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Indianapolis and Beyond: Many Roles, Many Shoes
Special 10th National Conference Issue



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Knowledge Quest is read by building-level school library media specialists, supervisors, library educators, and others concerned with the development of school library media programs and services in elementary and secondary schools.

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Features

Editor's Note: This issue of *Knowledge Quest* features just a few of the presenters of concurrent sessions at the upcoming AASL 10th National Conference in Indianapolis. Complete program information is available on the official conference Web site at <www.ala.org/aasl/indy>.

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... And Gladly Would
(S)he Learn, and
Gladly Teach

Carol Gordon
cgordon@bu.edu or drgordon@cape.com

"Measuring Up" looks at assessment and evaluation—the strategic process of collecting, analyzing, reporting, and reflecting on data about programs and learners for continuous improvement.

Prologue

Heavy wooden bookcases filled with faded red, blue, and green library-bound books line the walls of the high school library. The card catalog, housed in a wooden cabinet perched on four long legs, occupies center stage, surrounded by large oak tables and heavy chairs. It is late autumn and members of the senior class of 1968 are gathering for the annual yearbook photo. They ignore the mandate, "SILENCE," prominently displayed on several black-and-white signs as they chatter about early college acceptance and financial aid. They expect to see Miss McNeil, school librarian, emerge from the stacks at any moment, tiptoeing with finger pressed against her lips. They think of her as keeper of card catalog and Dewey Decimal secret knowledge. A healthy collection of books and a well-ordered catalog are the measures of her success and no one expects her to teach.

Act One

Two years later. It is late autumn. In addition to books, the library shelves display a collection of filmstrips, 16mm films, and state-of-the-art projectors. This time when the senior class of 1970 gathers in the rear of school library media center for their yearbook photo, Miss McNeil is in the picture at center stage. Standards for School Media Programs placed her there, at the heart of the instructional program, in the role of teacher and curriculum consultant.¹ Experts have dubbed her teaching "the tool-centered approach." To Miss McNeil this means that if it's Tuesday it must be bibliographical dictionaries.

Miss McNeil: The first topic in our library curriculum is indexes. Today we will be learning about the *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature*. You will need to know about this index when you are looking for current sources of information, such as magazines, when you are researching a topic. If we look at the overhead transparency we can identify the parts of an entry. . . . You will have the remainder of class time to complete the exercises on your worksheet. At the end of the term there will be questions about the *Readers' Guide* on your Library Skills test.

Jamie (aside): Why can't I just look through the magazines in the back room and pick out what I want to read?

Tiffany: Miss McNeil, this *Readers' Guide* doesn't even have the article I want to read in it!

Tom: What does "BusWk" stand for?

Helen: Did she say we have to write a research paper? How many words does it have to be? When is it due?

Carlo: We have lots of magazines at home. I'll just use those.

Act Two

Eighteen years later. A microcomputer at the circulation desk replaces the card catalog. An automated library management system monitors checkouts and returns and generates overdue lists, bibliographies, and statistical reports. Students learn to search for library materials, which are gathered around four workstations in the center of the library. In the computer lab, located in what was formerly a special needs classroom off the library, students learn to program in Logo when it is their math class' turn to use the lab. The English teacher uses the lab for word processing as students learn to navigate through Claris Works. AASL has set standards

Carol Gordon is Head
of the Educational
Resources Library at
Boston University.

for school library media programs that factor in the educational issues of the day. This document urges librarians:

... to ensure that students and staff are effective library users of ideas and information ... to provide intellectual access to information through systematic learning activities which develop cognitive strategies for selecting, retrieving, analyzing, evaluating, synthesizing, and creating information at all age levels and in all curriculum content areas.²

Miss McNeil knows that worksheets and overhead transparencies will not lead her students to cognitive strategies. Her worksheets, filled with sensible exercises in location and retrieval of information, now seem naïve attempts at active learning. Scores of skills, such as deciphering periodical codes, have become anachronistic. Her traditional paper and pencil tests are simplistic and inaccurate measures of complex thinking processes.

She knows that implicit in Information Power is a paradigm shift. Rather than a warehouse of answers, she is beginning to think of her library as a learning laboratory that generates questions for student investigations. Her teaching method is called inquiry learning:

... a complex process that includes formulating a problem or question, searching through and/or collecting information to address the problem or question, making sense of that information, and developing an understanding of, point of view about, or answer to the question.³

In order to manage this complex process called "research," Miss McNeil knows that her students need structure to help them through the information search process.

Miss McNeil: Let's look at the questions you have brought to the library today. . . .

"How old is planet Earth?" "How does the Internet work?" "How does music use mathematics?" We are going to find resources that will lead us to more questions and eventually, to good answers. We will use a "pathfinder approach" to make our way through different kinds of resources.⁴ We will start with encyclopedias and advance to other reference books, nonfiction books from the circulating shelves of the library, and periodicals. In order to locate the books we need, we will learn how to search the library catalog. For the next three days we will locate and read about our questions so that we can plan our research. Today we are going to practice Boolean searching in the library catalog and compile a working bibliography of books that may be useful in our research. The packet you have received includes diagrams that illustrate how the words "and" and "or" and "not" work when they are used with your search terms. At the end of these three days you will write a proposal for your research, which will include: (1) three subquestions for your major research question; (2) five key words that are good search terms for your topic; (3) a working bibliography of titles and citations from resources you found helpful; and (4) a statement of difficulties you think you will encounter and where you will go for help.

Ruth: How do I start searching for my topic if I don't know anything about it?

Joseph: Suppose I want to change my topic. Do I have to do another proposal?

Maria: How come most of the books that the computer found don't answer my question?

Carlo: We have lots of books at home. I'll just use those.

Act Three

Ten years later. The library media center is equipped with a bank of computers that have Internet access and CD-ROM drives. Miss McNeil works with teachers to design projects that emphasize information literacy standards as well as academic content. Inquiry learning and investigative methods

have pointed to how students would best learn. But how would Miss McNeil know whether they had learned it, and to what extent they have learned it? Information Power: Building Partnerships for Learning advocated assessment as:

an integral part of the information literacy standards for student learning that encourages continual examination of both teaching and learning for improved student performance.⁵

The concept of authentic assessment challenged the validity of the exclusive use of traditional assessment techniques, such as paper and pencil tests.⁶

Scene 1

The social studies classroom

Mr. Brandt: Today we will go to the library and research the Middle Ages. Miss McNeil will explain your packets, which contain graphic organizers and concept maps that will help you collect information that describes how people lived during this era. You will use your notes to write a journal from the point of view of a twelve-year-old who is the son or daughter of a medieval person. We will have a lottery to determine the identity of your medieval family. Mrs. Jones and I will assess your journal entries using a writing rubric that we will review tomorrow. This will be 50 percent of your grade.

Scene 2

The English classroom

Mrs. Jones: To help you to write your journal in Mr. Brandt's class, we will visit the library next week to choose novels that take place in the Middle Ages. These novels can be models for your journal. You will use guiding questions to help you pay attention to the elements of historical fiction and to details that make the story credible and historically accurate. Miss McNeil will show you how to search for a fiction book in the library catalog and how to retrieve the books from the library shelves. We will use the writing process to

write the journals and they will be assessed using the writing rubric we have been using this year.

Scene 3

The library

Miss McNeil: Your work as a researcher is just as important as the journal you will be writing. I will be assessing three items of your work: (1) your footnotes in your journals that describe how you did your research, the resources you used, what problems you encountered and how you solved them; (2) graphic organizers that contain your notes and a bibliography chart of your sources of information; and (3) your search logs. I will use a checklist and point system to assess these three items, which are worth 50 percent of your grade.

Janet: I don't think I like the idea of handing in my notes for a part of my grade. I guess I won't be copying word-for-word from the books I use.

Kim: Why can't I just go on the Internet to find everything I need?

Carlo: I think I'm going to use the library for this project.

Epilogue

Miss McNeil and the teachers and students with whom she works enjoy the project-resource-based learning that links information literacy with academic learning. "Could we have done it differently?" thought Miss McNeil. "How could we have done it better?" She decided to talk with Mr. Brandt and Mrs. Jones.

Miss McNeil: Thanks for meeting with me during our lunchtime for this "post

mortem" session on the Middle Ages Project.

Mrs. Jones: I'm glad we can talk about this. I noticed that students had difficulty using the style sheet to cite sources.

Mr. Brandt: Yes, they also didn't use quotations very well to elaborate or illustrate a point.

Mrs. Jones: Let's make a note of the need for some direct instruction on quotation.

Miss McNeil: I will be happy to keep notes about these changes so that we can refer to them next year when we meet to plan the unit. I also noticed that students who researched knights and tradesmen had plenty of sources but those who were collecting information on the life of a daughter of the lord of the manor and the son of a miller had difficulty. I will order books and search for Internet sites that will fill in these gaps.

Mr. Brandt: I think we need more books that are written on a middle school level for my special needs students.

Mrs. Jones: I'm glad you mentioned that. I think we need to revise the packet and adapt the assignment for ESL and special needs students.

Miss McNeil: Why don't we write a questionnaire that our students can complete at the end of the unit next year so that we have their input for revisions?

Mrs. Jones: Let's ask them whether they had adequate library resources and enough time to complete the project.

Miss McNeil: I would be interested to know whether they thought they had enough help and if they felt well-prepared for information searching.

Mr. Brandt: We could share the data we collect from these questionnaires with our stu-

dents and spend some class time talking about the assignment and assessments.

Miss McNeil: This would give us the chance to be role models as we research the unit we designed as our students are researching their topics.

Mrs. Jones: If we expect students to become their own best critics using authentic assessments, shouldn't we, as teachers, become our own best critics too?" ●

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