Online School Librarian: Do You Qualify?

Rob Darrow
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What does an online school librarian look like? What are the daily duties of an online school librarian?

Throughout the United States, virtual or online schools have developed. It is estimated that by 2019, 50 percent of high school courses will be delivered online (Christensen, Johnson and Horn, 2008). At least 30 states now have virtual school programs and 87 new virtual schools have developed since 2005.   Some of the most developed online schools include the Florida Virtual School, VHS, Inc, and Michigan Virtual School.   Then there are the high tech brick and mortar high schools highlighted in various magazines such as High Tech Charter Schools in California, Denver School of Science and Technology, and Microsoft's School of the Future in Philadelphia.

It may surprise you to learn that not one of these aforementioned schools have a school librarian on staff nor a space called a library. It appears that in the future, at high tech schools, or in online schools, neither libraries nor teacher librarians are part of the equation. However, one exception to this seeming trend is the Science Leadership Academy in Philadelphia, a high school that opened in 2006 and has both a library and a school librarian.

The School of the Future thought carefully about the role of the library and the library media specialist in this new educational frontier. Microsoft's Mary Cullinane explains, "*When you use the word library, people immediately get the sense that I need to physically go to a place to access information or do research…in the world in which these kids are going to exist after they graduate, that is a ridiculous idea.*"

Over the next several issues of the Big6 eNewsletter, we will apply the Big6 to discover what an online school librarian might look like, and we want to hear what you think – your input will guide the future articles. We Big6ers are future thinkers, so let's seize the opportunity to define our role in online schools.

First, have a look at these online or "high tech" schools. While the differences between these virtual schools and traditional bricks-and-mortar institutions will certainly be obvious, think also about how these schools are *similar* to traditional schools, and how the school librarian might play a role in the student experience.

Florida Virtual School – www.flvs.net
High Tech Charter High School, California - http://www.hightechhigh.org/about/
Denver Science and Technology School - http://www.scienceandtech.org/
Microsoft's School of the Future, Philadelphia - http://www.phila.k12.pa.us/offices/sof/
Science Leadership Academy, Philadelphia - http://www.scienceleadership.org/

Then, think about the question in terms of Big6.

The **Task Definition** is: What is the role of the teacher-librarian in an online high school?

For **Information Seeking Strategies**, examples of how teacher-librarians have been integral for online schools would be helpful.

For **Location and Access**, consider looking at these sources to identify ways teacher-librarians can serve important roles in online schools:
- Matthew, Victoria and Schroeder Ann. "The Embedded Librarian Program." *Educause.* (2006) Retrieved June 1, 2008 from: http://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/eqm06410.pdf
- YouTube Videos:
  - Prototyping the Future - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TpFO_L_jA1c
  - Did You Know - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ljbI-363A2Q
  - A Vision of K-12 Students Today - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_A-ZVCjfWf8
  - Information R/evolution - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-4CV05HyAbM
- Christensen, C., Johnson, C., and Horn, M. (2008). *Disrupting Class: How Disruptive Innovation Will Change the Way the World Learns*. McGraw-Hill. ISBN-13: 9780071592062.

Looking forward to reading your ideas and examples. Please add them to my blog at: http://robdarrow.wordpress.com.

Links:
Watson, J.F. and Ryan, J. (2007). Keeping pace with K-12 online learning. Evergreen
        Consulting Associates. Retrieved March 1, 2008
        from http://www.nacol.org/docs/KeepingPace07-color.pdf.