are accessible 24/7 and they are always integrated seamlessly and simultaneously into resource-based learning opportunities created in the LLC.



The TL provides instruction as students navigate the web, building their skills in information, digital, media, cultural and other literacies; the TL promotes ethical and responsible digital citizenship.

VLC PROGRAM DESIGN

The design of the Virtual Learning Commons (VLC) is dynamic; that is, it is perpetually evolving and always “in beta”. It is co-constructed over time to meet the needs of the program and the school. It is not a computer lab or a one-year project.

Elements of the VLC include:

- The oversight and skills of the TL; value is placed on this role and adequate staffing has been provided to enable the development of the LLC.
- An infrastructure that enables efficient and timely use of technologies, such as good Wi-Fi access, adequate bandwidth, online platforms, and student dashboards.
- Access to a variety of applications for presentation and creation.
- A variety of technologies and responsive technology support from both technicians and the school’s technology teachers who share access with staff and students.

FEATURES OF THE VLC

- Students select their own learning tools, products, and environments; their learning is intentionally scaffolded as they learn from “experts” and teach each other.
- Social media is important as a reflection of the participatory and connected culture.
- Access is also to blogs, wikis, YouTube, online learning communities, book reviews and trailers, help sheets, the district catalogue and its virtual tools and database collections.
- Interactivity and collaborative development put students and colleagues into making and creating modes; it reflects the school’s culture of collaboration.

START THE SHIFT: THERE ARE MULTIPLE POINTS OF ENTRY

One of the key findings of the Vancouver School Board's two-year elementary TL inquiry into Library Learning Commons is that there are multiple points of entry into the LLC project. The elementary TLs looked at the educational contexts and experiences in different schools and school libraries that shaped what each TL brought to the conversations. The secondary TL inquiry took a different look at the concept of multiple points of entry, exploring instead, within the Pro-Active model, different ways to enter the transformation project to shift the school library along the continuum to a Library Learning Commons.

THE ELEMENTARY TLs' CONSIDERATIONS

Each of the members of the elementary TL inquiry group entered into the TL inquiry conversations from different personal and professional points, and from very different schools in unique urban communities.

DIFFERENT JOURNEYS, DIFFERENT CONTEXTS:

- A relatively new TL in a very small primary annex library; she had 12 years of experience as a teacher in the school, attended the same school herself, and knows her school community well.
- An experienced TL who built a dynamic school library program on Vancouver's South Side; she had just relocated to a West Side school where the school library needed a major overhaul.
- A temporary TL in a large bilingual East Side school; her work included re-conceptualizing a very small space.
- A very experienced TL in a large bilingual West Side school; she is well-known for motivating teachers and other TLs to integrate technology.
- An experienced TL in a mid-size East Side alternative elementary school that doesn't use textbooks with its multi-age groupings; she had been a classroom teacher in the same school.
- An experienced TL in a school noted for its teacher inquiry into technology integration; her Library Learning Commons was a natural outcome of this school-wide collaborative project.

The temporary TL has moved to her own assignment and is building her own LLC with the findings of this inquiry in mind. The primary annex TL is moving to another school due to declining enrolment; she too will build on the inquiry experience. The results are the same for each of the group: they all remain committed to advancing the LLC Project.

THE SECONDARY TLs' CONSIDERATIONS

Each of the secondary TLs moved along the continuum in one of three ways.

DIFFERENT POINTS OF ENTRY:

The first starting point to create an LLC is a *natural evolutionary process*; start with a successful school library: that is, one built on firm foundations of a responsive, dynamic program that a TL has "grown" for five years or more:

- In place are practices that exemplify long-term respectful relationships and a culture of collaboration, requisite resources and technologies, and a principal willing to fund and support the new project, especially in its focus on student success.
- The goal of moving forward is transparent: to have an impact on teaching and learning; the impact on the LLC is measurable program growth.

The second "starting point" is to kick-start the program by renovating the facility; a TL familiar with LLCs begins program creation and assesses the effects over time:

- The new LLC has a dramatic impact on students who appreciate the renewal and investment in their learning; they use the space; it is a respectful, supportive, and comfortable place to work.
- The changes have an impact on, and beyond, the district: others come to see the physical design.
- Within three years of the estimated five-year process, growth is evident: there is a growing culture of collaboration, interest in authentic inquiry-based learning and reading; optimal growth depends upon frequent review of the vision and of LLC staffing.

The first "starting point", the natural evolution, is evident in the secondary TL narrative by Pat, whereas the second "starting point", the renovation, can be seen in the narrative contributed by Moira.

A third "starting point" for LLCs is well illustrated in the secondary TL narratives by Aaron, Rhea, Michelle, and Martha, all excellent examples of how Surrey, Saanich, and Prince George school districts provided impetus and support.

TL NARRATIVES: THE ELEMENTARY LLC EXPERIENCE

A group of Vancouver elementary TLs with very different backgrounds undertook, over a period of two years, to meet, discuss, and share their LLC experiences. Each school context is also different. These excerpts reflect common themes in their discussions.

ACCESS BY ALANNA WONG

Alanna is an experienced elementary TL who moved to a new school in 2011. Below are excerpts of her experiences transforming the school library at the new school into an LLC.

In 2005, I became the full-time TL in a school of 350 students; I was fortunate to have the support of the administration for a full-time library position. I had the freedom to develop a library program at the school as I wished. In 6 years, a vibrant library program was achieved with the collaboration of all staff members, including the gym teacher. Students, staff and parents were using the library before, during and after school hours. The library had become the “heart” of the school. In addition, the school’s online presence was created through the development of the school website, which included a library web page.

In September 2011, I transferred, as the new TL, to another Vancouver elementary school of 290 students. The library had no clear designated areas for working, story time, reading or quiet space. The previous librarian told me that there had been no inventory done for several years – the collection needed updating and weeding. Collaboration with staff and their programs was limited to set library periods for primary divisions, and I was unsure of what the library did for the others. There was no integration of technology within the library program. Very few students came into the library before or after school hours and there were virtually no parent volunteers for the library.

My vision: A vibrant, whole school, collaborative approach to learning for staff, parents and students. I began by building relationships with stakeholders. I shared my vision with the administrator and parents at PAC. I established a schedule for early morning and after school access to the library for students and parents. I formed a library monitor club for senior (upper intermediate) students in order to develop a sense of ownership for the library. I began collaborating with staff. Newer staff members were more interested with this approach since they were also building relationships in the school.

Excess furniture was purged and the remaining and new furniture was re-organized to create designated areas for working, reading, story-time, and a quiet area. With the help of some TLs with expertise in designs that facilitate workflow and in major collection shifting, we weeded the books and grouped the collections for easier access and locating. Staff, parents, and students said these changes opened up the space in the library, made it easier to find resources, and made it more welcoming.

New routines were implemented; set library periods were eliminated and were replaced by daily open book exchange periods and flexible library scheduling for new inquiry possibilities for our students, developed collaboratively with staff. New technology was integrated in any collaborative units planned with staff. I attended regular PAC meetings to promote the library to the parents as a “Library Learning Commons”.

I started a weekly story time for four special needs students. After our read-aloud, I introduced the use of iPads for the SSSWs (special needs staff assistants) and the students so they could make their own story, using the iPad application called “Puppet Pals”. The assistants took photos of their students and proceeded to make two-scene puppet show stories. The students were focused on the images of themselves in their simple story and had such fun recording their voices. They took the iPads back to their class to share with their classmates. The staff assistants reported to me that for the first time, they observed real interactions including some students who took it upon themselves to make another show with the special needs student. One told me that for the first time her student made a connection to someone in the class and that she actually spoke and acknowledged others. It was a breakthrough moment!

Bringing this back to the Library Learning Commons, I believe that we need to empower students in the use of technological tools. So often we forget that our special needs students can also benefit from these same tools. In a Library Learning Commons, staff and students are all learners and we learn together.

STAFFING AND STAFF RELATIONSHIPS

BY KAREN CHOW

Karen is an experienced teacher and a relatively new TL who, at the time of the inquiry, had worked in her partially open-area annex of 90 students for more than fourteen years.

Our elementary annex staff began to engage in professional dialogues that focused on the book *Learning in Safe Schools* by Faye Brownlie and Judith King. These dialogues affected modifications in practise and fostered a more “distributive leadership” approach among staff.

Our readings guided my staff in developing a climate of collaboration at the annex:

You can't be a team member without being a part of the conversation. You'd just become a technician without reflection, and teaching just has to be so much more than that.

I jumped at the opportunity to leave my half time primary classroom teaching position to take on a full time position as the TL (40%) and Resource Teacher (60%). This was the first time in many years that the TL/Resource assignment was full time and, thanks to our Brownlie and King readings, the TL was to be included as a member of the school-based team that met twice a month. The staff was clear that the TL had important insights into students' needs that should be shared; it meant the TL's help in implementing recommendations that supported students was valued. This remarkable shift paved the way for the team teaching and collaboration I do today with every single class in the school.

My colleagues have also embraced a "push-in" model of support as they prefer to have an extra teacher to work with on a particular lesson or project than having a revolving door of students coming or going from the classroom. This model fosters collaboration and allows students to have stronger connections to more staff members. The TL position is a specialized position and a necessary part of every school staff. I am viewed as an additional accessible teacher and my colleagues have also come to view the LLC as an extension of their existing classroom. Thus, a Library Learning Commons in a primary setting:

- Includes the physical space of the traditional library (hence, a "Library Learning Commons").
- Is managed by a TL who is a strong leader, effective collaborator, and mentor who fosters transliteracy; the TL has a unique relationship with the staff, students, and parents in the school.
- Is utilized as a space for many functions, including collaborative meetings, teacher planning, independent student as well as small group work; these functions can occur at the same time.
- Has strong administrative support; that is, the administrator maintains staffing, fosters collaboration between staff members, sets a school-wide tone for teamwork, schedules regular class reviews, and includes the TL as part of school-based team meetings.

INFRASTRUCTURE BY SYLVIA ZUBKE

At the time of the inquiry, Sylvia was an experienced elementary TL working in a school that supported technology learning as well as collaborative and inquiry-based professional development and teaching.

When I first saw the Irving K. Barber Learning Commons at UBC, I asked myself, "How do I adapt the concept of a university Learning Commons to create an elementary school Library Learning Commons?"

I went back to my school and re-arranged my shelves so that they were all low enough for students to reach, and I put fewer books on each shelf. I became ruthless, every year weeding the books and making a list of every book that hadn't circulated in my library. If I felt unsure about weeding a book, I would put it in a box to see if it would be requested. My last World Book encyclopedia set is in my backroom. It is April, and not one person has asked for it—everyone uses online encyclopedias.

Traditionally, libraries and bookstores have had more non-fiction titles than fiction. I have weeded my non-fiction section to equal the size of my fiction. I got rid of books where the information is more current on the internet or from databases. I got rid of books that are higher vocabulary but low on visuals. I took the money I would have spent on non-fiction and enhanced my fiction and graphic novel collections.

I ask students what they want me to buy, and I buy it. We have an awesome graphic novel and manga section, plus superheroes, Lego, Hot Wheels, Dora, Mr. Men, Star Wars, etc. I make sure to buy all the award-winning books and books recommended by other teacher-librarians but the collection must reflect the tastes of its clients. Any time a student, teacher or parent requests a book that I don't have, I put it immediately into my online shopping cart to review before purchasing. During the summer, teachers email me requests or the units they are planning so I can have resources ready for September.

Then I used Scholastic Book Fair certificates to add child-sized seating to the donated big, comfy chairs. They also enabled me to buy a dollhouse, medieval castle, Lego and train tables, as well as carpets.

Parents with their pre-schoolers come to the library to read and play with the toys. The local community service organization uses our space after school for literacy clubs. UBC uses it once a week and there's an after-school computer class on Mondays. I bought a refrigerator, microwave, toaster oven, kettle, and coffee pot for the library. I even got light, easy-to-move tables for the library, and the administrator made sure we had robust Wi-Fi. I have 19 desktop computers, a printer, a SMARTboard, projector, headphones, and microphones.

I would so love to have the glass walls that keep spaces differentiated, but that is not in the budget. Because I cannot differentiate my space well, I accommodate different noise levels at different times. If special education assistants or parents come in to use the computers, they wear headphones or read quietly in the reading corner. If a small group needs to meet, I have cleaned out my back room and added a round table with 6 chairs. After school, the library is a meeting space and it can get loud. I tolerate it because more and more parents come into the space, and I so enjoy the rich conversations that occur.

21ST CENTURY LEARNING BY CELIA BROGAN

Celia was, at the time of this inquiry, a new TL working at a very large East Vancouver dual-language elementary school of more than 600 students. She has since moved to a dual-language library program at a smaller West Side elementary school.

“Learning commons”. What are the implications of renaming the library? If we move away from using “library” in favour of using “learning commons”, are we sending a message that the activities and habits of mind associated with a library are outdated and different from those that we expect to see in a learning commons?

While renaming the library may facilitate the re-branding of the space, that is, eliminating the stereotype of the strict, “shushy” librarian and her quiet, dusty, book-filled haven, it is more likely that an elementary school library is already a place where students can come to work on group projects, browse recreational reading materials, and use multiple technologies to explore curricular topics and demonstrate their learning. It is a place where teachers come if they want to chat informally about their practice or formally collaborate on a lesson or unit. If these things are not already happening in the school library, changing the name of the space is not going to help; it may renew interest for a while but without the underlying philosophy and framework it can quickly become a free-for-all or a dead zone.

We have heard about elementary library spaces losing professional staffing and then being renamed as Learning Commons. This is problematic as a learning commons is a complex educational space, tied directly to the ecosystem of the larger school community; effective management and integration of the learning commons into the educational ecosystem requires dedicated expertise and attention.

The union of *library and learning commons* ideals is possible when members of the learning community co-construct the vision of the space and its purpose. We can’t pretend that we’re only changing the how of teaching. The shift to a Library Learning Commons (LLC) model, especially within a school community, falls within a larger paradigm shift pedagogically: participating in an LLC is a different way of being in a learning community. This is why the program and pedagogical shift cannot occur in the library alone. There must be a collective will among teachers and administration to reflect on and guide collective changes in practice.

A manageable and realistic vision resists the desire to include every new constructivist innovation. The inclination to overlap concepts such as makerspaces and educational technology teaching areas, like computer labs, with the LLC muddies both the understanding and the administration of the space. The ideal would be that we have adjacent spaces in the school for students to move through a cycle of knowledge exploration and construction.

Consider that the product is not the most important thing in an LLC; rather it is the information and literacy skills—the development and synthesis, transfer and deconstruction of ideas—that are the primary focus in this common space.

Students may then move their learning to an adjacent makerspace to carry out the next stage of their process. They may come back to the LLC during the cycle to rehash/revise aspects of their ideas and then go off somewhere else.

TECHNOLOGY BY MICHELE FARQUHARSON

*Michele Farquharson is an experienced TL who has been a member of the Board of Directors for the journal *Teacher Librarian* for years. She works at a very large West Side dual-language elementary school.*

Since 2002, *The Horizon Report K-12* has been one of the best indicators for emerging technology trends in education. The April 2013 shortlist lists twelve technologies, ten top trends and challenges that will significantly impact teaching, learning, and creative inquiry in global K-12 education in the next 5 years.

These include:

- BYOD: Bringing your own device allows students to work with familiar technologies.
- Cloud computing: Students will be encouraged to share questions or findings with each other.
- Mobile learning: Students engage with a type of technology that has exploded with the availability of educational and productivity apps, promoting media rich products.
- Online learning, particularly massive open online courses (MOOCs): These are being reshaped to include blended learning strategies and to provide more personal learning.

Teacher-librarians have long understood the personal empowerment that comes for both educators and students when they are enabled to acquire skills for information literacy, critical thinking, and participatory learning. As we move forward, our school libraries need to transform to Library Learning Commons to allow our students to become transliterate.

Sue Thomas has defined *transliteracy* as:

... the ability to read, write, and interact across a range of platforms, tools, and media from signing and orality through handwriting, print, TV, radio, and film, to digital social networks.

While teacher-librarians need not devise more benchmarks or learning outcomes, they do need to continually redefine what is necessary so that students become transliterate.

Harold Rheingold, an influential and provocative writer, a forward thinker, and a well-respected teacher of social media, believes that educational institutions must teach students how to think about technology.

In societies that don't change very much, the duty of the elders, the duty of the educational institutions, is to pass along what has been proven to work over the generations. In societies that change rapidly that doesn't do any good. You need to teach people how to think. You need to teach them how to recognize trends. You need to teach them how to evaluate. They have to be able to answer the questions: What is the technology going to do for me and what is it going to do to me? Do I need to know how to use it and if so how do I use it in my life?

His recent book, *Net Smart: How to Thrive Online*, focuses on five main areas: managing attention, network awareness, participation, crap detection, and collaboration. This book is a must-read for anyone using the internet. Rheingold has always been a champion of digital media but feels that, in order to cope with the plethora of information and the ability to connect with others, these five areas must be taught and understood.

For any educator, the managing of children's attention is paramount. The ability to consume or create media at any minute can be addicting, therefore, digital mindfulness on the part of our students is mandatory. Teacher-librarians recognize the power of participation and online collaboration, as well as the need to be information literate. However, the value of network awareness, knowing how and who to connect with and who to follow, needs to be shared with our students, not only to benefit their academic understandings but perhaps even more importantly to ignite their personal interests and passions.

COLLABORATIVE CULTURE BY CHERIEE WEICHEL

At the time of the inquiry, Cheriee was an experienced TL at an alternative elementary school of 300 students. She had been the TL there for five years and, for ten years prior to that, was a classroom and an ESL support teacher at the same school.

What is most obvious at my school is that we organize around multiage classrooms – mostly three grade groupings in each class. Structuring a school with a multiage organization is very different from running split classes. Grouping is more flexible and mostly heterogeneous.

We operate under a distributed leadership model. It isn't always easy. You might not notice at first just how highly collaborative we are. We meet once a week at 7:45 in the morning and have regular conversations about who we are, what we think is important, and where we want to go. We don't give out letter grades. A majority of our teachers team-teach.

During my fifteen years here as both a teacher and as the teacher-librarian, learning has been resource based. For the most part, other than a few math books, we don't have textbooks. When working at a school that doesn't use textbooks, the library truly is the hub of the school and a critical part of learning.

I have struggled to understand just what it might mean to transform our school library into a Library Learning Commons. I realize that it includes everything an exemplary school library needs to be, along with an opening up of opportunities for more serendipitous learning to occur. I can't control everything and have to let the space belong to the community, albeit mediated by me.

At my school, the evolution of the library into a Library Learning Commons has been about integrating where we are going with where we have been. While we continue to engage learners using both traditional and digital technologies, in the learning commons iteration of the library, the essential or basic goals remain the same. These goals include, but are not limited to, learning to work collaboratively, to learn to access, analyze and synthesize information, to think critically, and to become problem identifiers and solution finders. It's still all about learning to learn. The development of transliteracy plays a pivotal role in this because, to function in the world of now and tomorrow, learners need to be able to do all of this across multiple formats simultaneously.



The Learning Commons is the starting point—it's the nerve centre of the school, the place where learning isn't about collecting dots but rather about connecting them It's our experimental lab: a place where kids and adults can take risks and experiment with new ways of doing school . . . where educational research can be played with and developed into programs that not only impact students but also provide "road maps" for teachers: "This is what innovation looks like . . . how it engages students . . . and how you can implement facets of it in your own classroom."

— Gino Bondi, LearningtheNow

TL NARRATIVES: THE SECONDARY LLC EXPERIENCE

A group of Vancouver secondary teacher-librarians spent three years meeting to share information and ideas about their Library Learning Commons experiences. Teacher Inquiry provided the meeting time and supported their transformational processes. Narratives from BC teacher-librarians around the province have put invaluable depth into this document.

PROGRAM: THE PRIORITY IS ACCESS BY PAT PARUNGAO

At the time of the inquiry, Pat, formerly BCTLA President and a Vancouver School Board TL Consultant, was an experienced TL at a mid-size East Van secondary school. Pat's then-TL partner Hilary Montroy is also experienced; she has a particular interest in new technologies and the Virtual Learning Commons.

The secondary library that I transferred to seven years ago had a vibrant and welcoming atmosphere. There are comfy chairs as you enter. I was told by the outgoing TL that the library was “half-way between the office and the counselling suite” – that is, not just in physical terms but also in philosophical ones as well. Students, from popular academic to marginalized, felt comfortable coming to the library. Access was in many ways already established.

At that time, two classes could be readily accommodated during the same period, and classroom teachers were accustomed to collaborating with the teacher-librarian. Technology included a few laptops, a digital camera, 18 desktop computers for student use, and two audio-visual carts, each with a projector, computer and speakers. How lucky I was to work in such a school library!

When our district TL Consultant held the annual TL Spring Update session at the Chapman Learning Commons in the Irving K. Barber Learning Centre and the following year at the Simon Fraser University Student Learning Commons, we discovered new directions for libraries that could be applied to secondary schools. I followed up by interviewing librarians at both UBC and SFU and learned that students and users were involved in the decision-making; each site had increased virtual access and had changed the physical space to be more flexible.

I am fortunate that my TL partner has also completely embraced the concept of a Learning Commons; together, we have made the following improvements:

1. STUDENT INVOLVEMENT

Staff and student suggestions for books are encouraged; we actively encourage their submitting requests in writing. When the book arrives, the “requesting” person is always called to be the first to borrow it. We try to acquire and process the books as quickly as possible so everyone knows that we are responsive to their suggestions.

We started an LLC Student Advisory. This group provides student perspectives on improvements we can make; they maintain the Learning Commons Facebook page, write about the LLC for the school newspaper, etc.

We have created curriculum-based online surveys. We next plan to seek student input on various aspects of our LLC program and involve them as technology support for students and staff who want to learn how to use the Smartboard or programs like Notebook, BitStrips, EasyBib, VoiceThread, iMovie, and more.

2. BETTER VIRTUAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL ACCESS

When I arrived, the library website had not been updated for some time. It had both wonderful information but also some that was dated. Hilary created a new website and regularly maintains it with, for example, a booking calendar so teachers can check availability; collaboratively developed projects, often including instruction, handouts, resource lists and links; and tutorials, like how to use online citation maker EasyBib, posted on YouTube.

Occasionally we limit access to teachers-only sections, like our discussion blog that supports an all-staff fiction book club; we are also careful to protect the privacy and intellectual property rights of teachers and students.

There are now thirty desktop computers; every student in a class can have a computer. Available as well is wireless access and more technology, like a Smartboard, document camera, Kobo e-readers, and iPads on a cart. We also encourage students to use their own electronic devices.

3. CHANGE OF THE PHYSICAL SPACE

To increase space for students to use, the collections' footprint was sufficiently reduced by weeding and by removing some of our tall fixed shelving or stacks. In place of these are now seven tables, enough seating space to accommodate a third class. And, with improved sightlines, the LLC looks brighter and more open. New task chairs have casters and our wish list includes tables with casters so that furniture can be easily moved to respond to the needs of various groupings of users. We encourage students to use the seminar room; we plan to create a “green room” filming station there as well.

The concept of the LLC is neither static nor complete. I envision its future as continuing to be user-focussed and responsive to educational and technological changes.

THREE Cs THAT CREATE AN EFFECTIVE LC PROGRAM BY MICHELLE HALL

Michelle is an experienced Home Economics teacher who has worked in both secondary school and elementary school libraries. She is a TL at a secondary school in Surrey, BC.

Yup, the name *Learning Commons* is a bit of a mouthful, so for simplicity's sake, we have been referring to it as the LC. My Vice-Principal tells me that in his day that stood for the "Liquor Control Branch". That gave me a good laugh, but the word "control" is what it's all about—letting go of your need to control, going with the flow, listening to the consumer, and being a great sales person and TL.

Before you can transform a traditional secondary school library into a Library Learning Commons, you have to consider two things: are you are willing to create open and flexible spaces, and are you willing to have an open and flexible mind?

The library at our school is a really large piece of real estate, too large not to be used to its fullest potential. We are all to blame if our libraries haven't become the heart and hub of the school. Over the years we have ignored them and gone with the status quo. We have treated them like a sanctuary for those few readers and academics who haunt them in silence. But...I'm lucky enough to work in a school, and in a school district, that is bubbling over with support for change in our libraries.

SO WHAT ARE THE 3Cs OF THE LC?

COMMUNICATION—COORDINATION—COLLABORATION

1. COMMUNICATION

I make it a point to communicate with my staff at every opportunity. I make myself open, accessible, and approachable. Whether it's my weekly emailed Google calendar, app recommendations, book talks/book recommendations, lesson ideas, Twitter activities, Pinterest, blog posts, or LC reports at staff meetings—I share, share, share. That includes sharing with students as well as via Twitter, the Learning Commons Facebook page, my Readers' Café blog, bulletin boards, contests, celebrations, special guests, activities, and announcements. Communication and sharing is so important in creating a feeling of shared ownership of the space and the program.

2. COORDINATION

I make myself available to help coordinate and facilitate events. For example, I help plan lessons with feeder schools, bring in guest presenters, and arrange Skype opportunities. I enrich the learning environment of the school and offer my services any way I can. That extends to sponsoring clubs that meet in the LC after school such as: economics club, peer tutoring, and the Readers' Cafe. I also try to offer fun activities at lunch a few times each year. Activities I've organized include: bookmark bingo, book pong tournaments, friendship bracelet tutorials, book trailer bonanza, and I recently did a session on making lip gloss with 16 girls—that was fun!

3. COLLABORATION

Collaboration is the hardest aspect of a new LC program to fully realize. At this stage, the TL really needs to be seen as being open, non-judgmental, and good-humoured!

In working with my colleagues, I might suggest ideas for projects or ask if I can help with a project. I offer to do the typing of a new assignment, create a rubric for that assignment, and do the photocopying before a class arrives, anything that reduces the workload for classroom teachers and makes collaborating more inviting (they all love free clicks, that's for sure)! Another service I offer my teachers is the opportunity to collaborate with each other while I teach two classes at once. For example, I have taught a three-week cycle of research and study skills to the Grade 8s, freeing up their teachers to collaborate. I then introduced these blocks to their Passion Projects and the teachers joined in to monitor and finish the projects with the students. Both services are valued and appreciated by my staff (especially since we are in the first year of becoming an IB-Middle Years Program school). As my principal always reminds me, "You're a teacher first, librarian second—and that's how our staff sees you".

So my role as a teacher-librarian is indeed multifaceted. It really is about relationships with our staff, students, and parents. My advice? Don't be afraid to throw things out, open up your doors, make some noise, make mistakes, and make a mess! Jump in with both feet, embrace it, believe it, promote it, and go visit other schools that can inspire you and give you great ideas! I spent some time with the incredible Angela Monk from Fraser Heights Secondary. Angela has had a thriving LLC for years now, and she knows how to make one rock!

More advice? Get the Admin on your side! I worked closely with my Admin Team; they were my biggest cheerleaders, and their financial support was instrumental in the physical transformation of our space. This transformation was a LOT of work both physically and emotionally, but it's worth it when you see that this is where everyone wants to be—sharing and learning together.

A DISTRICT-SUPPORTED LLC PROJECT: SAANICH BY AARON MUELLER

Aaron is an experienced TL and cybrarian who, at the time of the inquiry, was new to a small-to-midsized secondary school in Saanich. The school was just completing the major transformation of its school library to an LLC.

The former TL at my new school began the transformation to a Library Learning Commons last year with program evolution, physical renovations, and purchases of furniture and technology. The school district provided Innovation Grants that enabled all secondary and middle school libraries to adapt their spaces, furniture, programs, and resources to meet the needs of a 21st century Library Learning Commons.

The old tables, chairs and some shelves were replaced by new comfy chairs and loveseats; these were strategically located to create quiet alcoves for reading and to frame other more central spaces as well. Our new tables can be folded and stacked away, opening up the entire space for new configurations. Some hefty weeding also cleared space for new resources and new learning activities. In addition, we have created a production room or “makerspace” where we produce videos, podcasts, and digital artifacts, and we can build computers and play with new equipment, as well as teach and learn new skills from each other.

The old library security system was removed, helping to create a culture of trust and to enable smooth access to our learning space. We expanded our Wi-Fi infrastructure to give access to more devices and equipment. There are strategically placed charging stations, enabling students to replenish their devices as needed.

The school has also recently acquired a set of 30 Linux laptops to complement our 30 desktops in the Library Learning Commons. The Linux platform allows us to enable profiles that provide students with access to their files, bookmarks, and documents from school, and from home. We have complemented this technology with Kobo e-readers, Apple and Android tablets, document cameras, digital video cameras, digital still cameras, music players, charging cables, dongles and many types of memory, cabling, connections, and other helpful “bits” that enable technology integration. We have added a “smart” TV that connects to our network and is able to display wirelessly, sharing photos and announcements. One important evolution in our program and district was to enable a new District-wide Learning Commons website template, one that is consistent across schools, and shares our projects, documents, links, and resources. This collaborative project was enabled by the district to get all TMs working together to build a useful, consistent and valuable template for all Library Learning Commons in every school.

Program-wise, the new Library Learning Commons has been able to implement many digital resources, databases, and learning activities utilizing our new technologies, equipment and spaces. We have had almost all faculties and courses come to learn, research, inquire, produce, and present their learning. We have housed hundreds of students during entire-grade presentations. We have hosted poetry readings, parent information nights, after school clubs, tutorials, and meetings. We have also implemented a new online booking calendar so that subject teachers can check and book time in the Learning Commons from anywhere.

Overall, it's been very exciting and empowering to be a part of this transformation, supporting our school's students, staff, and community with our new design. We have created a buzz in the school and district, showcasing much of what can be achieved through this thoughtful and supported transformation.

THE DISTRICT LLC PROJECT: PRINCE GEORGE BY RHEA WOOLGAR

Rhea is an experienced English teacher and TL at a mid-size secondary school in Prince George, BC. She has also been a District Learning Commons Liaison.

In September 2013 I inherited a well-stocked, traditional school library. I had spent the previous year on temporary assignment replacing a TL on leave; during my time there, the school library had come up for renovation. Although it was intimidating to renovate another TL's space, it was an awesome experience in collaboration and purposeful design.

I brought the insights and skills of that experience into my new school where the support of the administration in undertaking the transition from library to an LLC has been significant. When I was hired for the position, I requested summer project funding to set up a Virtual Learning Commons (VLC) to allow students 24/7 access to district-purchased databases and e-resources. I used LibGuides as the format and developed a menu of research and information literacy skills for students to use as they accessed resources within the LLC.

CHANGING ATMOSPHERE

When school began in September, I wanted the word to get out that our school's learning commons was “not your Grandma's library”. The first tangible thing I did was remove the “Ø” signs, like “No food or beverages” and “No hats”. Every block I searched for students to invite to come and work in the library. I put a tub of Lego on a table and a jigsaw puzzle on another. Slowly students began to choose the LLC as a place to come to work, to learn, and even to play. I wanted staff and students to know that the library was their learning space.

CHANGING SPACE

As the library began to get busier, it was apparent that the space would have to change to make room for additional classes and groups of students. And so we weeded. The library technician at our District Learning Commons (DLC) gave me a list of all resources that had not been used or signed out in five years. Reducing the size of our collection by about 10% freed up enough room to have an additional class in the library. We condensed our non-fiction section and placed our newly refreshed fiction section on the wall. The books looked (and smelled) so much better, and students could more easily find what they wanted. Staff or students' fears that a favourite book would be weeded or their concerns that out-of-date books should be kept, “just in case”, were perfect opportunities to demonstrate how databases and e-resources could be used for the same or better information.

CHANGING TRADITIONS

Throughout the process of changing the atmosphere and space in the library, the library clerk and I worked to change how the library was regarded by staff. Instead of being a curricular add-on, we wanted to become an integral part of teachers' course planning. We decided that, in response to any request by staff, our goal was to "get to yes". We found ways to fit extra classes into the space; we travelled out to classes to renew and sign out books; I gave booktalks wherever we could fit them in.

We tried to anticipate and plan in advance for the needs of our staff. At Christmas we hosted a reindeer games activity for our grade 8s and, during the Olympics, we streamed the Canadian Women's Hockey games into the LLC. Our goal? Whenever something was happening in the school, the learning commons would be involved.

It was also important to begin to change how students used the resources in the space, to get past the traditional research, the hunt-and-gather approach to information retrieval, or "Bird Units", as we called them. We developed LibGuides to help frame LLC or inquiry projects, framing each project or assignment with a big question that pushed students to deeper and more meaningful learning. Thus far, it has been a successful re-design of our role in the teaching and learning that takes place in our school.

I have worked with several teachers to meaningfully incorporate technology and collaboration into teaching this year. After attending the Google Apps for Education (GAPE) summit in Kamloops, several Grade 8 classes have used Google Docs for collaborative work. Another group evaluated, edited and used YouTube videos to teach their classmates about a scientific concept. One afternoon a class learning about gladiators took a Google Earth Walking Tour of the Roman Colosseum with me.

Recently, several teachers and I met to discuss the digital literacy skills our students needed to acquire by graduation. Students have such vast differences in technological abilities, so setting aside the notion of a "scope and sequence" as being unrealistic in today's learning, we set our sights on students having strong basic technology skills that enable them to learn to use any new technologies for their own inquiries, now and in the future.

We received support from PAC funding to expand our games/makerspace collection. I am excited to see the power of gamification to enhance learning. We purchased a class set of the game "Settlers of Catan". Using this game, Grade 8 teachers and I have planned a series of lessons about how civilizations develop. We recruited four of our keenest teachers to help us and the library hosted a "Settlers of Catan" tournament. Students wrote about what they had learned in playing the game, about the rise and fall of civilizations.

MOVING FORWARD

As we expand our uses of both the virtual and physical spaces, BC's Freedom of Information and Privacy Protection Act (FIPPA) has remained a challenge. Our province's response to FIPPA as it affects learning opportunities for students has been slow. We are challenged by knowing better, but not being able to do better. I have found that working with the DLC team has helped bring some clarity to how to address FIPPA. I am looking forward to having a FIPPA "permissions" document that has been legally evaluated for use with students, staff, and parents.

ASSESSMENT AND REFLECTION

It is difficult to get descriptive feedback to inform and improve our practice. I want feedback that is meaningful and effective, to keep a focus on the work that I am doing and the program I am developing. I have invited my administrator and selected colleagues to give me feedback. In taking my own measure of the program, I assess my own answers to the following questions, adapted from *Colorado's Highly Effective School Library Programs*:

How does the TL show direct evidence of:

- Meaningful integration of 21st century skills into the library program?
- Leadership within and outside the school?
- Impact on student achievement within the school?
- A collaborative environment where students have the instruction they need to be college- and career-ready?
- A culture of collaboration that includes the teacher-librarian in instruction, leadership decisions, and the provision of digital literacy instruction for staff and students?
- The creation of programs, aligned with school and district goals, that encourage student involvement in community, cultural or global initiatives?
- Demonstrated differentiation to meet the learning needs of all students?
- Work in helping teachers with student assessment?
- Purposeful lesson design that creates lifelong learning opportunities?

It was after the transformation of our secondary school library in Prince George that I was seconded one day a week as a District Learning Commons Liaison. In that position, I worked with other TLs as they transformed their school libraries to LLCs.

LIBRARY AS EVOLUTIONARY PROCESS: TL “IN BETA”

BY MARTHA CAMERON

Martha, an experienced TL, has worked in her large Surrey secondary school for many years; she is a lead TL in the BC movement to LLCs.

Several times a year, we are invited to get together with other district teacher-librarians who are on the same Library Learning Commons journey. These are such valuable opportunities to share information, experiences, practices, and plans. These meetings also have given me a chance to reflect on where we've been, and where we are going at my school library, now a Library Learning Commons.

This is what we have accomplished so far. Fourteen or so months ago, our space changed dramatically. We removed a “forest” of stacks and a mother-ship of a circulation desk. In so doing, we completely—and thankfully—changed the tone of the library. We went from a “We're smart and we're in control” place to more of a “This is your space to accomplish what you need to accomplish” place.

The change of space allowed for some quite unpredictable possibilities, including a concert series that takes place in the library, called Music4Lunch, where our school bands and choirs perform once a month.

The soft furnishings have also facilitated new kinds of collaboration and interaction.

I have worked hard to create a greater web presence, “flipping” the library so that all our resources are available to our whole community, all the time.

Some issues are straightforward and relatively easy to accomplish, but the job is, of course, never done. Here is what I am working on:

- A meeting space with a whiteboard wall; when I paint the existing cupboards with IdeaPaint, we will also have a quiet space for students to work in, which is something we are short of at the moment.
- More student involvement in the creation of the vision of this Library Learning Commons.
- Facilitation of connections for both students and teachers: I ask myself, “How can we facilitate connections now and in the future, connections that are powerful, engaging, thoughtful, and life-changing, connections that will continue to empower them to succeed throughout their lives?”
- A battery of mini-lessons, to be called “You Are The Library: Enabling Students To Take Advantage Of Life's Opportunities”: my goal is to equip our students with a whole host of tools, and more importantly, an attitude that will make all this possible.

I find myself thinking about time. We have many grand ideas. We are there; we have changed our mindset. The fact remains, however, that we are very confined by our infrastructure, particularly with respect to time. In a school day that is defined by rigid blocks of time, a semester that is defined by weeks, an assessment system that requires “marks”, and an “old order” challenging a new one, time becomes a huge issue. At the very least, we need to teach our students that the time constraints they currently work within will, one day soon, not exist.

So our evolution continues ... the good news is that the Library Learning Commons is packed with kids and all our users seem to be willing to help in the process. The best evidence that change is afoot was demonstrated recently when, on the Friday before Thanksgiving long weekend, I couldn't get the students to go home!

WHEN INFRASTRUCTURE ANTICIPATES PROGRAM

BY MOIRA EKDAHL

Moira is an experienced, award-winning TL who at the time of the inquiry, had been working in a mid-sized South Vancouver high school learning commons for three years. Janice Smith, an experienced TL, was a key partner in the process of developing the facility and the program.

I was hired at my present school as a Learning Commons Specialist. My administrator, excited about the LLC project as a dimension of the school's technology-enriched vision of learning, had secured a generous community donation and the PAC was committed to supporting it as well.

Our LC Design Team (the principal, two TLs, an Art and a Technology teacher) began to create a whole new kind of learning environment. On the plus side, the LLC would be well located, across from the school office and near the front door, at the “hub” of things. The vast space had four instructional areas and various adjoining rooms. On the minus side, the facility had been added to the school in the 1950s and had bunker-like “Cold War Architecture”, with no natural light, except at the back, from two narrow 2-inch windows in a set of double EXIT doors expressly not be used to EXIT. Old technology clung like after-thoughts to the room's large support posts.

We developed the plan for renovations: move and re-organize the entire collection; re-paint and re-wire some areas for technological upgrades; remove a “forest” of spinners, some of the seismically secured “stacks”, and all of the rarely used study carrels filling an entire teaching area; uninstall (and consider eliminating) the security system.

First we would construct the space; our trades built:

- A new counter in an upper area that overlooks everything; with stools, it has become a favourite work area.
- New low movable book shelves that would delineate our fiction and quiet reading area but be easily moved to accommodate large groups (up to 100).
- A compact circulation desk that has clear sightlines.
- A bar-height L-shaped counter with high stools; our 10 PC screens are always visible and in use from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm; we envision this counter as having high stools on both sides for collaborating with technology.
- Cabinetry in three instructional areas for mini-Macs and audio-visual systems that enable projection to interactive whiteboards; in our Innovation Centre, projection to a whole-wall screen is a frequently requested performance area with surround sound.

Today there are four kinds of spaces: quieter, more comfortable reading and study areas; an informal café-style reading/learning space; smaller rooms that can accommodate multi-media production, storage, work, meetings, or “making things”; and large teaching areas, including the Innovative Teaching Centre and the Collaborative Centre. Students access our technology (20 Chromebooks, 10 Dell laptops, and 10 mini-iPads) from what had been the magazine/school archives storage room. The multi-use “green room” has 3 iMacs.

Wi-Fi is enhanced at our school as we also house the district’s virtual learning school. Students and visitors readily use their own devices in our LC. We have comfy chairs—donations from a renovating coffee enterprise known for its comfortable seating—as well as custom chairs and ottomans. Our Collaborative Centre has “wheely” chairs and tables that enable us to respond quickly to users’ learning needs; the key to the appeal of this area for teaching and learning is its lightness and colour. We have eliminated “Ø” signage that announced THE RULES.

When the doors of the new LLC opened in October 2012, students knew instantly what to do—work, read, learn together. With the “soft opening”, students began to discover the significant investment in their learning; the old windowless school library had become a bright and welcoming space. Our students are very respectful of the space. Said one girl when asking her teacher to bring the class in again, “It is perfect because it is so studious”. Another student, asked what she thought about the new plastic “infinity bench” that lights up and serves as a coffee table or bench, said, “It attracts kids”. I like to have a feature “piece” that represents “the invitation” to learn. In the strange bench, I see the light at the heart of the school and our program. Our LLC program begins when the doors open in the morning and closes when we leave at the end of the day; it includes breaks, lunch, and all uses between 8:00 am and 4:00 pm. Of course, any after-hour use of the 24/7 district resources or of the space for events or meetings is a real or virtual extension of our program.

Re-design had incorporated simple principles that would put “new light” on the role of the school library in teaching and learning: new open sightlines, bright new furnishings that enable flexible use of space; reduced collection footprint; new paint, wiring, and custom-built fittings; large-scale technology installations; a sense of the invitation to learn. Re-design anticipated building the LLC’s capacity to enhance teaching and learning within the school. In the district, we are also well situated to be a “hub” for professional development about LLCs, technology integration, and shifting pedagogy.

I knew that building the space before the program was risky—as form best follows function, you unquestionably need to build on the firm foundations of a strong, dynamic, and responsive program. My TL partner Janice Smith and I continue to work together to create new partnerships and build the culture of collaboration; we are three years into what my “TL Inquiry” colleagues have suggested will be a five-year building process. We knew the kids would get it!

Our school’s LLC has garnered attention from administrators, management, and teacher-librarians across Canada; many interested visitors from Metro, provincial, out-of-province, Ministry, and district locations, as well as school-based educators have come to our LLC. In our district, new seismic reconstruction has attracted architects and district managers to our LLC. Within the Vancouver School Board, many have looked to our LLC as a model project, a source of ideas, advice, and impetus.

In setting out to transform a very large space that suffered from under-investment and under-utilization, our Design Team intended that both the space and the program it housed would see a significant overhaul; the new LLC would generate a program that would attract new users, build new relationships, and ultimately reach beyond its own walls, into classrooms, homes, and communities, local and beyond. Across the district, VSB teacher-librarians have come to consider new technologies, furnishings, fittings, and principles with which to “grow” their own LLCs.



IT ALL STARTS WITH THE PROFESSIONALS

BY JOAN MUIR

Joan is an experienced TL who has worked in both elementary and secondary school libraries. Her present west side school is one of Vancouver's larger schools. Her TL partner Stephanie Lemmon also works half-time as a science teacher at the same school.

When my partner, a new teacher-librarian, and I arrived to start our work together at a school, we found a facility that was little used. The staff rarely came in. It will never have a “hub” location...you have to follow signs and know where you are going to find our school library. It is a difficult space in some ways, having two floors on three levels. As well, secondary schools are divided into departments; the divisiveness is another hurdle to overcome. But it is one of the largest school libraries in the city; it has some beautiful bright spaces; we discovered a staff that was open to new things and very welcoming; the school is very centrally located and easily accessed in Vancouver.

It became abundantly clear to me that we were going to have to market our expertise. We needed to be a “location of choice” in our own building. Our primary goal that first year was to build strong relationships with individual teachers, administration, student teachers, the parent community, and students. Our main focus was the teaching staff. We sought to build relationships which were professional, educationally supportive, and recognizably valued by each teacher. We provided sound service and expertise.

As we were both new to the school, our initial communications with staff began at a respectful distance, but:

- We never missed a chance to make announcements in staff meetings, at meetings of department heads, and staff committee.
- We focused on other communications, like daily bulletins, pamphlets, and emails.
- We kept our communications concise and well-crafted to get across information that we knew would capture their interest and/or be very useful.

Here is what else we committed to:

- We asked to be invited to department meetings where we could offer educational support, resources, and technology.

- We tried to collaborate in the library with someone from every department. We anticipated that colleagues who came to work with us would favourably discuss their experiences with other members of their departments.
- We got involved with the school community in such initiatives as Canada Sings! and Teacher Inquiry.
- We created professional development gatherings for several departments in the library to support their particular teaching knowledge and to stimulate cross-curricular discussions.
- We created a staff reading club that met regularly. Some who have since left the school still come back for our meetings.
- We moved to leadership roles within the school by organizing and chairing the technology committee.
- When it looked as though the Social Committee was going to fall apart, we stepped up. We created a climate of enjoyment and inclusion that enhanced the school culture.
- We have continued to build the academic standards of units and to bring unusual events for staff and students, such as the “Human Library”.
- We created student clubs such as Library Monitors, the Students Read Book Club and Writers in the Making Club (a poetry writing club).

By the end of our first year, we had

- More than doubled our circulation.
- Involved all but three departments in class bookings.
- Watched the “gate count” go through the roof.

The library became THE new place to work, learn, and socialize. It was clear that the program and the facility had become a significant entity for all members of the school community.

Over the last few years, I have worked with the Admin Team on the Finance and Interviewing committees. With our sustained efforts in jump-starting the school library program and the visible impact of the lively program on the school, our administrator, about to retire, decided to invest in renovating the library to turn it into a Library Learning Commons. The awkward school library that we had found just a few years ago is now a lively and beautiful space – and a “location of choice” for district events.

We had started in the right place; the foundation to our program's success was the time and effort placed on building professional and strong relationships with our school staff.

DISTRICT NARRATIVES: THE LLC EXPERIENCE IN SURREY AND PRINCE GEORGE

Some BC school districts are excellent examples of support for and implementation of the *Pro-Active* transformational model that builds on the work of the TL (professional capital) and the school library program. Compare the Surrey and Prince George district LLC projects with the important ways, described by Aaron Mueller, that the Saanich district has enabled LLC projects initiated by the Saanich Teacher-Librarians' Association. For a BC school district LLC policy example, see Kamloops/Thompson District #73.

SURREY SCHOOL DISTRICT #36: LLCS AS A DISTRICT INNOVATIVE LEARNING DESIGN PROJECT

BY SARAH GUILMANT-SMITH

Sarah and Lisa Domeier de Suarez are Tls whose work at the district level in Surrey facilitated the development of LLCs as important components of their district's support for school-based innovative learning design projects.

The Surrey School District's three-year support plan for school-based innovative learning design projects included a strong focus on Library Learning Commons. By 2014, district funding, targeted mostly to technology hardware and furnishings, but including ongoing staff development, had been extended to 18 secondary sites and 18 elementary sites, or nearly one-quarter of schools in BC's largest school district.

While each school community is at its own point on the program development continuum, the District priority has been to develop broad-based, shared understandings about the kinds of best practices outlined in this document, specifically about:

- Opening up timetables to the greatest extent possible.
- Creating "flexible" spaces with adaptable furnishings.
- Providing 21st century technologies and promoting responsible digital citizenship.
- Fostering climates of collaborative inquiry.
- Facilitating side-by-side learning and teaching opportunities.
- Curating diverse collections representing a variety of information formats.
- Acknowledging the central role of the teacher-librarian as an educational leader and as the key coordinator of the Library Learning Commons.

PRINCE GEORGE SCHOOL DISTRICT #57: LIBRARY LEARNING COMMONS AS INNOVATIVE LEARNING DESIGN PROJECTS

BY MONICA BERRA

Monica is the District Vice-Principal, Learning Innovations for Learning Commons.

[NOTE: The following is adapted from "Building a District Learning Commons—SD #57," by M. Berra. CLA Conference: Treasure Mountain Canada 3, Victoria, BC. May 30, 2014. Web.]

THE TEAM'S VISION STATEMENT

We are collectively combining our creativity, knowledge, and expertise to create a Library Learning Commons to meet the diverse needs of all learners.

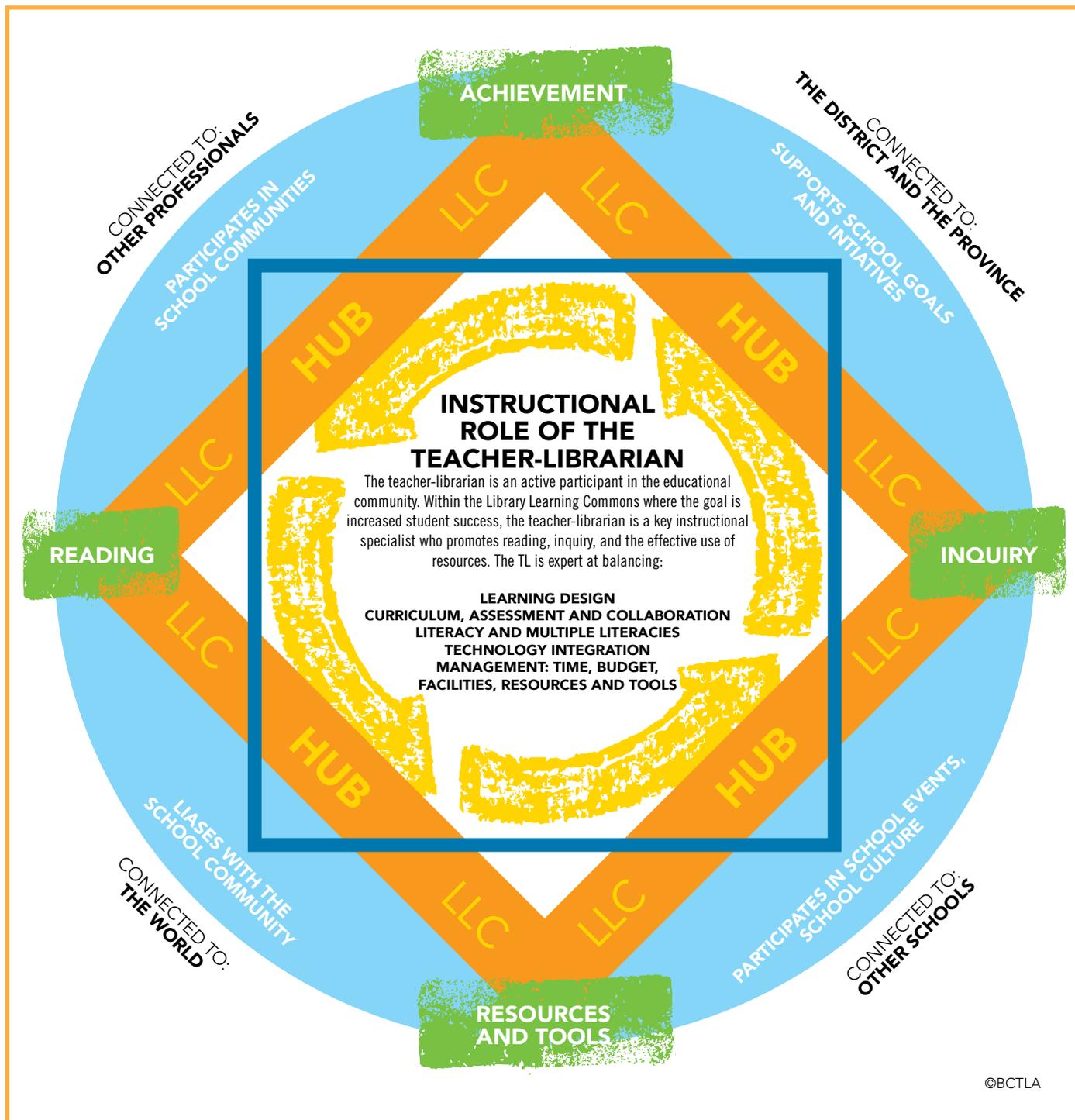
BUILDING THE DISTRICT LEARNING COMMONS

The District began the project by creating four new leadership positions for LLCs; with a focus on student learning, the District Vice-Principal and three 0.2 FTE District LC Liaison Teachers would build the foundations and support schools with the transition of school libraries to LLCs. With a Learning Team Grant, the Team would optimize its own professional capital: they would share expertise in inquiry, digital literacy and citizenship, and technology.

Systemic change, they knew, takes time, practice, commitment, and an open mindset. Real change happens after the initial excitement and confusion at the outset of such a project; it is a complex process of moving forward based on changing how we think about and respond within learning environments. In addition to understanding how change happens in a system, the Team was guided by four foundational principles:

- **CONTINUOUS INQUIRY** requires risk and is experimental.
- **LEARNING COLLABORATIVELY** is not the same as cooperation; conflict will occur.
- **REFLECTIVE PRACTICE** guides future practice.
- **LEARNING** by doing is essential.

APPENDIX 1: INSTRUCTIONAL ROLE OF THE TEACHER-LIBRARIAN IN THE LIBRARY LEARNING COMMONS



Within the busy school and wider educational and local communities, the strong school library program is the hub of learning; the TL, in creating a strong program, puts “learning” into Library Learning Commons.

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A PRIMER: K-12 LIBRARY LEARNING COMMONS IN BC SCHOOLS

READ THESE!

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LOOK AT THESE!

CHECK OUT THESE VIDEOS AND VIRTUAL LLCs

[Johnston Heights Learning Commons](#): TL Michele Hall's Virtual Tour of JHSS Learning Commons, Surrey School District #36

[Innovation and School Libraries Pecha Kucha](#): (7 Dec 2012) Gino Bondi at *The Changing Times, Inspiring Libraries Summit*.

"I'll Fight You for the Library" performed by Taylor Mali

[The Learning Commons in BC](#): BC Libraries (2012)

[Library to Learning Commons](#): Saanich SD #63, BC (2014)

[The Power of Reading](#): Dr Stephen Krashen, University of Georgia COE Lecture Series (April, 2012)

VIRTUAL LEARNING COMMONS: A SAMPLER

[BCTLA Learning Commons Summer Institute](#) (2012): resource page

[Fraser Heights Library Learning Commons](#), Surrey, BC.

Gladstone Secondary School's [Virtual Learning Commons](#): VSB.

Hamilton, Buffy J. [The Unquiet Library](#), [The Unquiet Librarian](#).

[Hastings Elementary School Library](#): VSB. TL: Frances Renzullo-Cuzzetto

Mission School District 75 [Elementary Learning Commons](#)

[Magee Secondary School Learning Commons](#): Vancouver, BC.

[North Surrey Secondary Library & Learning Commons](#)

[Prince George District Learning Commons Discovery Portal](#)

[SD45 Secondary Learning Commons](#)

[SD62 Virtual Learning Commons](#)

[Springfield \(Illinois\) Township High School Virtual Library](#)
See also [new homepage](#) featuring LibGuides.

[Vancouver Technical Secondary School Library](#): VSB.

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FURTHERMORE

This document illustrates how, as sites of equitable access, the concept applied in a Library Learning Commons is about so much more than technology, resources, and services; it is about how a teacher-librarian envisions a space that gives form to culture, community, new and bold thinking, geography, sharing, relationships, support, and found opportunity.

The shift towards Library Learning Commons models from the traditional school library has been an evolution born of the desire to develop more access, more technological literacy, and improved scholastic and literary culture. While the model itself has been growing, many teacher-librarians were already evolving in that direction; no name change required. The Library Learning Commons is the natural “next step” in the continuum of development of supported multidimensional learning environments focused on stronger points of access and service.

Declaring that a space is a Library Learning Commons is a clear and bold statement that this space, in the realm of school libraries and the faculty who manage them, is just the model best suited to supporting education in the 21st century and its new ways of teaching and learning.

— Alan Smith, Kelowna, BC

“Start small”. Those were the words of wisdom that my mentor, Kelowna Secondary School teacher-librarian “extraordinaire” Al Smith, shared with me in 2006 [Some] minimal changes have led to a massive transformation of the physical space and environment—cue a sigh of relief from school administrators—and all with very little financial investment, just sweat equity and a dash of passion. We view the growth and development of our school library along a continuum, and while we’ve come a long way, we do recognize the need to evolve and innovate as we emerge as a learning hub in our school community.

In our rural setting, with shrinking budgets and only 0.7 TL services, we have had to be creative to be effective in meeting students’ learning needs, doing more with less. We know, for example, that nearly 70% of our students live outside city limits, travelling up to two hours to school each day. To provide them with equitable access [comparable to BC students in urban areas, for example] to resources, we initiated a cooperative arrangement between the Kootenay Lake School District and the Nelson Public Library to increase our students’ access to both electronic and traditional media materials. By purchasing an “institution” card, students can order resources online and have them delivered directly to the school by the district’s courier services. In making this possible, we have shifted the school library towards the Learning Commons model, effectively increasing our “offerable” collection by 500%. BC public libraries in small communities are an important partner with LLC programs as they work collaboratively with us to support student learning.

— Jeff Yasinchuk, Nelson, BC