

FOREWORD

The future of school libraries and school librarians hangs in the balance. Every year communities are presented with a false choice: reduce the number of teachers in the classroom or lay off the librarian. A false choice because school librarians are teachers – their classrooms beyond the four walls of the library and extending into every classroom; indeed into every student's home with resources and assistance. All too often schools are making the bet on the short term, seeking to reinforce traditional classroom instruction rather than investing in inquiry and student-directed learning. At the federal, state, and local level our schools are doubling down on a model of education that seeks validation in test scores, and reifies practices set in place in the industrial age.

That is the story that we tell ourselves in conferences, on blogs, and in district meetings. It is clear to us the way forward. It is clear to us that librarians can unlock the potential of our children by unlocking their passions. We see the future of truly connected students who are literate beyond reading and writing and can move, as Barbara Stripling says, from knowledge to understanding. Yet that message will not escape the conference, nor meeting, nor our echo chamber of LM_NET and blogs unless we evangelize that message.

To evangelize is more than simply reciting the message. To advocate is to go beyond agreeing with a cause. To truly seek change is to live our own message. We, as librarians, must talk the talk and walk the walk. If you see yourself as a vital partner with teachers, you had better have teachers that say the same of you. If you seek to turn students into passionate learners, you must also learn – every day. You

must become nothing less than a radical positive change agent. It is not enough to create a haven of true learning in your library -- you must spread that environment throughout the school.

Horace Mann once said, “Be ashamed to die until you have won some victory for humanity.” Tall words to be sure. Who was Mann? Mann was a legislator, and the Secretary of Education in the State of Massachusetts at the turn of the 19th Century -- and a librarian. Many credit Mann with laying the foundations of public education in this country. When he talked about victory for humanity, he was talking about how we educate our youth. His victory was not won on a battlefield, or in some remote campaign, but in the classroom.

The future of school libraries and school librarians hangs in the balance. But the final decision cannot be made by administrators or school boards alone. It must be shaped and made by librarians in concert with, and frankly, at times in opposition to those who hold power in our schools. We must shape the future not to save ourselves, our jobs, or some sense of tradition. No we win this victory for our students.

School librarians have more research supporting their effect than any other library type out there. The researchers have done their work and shown that it is the presence of a certified school librarian test scores rise. The national and state associations have done their jobs. They have set the standards and done what advocacy they can. The real work here is now up to you. This great victory for humanity – the embrace of learning and inquiry over memorization and testing – will be won student by student, teacher by teacher, district by district. We have examples: now we must have the

courage to leave the confines of the library and become new examples.

In this book you will read others views on the future and what concerns school librarians. These are the voices of the brave and the concerned. You must add your voice. If you read these essays and disagree, then disagree and suggest another view. If you read these and agree, then voice your support. If you read these and learn, use your learning and teach others. If, on the other hand you read these essays and voices and remain mute, you abdicate the future. Don't.

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