



# Manifesto for 21st Century School Librarians

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A couple of summers back a young school librarian, fresh out of library school, asked a very honest question at one of our state retreats:

*We're all doing different stuff. The other school librarians I know are not doing what I am doing. Some maintain Web sites and blogs; others do not. Some have seriously retooled; others have not. In the 21st century, what does a school librarian do?*

Well into the 21st century, it is clear that the concept of *modern* teacher librarian practice is not clear. There is no textbook for what effective practice looks like in continually morphing information and communication landscapes.

What I know for sure is that if the Joyce who graduated from library school in 1976 (and again with a school specialty in 1988), heck, if the Joyce from the 2007/2008 school year, were to visit my library today, she would be stunned by the differences in my/our practice.

In the past few years many of us have re-imagined school library for learners using the array of new tools and abilities in front of us today.

And in my humble opinion some aspects of emerging practice are nonnegotiable.

**You know you are a 21st century school librarian if . . .**

## **Reading**

- You consider new ways to promote reading. You are piloting/supplying learners with downloadable audio books, [Playaways](#), [Kindles](#), iPads, Nooks.
- You share ebook apps with students for their iPhones, droids, and iPads and other mobile devices (Check out Gale's [AccessMyLibrary, School Edition](#))
- You market, and your students share, books using social networking tools like [Shelfari](#), [Good Reads](#), or [LibraryThing](#).
- Your students blog or tweet or network in some way about what they are reading
- Your desktop screensavers promote great reads, not Dell or Apple or HP.
- You link to available free ebook collections using such tools as [Google Books](#), [International Children's Digital Library](#) (See [ebook pathfinder](#).)
- You review and promote books in your own blogs and wikis and other websites. (Also [Reading2.0](#) and [BookLeads Wiki for book promotion ideas](#))
- You embed ebooks on your websites to encourage reading and support learning
- You work together with learners to create and share digital booktalks or book trailers.



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## **Information Landscape**

- You know that searching various areas of the Web requires a variety of search tools. You are the information expert in your building. You are the search expert in your building. You share an every growing and shifting [array of search tools](#) that reach into blogs and wikis and Twitter and images and media and scholarly content.
- You open your students to evolving strategies for collecting and evaluating information. You teach about tags, and hashtags, and feeds, and real-time searches and sources, as well as the traditional database approaches you learned way back in library school.
- You organize the Web for learners. You have the skills to create a blog or website or wiki or portal of some other type to pull together resources to meet the specific information needs of your learning community.
- You make sure your learners and teachers can (physically & intellectually) access developmentally and curricularly [databases](#), portals, websites, blogs, videos, and other media.
- Your presence reflects your personal voice. It includes your advice and your instruction, as well as your links. You make learning an engaging and colorful hybrid experience.
- You think of your web presence as a knowledge management tool for your entire school. It includes student-produced instruction and archived (celebrated) student work, handouts, policies, and [collaboratively built pathfinders](#) to support learning and research in all learning arenas. (Checkout [Pathfinder Swap](#) for examples.)
- You help learners put together their own personal information portals and [Knowledge Building Centers](#) to support their research and learning, using widgets, embedded media, and [personal information portals](#) like [iGoogle](#), [PageFlakes](#), and [NetVibes](#) and wikis and [Google Sites](#).
- You intervene in the research process online while respecting young people's need for privacy.
- You work with learners to exploit *push* information technologies like RSS feeds and tags and saved databases and search engine searches relevant to their information needs.
- Your own feeds are rich with learning content, evidence of your networking. You embed dynamic [widgets](#) (including your own database widgets) wherever students live, work, and play.
- You integrate dynamic interactive features in your library's website—Google calendars, RSS feeds, [delicious](#) bookmarks, Flickr photo galleries, online presentations, blogs, surveys, polls, as ways to interact with and teach students.

## **Communication and publishing and storytelling**

- You know that communication is the end-product of research and you teach learners how to communicate and participate creatively and engagingly. You consider new interactive and engaging communication tools for student projects.
- Include and collaborate with your learners. You let them in. You fill your physical and virtual space with student work, student contributions—their video productions, their original music, their art.
- Know and celebrate that students can now publish their written work digitally. (See these pathfinders: [Digital Publishing](#), [Digital Storytelling](#))

## **Collection Development**

- You expand your notion of *collection*.
- You no longer strive for the *standard catalog*, long-tail, just-in-case approach. In tight times, with shared catalogs and easy online purchasing, a just-in-time approach is far more effective. You build your own collection collaboratively, with an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the available collections around you.



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- Collection should include: ebooks, audiobooks, open source software, streaming media, flash drives, digital video cameras, laptops, tripods, RSS feeds, and much more! And we should seek effective, federated approaches to ensure these diverse formats and platforms are equally and seamlessly accessible.
- You involve your community in collection building using interactive polls and web-based suggestion forms.
- You understand that *library* is not just a place to *get* stuff, it is a place to *make stuff, collaborate on* and *share* stuff. Not a grocery store, but a kitchen!
- Your collection—on- and offline—includes student work. You use digital publishing tools to help students share and celebrate their written and artistic work.

## **Facilities, your physical space**

- You know your physical space is about books and way more than books. Your space is a *libratory*. You welcome, and create space for, media production—podcasting, video production, storytelling—producing and presenting.
- You welcome and host telecommunications events and group gathering for planning and research and social networking.
- You cope with ubiquity. No, you learn to love it. Ubiquity changes everything. In one-to-one schools, students may visit the library less frequently. In such environments, in all modern, truly relevant environments, *library* must also be ubiquitous. Library **MUST** be everywhere. Librarians must teach everywhere, in and outside of the library.
- You realize you will often have to partner and teach in classroom teachers' classrooms. One-to-one classrooms change your teaching logistics. You teach virtually. You are available across the school via email and chat.
- You know that laptops can actually walk back to the library for its space and additional resources in all formats.

## **Access, Equity, Advocacy**

- You are concerned about a new digital divide: those who can effectively find quality information in all media formats, and those who cannot.
- You are concerned about a new digital divide: those who have access to the new tools for creation and publishing and those who do not.
- You consider just-in-time, just-for-me learning as your responsibility and are proud that you own *real estate* your students' desktops and mobile devices 24/7.
- You grapple with issues of equity. You provide [open source alternatives](#) to students and teachers who need them. You lend flash sticks and laptops and cameras and . . . You ensure your students can easily get to the stuff they most need by using kid-friendly terms and by creating [pathfinders](#).
- You ensure that all students have access to readings appropriate for their differentiated needs and offer books in a variety of formats.
- You know that one-to-one classrooms will change your teaching logistics. You realize you will often have to partner and teach in classroom teachers' classrooms. You will teach virtually. You will be available across and outside the school via email and chat.
- You don't stop at "no." You fight for the rights of students to have and use the tools they need. This is an equity issue. **Access to the new tools is an intellectual freedom issue.**



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## ***Audience and collaboration***

- You recognize that the work your students create has audience and that they may share newly constructed knowledge globally on powerful networks. You help them see that they have the potential to make social, cultural, and political impact.
- You recognize that learners may share their ideas and participate in dialogs beyond the walls of the library or classroom.
- You exploit *the cloud* as a strategy for student collaboration, sharing and publishing.
- You share with students their responsibilities for participating in social networks.
- You see teleconferencing tools like Skype as ways to open your library to authors, experts, book discussion, debates, and more. Consider starting by examining [Skype an Author Network](#)
- You use new tools for collaboration. Your students create together, They synthesize information, enhance their writing through peer review and negotiate content in blogs and wikis and using tools like [GoogleDocs](#), [Flickr](#), [Voicethread](#), [Animoto](#) and a variety of other [writing](#) or [mind mapping](#) and [storytelling](#) tools.
- You help students create their own networks for learning and extracurricular activities.

## ***Copyright, Copyleft and Information Ethics***

- You teach students to care about their own digital footprints—and monitor them using [people search tools](#).
- You encourage students to develop academic—NOT *invisible*—digital footprints.
- You teach students about norms for appropriate behavior in wikis and blogs.
- You model respect for intellectual property in a world of shift and change. You encourage and guide documentation for media in all formats.
- You lead students to Web-based [citation generators](#) and note-taking tools to guide them in these efforts.
- You recognize and lead students and teachers to the growing number of [copyright-friendly or copyleft portals](#).
- You understand [Creative Commons](#) licensing and you are spreading its gospel.
- You encourage learners to apply Creative Commons licenses to their own creations.
- You are revising and expanding your notion of Fair Use in line with the [Code of Best Practices in Fair Use for Media Literacy Education](#).
- You say “yes” a lot more. You know that in their creative remixes and mash-ups, students may use the copyrighted works of others in their own work without asking permission under certain conditions. You are discussing *transformativeness* with students and faculty. (See [The Cost of Copyright Confusion for Media Literacy](#) and [Fair use and transformativeness: It may shake your world](#))
- You use a tool for reasoning whether a proposed use is Fair Use. ([Tool for reasoning Fair Use.pdf](#))
- You ask students to ask these two questions when they are using the copyrighted work of others in their own media:
  - Did the unlicensed use *transform* the material taken from the copyrighted work by using it for a different purpose than that of the original, or did it just repeat the work for the same intent and value as the original?
  - Was the material taken appropriate in kind and amount, considering the nature of the copyrighted work and of the use? (From the [Code](#) of Best Practices in Fair Use for Media Literacy Education)



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## ***New Technology Tools***

- You consider iPods and iPhones and iPads learning tools and storage devices and reference sources. You know that when you interrupt a student she might be in the middle of a chapter, recording a podcast, transferring data, taking audio notes. You establish classroom or library academic guidelines and norms for their use during the school day.
- You know this is only the beginning of social networking. Students will get to their Facebook accounts through proxy servers and their mobile devices despite any efforts to block them. You plan educationally meaningful ways to incorporate student excitement (and your own) for social networking. You establish classroom or library academic guidelines and norms for their use during the school day.
- You consider your role as info-technology scout. You look to make “learning sense” of the authentic new information and communication tools used in business and academics. You figure out how to use them thoughtfully and you help classroom teachers use them with their classes.

## ***Professional Development and Professionalism***

- You seek professional development that will help you grow even if it is not offered by your school district. Even if you don't get PD credit. You can't “clock” these hours.
- You build your own personal/professional learning network using social networking tools
- You guide your teacher colleagues in setting up their own professional learning networks.
- You read both edtech journals and edtech blogs, not just the print literature of our own profession.
- You follow selected educators, experts, authors, etc. with microblogging apps like [Twitter](#)
- You use Twitter to mine realtime chat about your professional interests. You use hashtags like #tlchat and #edchat
- You learn by visiting the webcast archives of conferences you cannot attend. (For instance, [ISTE](#))
- You share your new knowledge with others using social bookmarking tools like [Delicious](#) and [Diigo](#).
- You set up feed readers to push the blog of experts and educators you respect to you on a regular basis.
- You join a [Ning](#) or other social network for instance:
  - [Classroom20NingTeacherLibrarianNing](#)
  - [English Companion](#)
  - [NCTE Conference Ning](#)
  - [ISTE Ning](#)
  - [Future of Education](#)
- You are contributing to the development of a new *brand* for our profession. When your students move on to the next library, they are going to expect visionary service and instruction and caring, helpful relationships.

## ***Teaching and Learning and Reference***

- You are figuring out how to be present for your learners and teachers 24/7, at the point of the information, research or communication need. Ubiquity changes everything. With computers in every classroom and every home, heck with computers in every pocket, how are you going to share your wisdom and collaborate?
- You understand that learning can (and should) be playful.
- You understand that learning should be authentic.
- You understand that learning can be multi-modal, media-rich, customized to the needs of individual learners.
- You know the potential new technologies offer for interaction—learners as both information consumers and producers. You understand that in this world learners have the power to create and share knowledge.



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- You are concerned that, when it matters, your students move beyond information *satisficing*. They make solid information decisions.
- You are concerned that students learn to evaluate, to triangulate information in all media formats. We must guide them in an increasingly complex world, to make information decisions, to evaluate all their information choices, including books, blogs, wikis, streamed media, whatever comes next.
- You understand that exploration and freedom are key to engaging students in a virtual environment to promote independent learning
- You are concerned and excited about what you can do that Google or Wikipedia cannot. What customized services and instruction will you offer that will not be *outsourced to Bangalore*?
- You continually share new understandings of searching, and evaluation, and analysis and synthesis, and digital citizenship, and communication, integrating and modeling our new standards, dispositions and common beliefs.
- You know the potential new technologies offer for interaction—learners as both information consumers and creative information producers.
- You ensure that the library provides an independent learning environment that connects students and teachers in a social, digital, community.

## ***Into the Future (acknowledging the best of the past)***

- You unpack the good stuff you carried from your 20th century trunk. Rigor, and inquiry, and high expectations, and information and media fluency matter no matter what the medium. So do excitement, engagement, and enthusiasm.
- You lead. And you look ahead for what is coming down the road. You continually scan the landscape. As the information and communication landscapes continue to shift, do you know where you are going? You plan for change. Not for yourself, not just for the library, but for the building, for your learners.
- You see the big picture and let others see you seeing it. It's about learning and teaching. It's about engagement. If you are seen only as the one who closes up for inventory, as the book chaser, and NOT as the CIO, the inventor, the creative force, you won't be seen as a big picture person.
- You continue to retool and learn.
- You represent our *brand* (who the teacher-librarian is) as a 21st century information professional. What does the information professional look like today? Ten years from today? If you do not develop strong vision, your vision will be usurped by the visions of others. You will not be able to lead from the center.
- You enjoy what you do and let others know it. It's always better when you do what you love. (If you don't love this new library world, find something else to do.)
- You continue to consider and revise your vision and feed it with imagination. Think outside the box. Heck, there is no box!

*This modest “manifesto” describes my idea what today’s practice **ought** to look like. In a [blog post](#), a little while back I pondered the flip side of that young librarian’s question.*

*What modern practice looks like also has a lot to do with what it **doesn’t** look like.*

Here’s a list of things I believe teacher librarians should **unlearn**:

1. That the little things really matter to those we serve and teach. (For instance, whether or not we decide to shelve Mc and Mac together.)
2. That you should annually close a library for inventory.
3. That Boolean logic is the best search strategy since sliced bread.
4. That Wikipedia is bad, or less-than-good, in almost every context.
5. That databases are the only online sources with value and credibility.



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6. That having a web presence, no—that having a really good and really useful web presence—is optional.
7. That someone else is exclusively or ultimately responsible for learning relating to information and communication and search technologies.
8. That the price initially quoted is the price you have to pay.
9. That vendors' have the final say.
10. That issues relating to Fair Use are generally going to be answered with the word no.
11. That no really means no or will continue to mean no when it comes to issues relating to access to the information and communication tools of today and intellectual freedom.
12. That intellectual freedom is a phrase connected to books alone.
13. That libraries should be quiet.
14. That libraries should be tidy.
15. That a library's effectiveness and impact should be measured by the number of books it circulates.
16. That your stakeholders automatically will know what you contribute to your school or your community's culture.
17. That a library is merely a place to get stuff.
18. That your collection should be just-in-case rather than just-in-time.
19. That someone else is responsible for your professional development.
20. That ubiquity won't change your practice profoundly.
21. That your library is bounded by its walls.
22. That your library is open from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.
23. That there is a box. (to think outside)



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*For ten years, she was the [techlife@school](mailto:techlife@school) columnist for the **Philadelphia Inquirer**. Joyce is the author of **Power Tools**, **Power Research Tools** and **Power Tools Recharged** for ALA Editions. (**PowerTools Remixed** is currently in progress.) She currently blogs for **School Library Journal**. Her [NeverendingSearch Blog](#) (now on the **SLJ** Web site) won an Edublogs Award for 2005, was nominated in 2008, and won again in 2009. She was awarded the AASL/Highsmith research grant in 2005. Her **Virtual Library** won the IASL School Library Web Page of the Year Award for 2001. She has won her state's PSLA Outstanding Program (2005) and Outstanding Contributor (2009) Awards. Joyce is active in ALA, AASL, YALSA, and ISTE and contributes to **Classroom Connect**, **VOYA**, **Technology and Learning**, and **School Library Journal**. Joyce speaks nationally and internationally about issues relating to libraries and thoughtful use of educational technology. She earned her doctoral degree in Information Science from the University of North Texas in August, 2007.*

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**NB: Submit translations and adaptations of this Manifesto to Ms. [Joyce Valenza](#) (Author) and Ms. [RoseMary Honnold](#), (Editor in Chief Voice of Youth Advocates) before publishing!**