

〈「学びの共同体をはぐくむ学校図書館」を考えるミニ・シンポジウム〉

## “Meaningful Inquiry Experiences for All Students: The Role of the Teacher-Librarian in Developing a Culture of Inquiry in Schools

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**Meaningful Inquiry Experiences  
for all Students:  
The Role of the  
Teacher-Librarian in Developing a  
Culture of Inquiry in Schools**

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I'm absolutely delighted to be here, and thank you so much, Dr. Nakamura, for the invitation and for all of the organization. I'm really excited to talk to you about inquiry and to give you a little overview of what we're doing

with *Focus on Inquiry*. I brought some posters because when you download *Focus on Inquiry*, you don't get the posters, but when you order the book in Canada you actually get a colorful poster.

A teacher-librarian in the 21st century needs to be a leader in the following areas:

- Inquiry
- Technology
- Resources
- Literacies

I work at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, and we have an online program to train teachers to become teacher librarians. Our program has been in existence online since 1996, and we decided that it's time to kind of rethink

what our program should be for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. And so, these are the four areas that we are focusing on in our new Master of

Education Program — inquiry, technology, literacy and resources. We also have a library school at the University of Alberta, but our program is housed in the faculty of Education and it's a Master of Education degree.

All of the students that come to our program are already teachers, are already practicing teachers, and usually they have been practicing teachers for 5 or 10 or 15 years. Most students are already working in a school library. Their principle has said to them please come and be the teacher librarian, and then they call me on the telephone, and they say, "I don't know how to be a teacher librarian, but I'm supposed to be one starting next week or next month. Please help." It is very different than people who study to become teacher librarians and then look for work. So that's, it's a very different experience.

Canada is a very big country, and we don't have good trains like in Japan, so people have to take courses online as they can't get to classes as easily as you could here to go to school.

### What is inquiry-based learning?

- ...a process where students are involved in their learning, formulate questions, investigate widely and then build new understandings, meanings and knowledge. That knowledge is new to the students and may be used to answer a question, to develop a solution, or to support a position or point of view. The knowledge is usually presented to others and may result in some sort of action. (p. 1)

This definition comes from *Focus on Inquiry*, and that was really our starting point for our work. And the one piece that we feel really strongly about is this last little piece at the end, that there's actually some sort of action. When you're done in

your inquiry, we want our students to then do something with it, to move forward with it. And sometimes we say social action. We also talk about social justice because many of the questions that students come up with require them to do something more if they're interested in the problem of homelessness, or climate

change, or greenhouse gases. Whatever their issue is they feel the need to do something more. So usually social action comes into it.

I can give you a good example. A friend of mine is a teacher librarian in a kindergarten to grade 6 school and she does a group inquiry. The grade three students were working on an inquiry project about what classroom pet would be the best pet to keep in their classroom. And then, the pet that they decided to get was the one that they actually went out to the pet store and bought. And so there was that kind of real world action involved in studying.

#### Leadership in Inquiry

- Adopting a model
- Collaborating with and modeling for teachers
- Teaching the process
- Collecting and providing access to the resources
- Assessing the process

The role of the teacher-librarian, in inquiry, in my opinion, and I think Dr. Harada will agree with me, is that you need to be a leader in your school, you need to be a leader in inquiry. And so, these are some things that teacher-

librarians can do to begin to be a leader in inquiry. And the first, I think, is to adopt a model. And it doesn't have to be *Focus on Inquiry*, it can be Carol Kuhlthau's model, it could be The Big Six, it could be something that your school works out together, but you need, I think, to have a model, and teacher agreement, and principle agreement, that you're going to use this model in your school. This model would be from kindergarten to Ph. D., but you need to have a model and agree to use it.

The next step has to be modeling for your teachers, because many of the teachers you will be working with will not have experienced any sort of inquiry in their own school life.

And we, in Canada, even though we've been working on moving

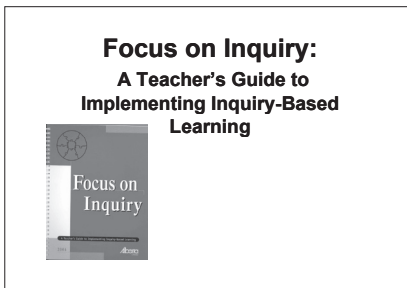
our curriculum to more inquiry-based or constructivist, a lot of our teachers have just never experienced inquiry. In my own life, I can remember I was twelve in grade 7 in Canada, and we did a project on pioneers. And the little lady who lived next door to me, her name was Mrs. Rivet. And she was about a hundred when I was a little girl, she was very old. And, we could do whatever we wanted, and so I wanted to learn about Mrs. Rivet and her coming to Canada. She was a pioneer, she came over from England with her parents when she was a little girl. So she told me the story of her life in coming to Canada.

That experience changed my experience as a student, changed my life as a teacher, because that learning experience, studying and talking to Mrs. Rivet, and asking questions and preparing that and sharing it with my fellow students. That was the most powerful learning experience that I could remember from my own elementary school and high school.

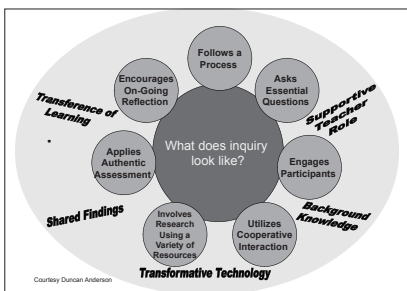
So, for teachers who didn't have those experiences like I had when I did my pioneer unit, we have to help them have those kinds of inquiry experiences. And so we have to teach our teachers the process of inquiry. To me that's the first step. And, I shared with Yuriko the example that, if we won 100,000 yen and could go on a vacation, how would we plan it, where would we go, how would we do our research, how would we present our photographs or our travel experience. So you need to provide teachers with inquiry experiences before they can work with their students to provide inquiry experiences.

And the part that we're really good at as librarians is this one. We're good at providing resources, collecting the resources, organizing the resources — that's the stuff that we do anyways. So that's just something that we continue to do.

The one thing we need to remember, though, is that when we're doing inquiry, our students are going to be searching for different things than we are maybe expecting. So in Canada, for example, the boys are really interested in *manga*. So we need to have *manga* in the schools, we have to find information about *manga* for the boys. The girls are always interested in horses, so you have to build a collection that's more broad than what you did before. You have to have a little bit more of popular culture, and you have to provide access to those things and that may mean providing access to websites, because a lot of the popular culture stuff isn't going to be as easily found in books. So your collection building is a little bit different, because you have to kind of imagine what kids are going to be interested in.



So this is what the document looks like in real life. This document was written as a second version. The first document was written in 1990; it was called *Focus on Research*. So *Focus on Inquiry* has very similar pieces to *Focus on Research*, without the Meaningful Question piece, and the Reflection on the Process piece — the middle piece was really missing because Carol Kuhlthau's work was just coming to us in 1993. In 1993, Carol Kuhlthau's book came out. So the Reflecting on the Process piece was missing, and it



out. So the Reflecting on the Process piece was missing, and it

was much more teacher-assigned research. So, you will do a report on pioneers, rather than inquiry where you have a choice.

Inquiry asks essential questions. Jamie McKenzie, who is an educational leadership educational change speaker, has written several books, and he has a wonderful website — [fno.org](http://fno.org). And he talks about essential questions as the most powerful questions we ask about who we are and how we live in the world. Those kinds of questions don't have easy answers or a right answer. What does it mean to be a good mother? Father? Partner? Why do we go to war? Why do we make good choices and bad choices? And, you know, how do we build peace? And how do we treat others who are less fortunate? And how do we define success?

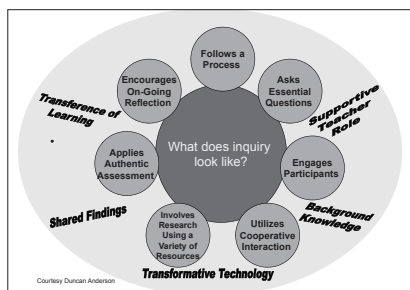
Those kinds of essential questions engage our students. Once we start doing inquiry, even though we may each have our own inquiry project, we are also learning from each other during the the process of inquiry. My friend who is a teacher-librarian does wonderful work with the primary kids. They do inquiries about bugs, or inquiries about ants. She does group activities when they're little, because trying to do an individual inquiry is quite difficult. So you need to model how to do inquiry with little ones. So they start doing a group inquiry, and then they might do a small group inquiry, and then as they get older, they might do paired inquiry and individual inquiry.

Children need to be exposed to all kinds of resources. So we're just not sending them to the encyclopedia; inquiry involves multiple sources and multiple perspectives, and that is what librarians love.

Authentic Assessment is key to our leadership role so that we can help others find ways to assess other than tests. So, if a student creates a website, then we would assess using design website criteria. We would use the criteria for to determine if it is

a good website. If a student does a power point presentation and a speech, then we would assess using what we know about giving a good speech, and effective use of power point. So it's real assessment. It's real life assessment. It's the kinds of things that they're going to do in their real world.

Inquiry encourages on-going reflection. All the time we are working with children we need to ask “What're you doing now?”, “What did you learn?”, “What would you do differently next time?”, “How are you feeling?” So all the time, they're reflecting on their experiences. “Oh this search worked well”, “This search term didn't work well”, “I found the encyclopedia a good place to start”. It is lots and lots of talking about what they're doing, what they're learning, where they're going.



The words on the outside of the diagram are the scaffolds that the children need. So if we start back over here, when we encourage on-going reflection and they do authentic real world learning, then they can transfer those skills into the

rest of their life, into other projects. So all of this reflection and real learning is transferred to their life, to their real world.

Students are sharing their information with others. The teacher isn't the only person who holds the information, who holds the knowledge. The children in your classroom become the information experts, in whatever topic they are learning about. And so this sharing of their information means that all students are teachers, and that all teachers are learners, because they cannot be experts in all of the areas.

And then, it's important that we provide our students with access to technology, but not just so that they can type something out on a word processor and print it out. We provide students with the kinds of technology access that they need to build websites, and use all kinds of web 2.0 tools that are available. We also make sure that those things are not filtered or blocked, so that they can create wikis or blogs or podcasts. This transformative technology is really important. It's also providing students with access to talk to experts using Skype or e-mail. So, the transformative technology allows us to have electronic resources, but it also allows us to interact.

Background knowledge is really important and you must expect that children will only come up with really great questions when they know a lot about the topic to begin with. So it's our job to, to provide them with some of that background knowledge.

Imagine you're doing a unit in social studies in grade four, for example, on the roles of people in our community. As you are building all of that background knowledge about the community, you can just keep a piece of paper up in the corner and when a student says, "Well I'd really like to learn more about whatever," you write the question down. And by the end of the unit, you've got all kinds of really amazing, important questions ready to go, for them to then continue on to learn more about the community.

And, to get to those really good essential questions, children need a lot of help from their teachers. One of my favorite teacher-librarians uses a great strategy. She calls it the "snappy" or the "stretchy" question. And, so the, the teacher librarian will do examples all the time with the kids. "What color is a brown bear?" And the kids don't even answer, they just do (clap clap). And then "How is our warming climate effecting the environment



of the polar bear?” And the kids go “stretchy”.

And, I did a research project working with 15-year old students, and from the first day that we met and started talking about the inquiry project until the time that they got to a good question, was 8 eighty-minute periods. So it takes a long, long time for kids to go from “I want to learn about World War II” to “Are there conditions in the world right now where we might have another world war?” This takes a long time and it takes a lot of teacher scaffolding work. And, so the nice thing about doing an inquiry after you’ve been working through a unit and developing background knowledge, is that you can help the kids as they go along to refine their question.

From library-based to  
inquiry-based....

- Changing view of library instruction
  - a source approach – 1960s – 1970s
  - a pathfinder approach – 1980s
  - a process approach – 1990s ...
- Re-thinking library instruction –  
expanding into instruction that supports  
inquiry learning

So, if we think about how things have changed; so from a library-based view of a school library program, to a inquiry-based school library program. In the '60s and '70s, we were concerned about teaching them how to use an encyclopedia,

how to use an atlas, how to use an index, how to use reader’s guide to periodical literature. It was a very source-based approach to what we did in a school library. And then, we went to a pathfinder approach, and so we prepared lots of pathfinders about topics, and then we gave them to the kids and they went off and used those. And then we moved into process approach. So Carol Kuhlthau’s work was really important in the 1990s. So, we were much more interested in the feelings that students had as they were going through a research process as well as the cognitive things that were happening during a research project. Our role is

much more of a facilitator and guide, and those are important roles.

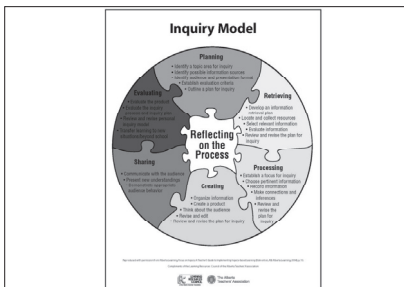
**Why use a model?**

- a scaffold for instruction
- a gauge for feelings
- a common language for teachers and students
- a guide for students
- a guide for monitoring

So why should we use a model? Why do we need a model like an inquiry model? Why do we need a model in our schools? And why will it help? How will it help us? And why will it help us move forward with our teachers and

with our students?

We felt when we were writing *Focus on Inquiry* that was important to have a model. And we felt it was important to help us with our instruction as teachers and teacher-librarians. We felt that it was important so that we could keep reminding ourselves wherever students were in the process, they have different feelings, and so that would help us. Having a model allows us all to speak the same language. “I’m working on my planning,” or “I’m working on my creating,” or “I’m thinking about how I’m going to share.” So the students and the teachers and the teacher-librarians all speak the same language about what they’re doing with their inquiry learning.



We use the model as a guide for students. One of my friends cut the puzzle poster up into pieces and laminated them. And then the kids will take whichever section of the puzzle that they’re at and have it on their desk. So that when she

walks around, she can say, “Oh Yuriko, you’re on retrieving. How’s it going? What are you finding? What are your search terms?” It helps you know where your students are. Or, if everybody over there is on creating, and you’re still on planning, then I can give you some extra help. I can monitor what’s going on really easily, because if everybody’s got blue on the corner of their desk, then I know everybody’s at about the same place.

**How inquiry challenges traditional approaches**

- It takes time.
- It is messy.
- Some do not perceive that it supports the current curricula and testing movements.
- It moves from teacher-centred, past student-centred, to a learning-centred model.
- The critical role of emotions in learning is acknowledged.

Change takes a long time, especially educational change, and, and inquiry challenges our teachers, challenges our parents, challenges our students because they haven’t experienced it before. It moves from teacher-centered, from

teacher giving the information to students, past student-centered, which we kind of went through in some schools where the students had all the choice and all the responsibility, and there wasn’t a lot of teaching happening. It was very student-controlled. To a place where it’s about learning — it’s about my learning as a teacher, a teacher-librarian, it’s about the students learning, it’s about the other students learning from you. It’s not about me as the teacher, it’s not about you as the student anymore, it’s about learning. It’s about learning in the classroom and it’s about learning in the school library.

Understanding and valuing the emotion that’s happening in learning is really important. And, there’s some work by Antonio Dimasio and he says that “We are not thinking people who feel, we are feeling people who think.”

### Creating a culture of inquiry in the school and classroom

- Inquiry focuses on authentic problems within the context of the curriculum and/or community.
- It capitalizes on student curiosity.
- Data and information are actively used, interpreted, refined, digested, and discussed.
- Teacher, students, and teacher-librarians collaborate.

### Creating a culture of inquiry in the school and classroom

- Community and society are connected with the inquiry.
- The teacher-librarian visibly models the behaviours of inquirer.
- The teacher-librarian uses the language of inquiry on an ongoing basis.
- Students take ownership of their learning.

If you want to create a culture of inquiry in your school, it is a change. In many schools, it's a change from the way they have been doing business, because inquiry focuses on real problems, authentic problems. And, those real problems and real questions can come from the curriculum or from the community or from the children's world.

A culture of inquiry uses student curiosity, capitalizes on student curiosity, so that their interests drive the excitement for learning. And rather than a textbook that's already been created, digested, organized, refined, and given to students, it's all the information that's out there, the students actually do the reading and the defining and the digesting, not the textbook company. So all of the really important work is left to the student rather than the publishers.

The key piece in a culture of inquiry is collaboration and that is a big change in schools, because many teachers went to school in a classroom with the doors closed and isolated learning happened. Collaborating with a teacher-librarian or with other teachers or with students, that's a real change for teachers to come to but that's the key for inquiry. You have to collaborate, you have to be willing to work with other people and to learn from other people.

The teacher-librarian has to be the chief inquirer. They have to model it, they have to use the language, they have to be the cheerleader. The teacher-librarian is the person in the school that can make other people want to play with them.

**Creating a culture of inquiry system-wide**

- Administrators (school/district) have a clearly articulated vision for inquiry.
- The vision for inquiry is carried forward despite competing pressures.
- Two or more champions promote the vision for inquiry.
- Resources and space for inquiry are readily accessible.

**Creating a culture of inquiry system-wide**

- Teachers collaborate and support each other.
- Teachers, students, and parents trust each other.
- Small, interdisciplinary teams of teachers work together.
- Problem-solving/investigative skills are valued in the school/school system.

And to build a culture of inquiry is bigger than just a school. You need to have people at the top, who believe in you, a few

**Five essential elements that make up a good learning environment**

- An intriguing question
- Guidance in helping students understand the significance of the question
- Engages students in higher-order intellectual activity
- Challenge students to answer the questions themselves
- Leave students wondering

that can see the vision, and they are willing to go straight forward with that vision, even though there are all kinds of other things coming in their way.

**Leadership**

- New book by Zmuda and Harada talks about "Librarians as Learning Specialists"
- Need to see ourselves as leaders in schools
- Need to have the same leadership qualifications as other leaders in schools - M.Ed. degree
- Need to look past our traditional leadership role in the area of resources
- Some leading thinkers are now saying that our real customers are the teachers in our schools

We have to have teacher-librarians, not just doing preparation time, but having a flexible so there is time for planning. One positive development in our schools is the advent of professional learning communities, where teachers actually work in teams to do their own professional

development. They are reading book, reading research and they're talking about teaching and learning. There has to be an expectation that people are going to work together and learn together and talk about teaching and learning.

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