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The Second Revolution: A Taxonomy for the 1980s

by David Loertscher

A new concept has emerged in the last ten years from the fields of educational psychology and instructional technology: instructional development. This is a systematic process of creating sound instructional modules or units for learners by a team of professionals that includes the teacher and a person knowledgeable in instructional technology. This new, process-oriented role is a natural extension of the role of the library media specialist. The person who knows materials in all the modern formats and who understands in depth the function of these materials in teaching concepts is a logical partner to the teacher who is a subject matter specialist.

Together, these two persons, assisted by technical, clerical, and volunteer staff, can create exciting units of instruction that will take into account the individual needs of the students in a particular school.

This "second revolution" is led by a small group of revolutionaries who are developing, creating, and carving out a new mission for the school library media center to fulfill. There is Don Ely of Syracuse University, who, together with Margaret Chiisholm from the University of Washington, has written about this concept. Robert Gagne and Leslie Briggs of Florida State have developed the concept out of educational psychology.

One of the problems of the new revolution is that it is described in such esoteric and jargon-laden language that some speculate that practitioners neither understand the role nor accept it. New attempts are constantly being made to explain instructional development to library media specialists and to train new persons entering the field in its components.

Some of those who have accepted the philosophical concept of the second revolution seem to be going through an identity crisis. These are the people who have learned the rudiments of instructional development but have not been able to practice it. They feel that their present program of services is already so pressing that



The LMC concept in action

there is little time to think about doing instructional development, let alone do it. So they feel guilty. They feel a gap between what they think they should be doing and what they are able to do.

The taxonomy—a new view

When one considers the best components of traditional library services, audiovisual services, and the new concept of instructional development, is there any way that all these elements can be combined to create a holistic view of this new role? Is there a way that we can offer various levels of service to suit individual needs in a school at a given time without feeling guilty? Such is the goal of the following taxonomy of the role of the library media specialist in instruction.

A taxonomy (do you remember Bloom's?) is defined as an orderly classification of concepts or activities. This means that each level of the taxonomy is a legitimate concern for a given type of situation and that a library media specialist may be operating at various levels of the taxonomy during a typical day and need not apologize for doing so. Each level has its

merits. Each level can be abused either by the library media specialist or the teacher. And every level can be practiced by every library media specialist in every single school at least once a year.

Let us explore the taxonomy, which consists of eleven successive levels of involvement:

- *Level One—No involvement: the library media center is bypassed entirely.* Here the library media specialist, for a logical reason, makes no attempt to be involved in a particular sequence in instruction. Not every unit can be plugged into the center at maximum usage at all times during the school day. Teachers who are experienced often collect their own specialized materials that serve very specific needs in an instructional segment and so require nothing from the LMC. A problem occurs, however, if non-use is a habitual pattern for either teachers or students.

- *Level Two—Self-help warehouse: facilities and materials are available for the self-starter.* Level two is basic to the complete program of library media services. At this level, the library media specialist has worked hard to organize materials and equipment for the browser. The center is inviting and attractive. Patrons can find the materials or equipment they need, know how to use them, and can check them

Students learn video production techniques



out for use at home or in the classroom. This level involves the selection, acquisition, presentation, and maintenance of the collection. Services at this level are the kind that no one notices when they are running smoothly, but everyone complains when things go wrong.

- *Level Three—Individual reference assistance: students or teachers get requested information or materials for specific needs.* Here the library media specialist assumes the magician role—the ability to know where to locate important and trivial information and materials from a vast array of sources, whether these be in the LMC's collection, in a neighboring LMC, from the district LMC, from the public library, from an academic library, or from a national network. It also involves reading, viewing, and listening guidance for students and teachers.

- *Level Four—Spontaneous interaction and gathering: spur-of-the-moment activities and gathering of materials occur with no advance notice.* During many instructional periods, a teacher and/or student will discover a new direction that is not in the instructional plan yet is too exciting to neglect. The library media specialist might respond at a moment's notice with materials, resource people, production activities, research projects, games, or any other activity that capitalizes on the unique teaching moment. These instant projects might last a few minutes in a single class or might grow to involve the whole school for a semester or even a year. Spontaneous services, however, might become an excuse for a lack of planning by teachers or turn into a babysitting service. For students, this spontaneous need and subsequent interaction can spark life-long interests and even direct vocational choices.

- *Level Five—Cursory planning: informal and brief planning with teachers and students for library media center involvement.* This is usually done in the hall, the teachers' lounge, the lunchroom, etc. (Here's an idea for an activity and new materials to use. Have you seen . . . ? Can I get you a film?) When the teacher accepts the library media specialist as an idea person and the specialist blooms in this role, all kinds of great things can occur. The library media specialist collects a bag of tricks

—ideas that have worked from teachers, other library media specialists, principals, conventions attended, professional journals, and from his or her own creative mind. The library media specialist knows the sources for help—people, materials, and equipment—and knows where and how to get them. Teachers learn to depend on the library media specialist to generate solutions and end stagnation. Similar services are given to individual students and groups of students.

• *Level Six—Planned gathering: gathering of materials is done in advance of class project upon teacher request.* When there is time to communicate with the teacher concerning the topic of an upcoming unit, the library media specialist can assemble materials from many sources. Materials from the LMC can be gathered before the “eager beaver” students have time to raid the cache; neighboring schools can lend their materials; public libraries can be put on notice of an impending demand; materials from other libraries, rental sources, and free materials from agencies and businesses can be assembled. Given enough lead time, the library media specialist can flood the teacher with materials. Gathering the right things at the right time for the right uses is no small task.

• *Level Seven—Evangelistic outreach: a concerted effort is made to promote the multimedia individualized instruction philosophy.* This might include teaching in-service workshops to promote audiovisual production and/or use of audiovisual materials, showing teachers the various uses of equipment and materials and explaining how a medium can suit various ability and interest levels, promoting the usefulness of high interest/low reading-level books, or encouraging the use of interdisciplinary materials. For students, motivational campaigns are conducted to involve them in media experiences. Here one thinks of a library media specialist who enthusiastically preaches the gospel of media through promotion, cultivation, stimulation, testimonial, recommendation, and selling—all with the concerted purpose of gaining converts among the students, the teaching staff, and the administration. As with other



The new technologies afford new ways to learn

types of evangelistic movements, the inattentive, the antagonistic, and the backsliders have to be contended with.

• *Level Eight—Scheduled planning in the support role: formal planning is done with a teacher or group of students to supply materials or activities in response to a previously planned unit or project.* At this level there is no media specialist involvement in goals or evaluation of the unit or project. With reference to students, the library media specialist may expend a great deal of effort working with individuals or groups of students in gathering materials, interpreting them, or helping to create materials for presentation. When we think of formal planning here, we think of individual or small group planning between the library media specialist and the teacher for at least a twenty-minute segment.

The same amount of planning can be done with individual students or groups of students. In this case, the library media specialist does not take the leadership role but is able to discern the objectives of the unit that the teacher or student has in mind and then suggests, integrates, and promotes LMC services that would fill the need. Detailed plans for LMC activities are drawn up, responsibilities as-



An artist-in-residence puppeteer visits the LMC

signed, materials selected, and materials produced or purchased. This level of involvement works particularly well in a team teaching approach, where the library media specialist is considered a participating and contributing member of the team. With students, the library media specialist is a facilitator, letting the student take as much responsibility as possible. We are looking at a servant/master role here, which of course can be very satisfying at its best but can also create situations where the library media staff can be exploited.

• *Level Nine—Instructional design, level I: the library media specialist participates in every step of the development, execution, and evaluation of an instructional unit, but there is still some detachment from the unit.* At this level of the taxonomy, formal planning for the unit begins far in advance and will require a number of preparatory planning sessions, plan-

The photographs accompanying this article are from school library media projects directed by the media services division of the Greenwich (Conn.) Public Schools.

ning while the unit is underway, and a formal evaluation at the end. Here the library media specialist assumes a leadership role, particularly if an interdisciplinary unit is anticipated. The teachers view the library media specialist, if not as a leader, at least as an equal partner—a partner with specialized types of skills to contribute to the unit. The library media specialist works with teachers to create the objectives of the unit, assembles materials, understands unit content, and participates in the instructional process. Projects and activities with students range from simple to complex but are designed for maximum learning and growth. Here we think of a team approach with neither partner of the team exploiting the other.

• *Level Ten—Instructional design, level II: the library media center staff participates in grading students and feels an equal responsibility with the teacher for their achievement.* The difference between levels nine and ten is subtle. Here, the students realize that the library media specialist is a coequal teacher not only as a resource person but also as an evaluator of student progress. The students know that the library media specialist's opinions will have an impact on the grade assigned to any test, project, or activity carried out as a part of the unit.

In-service teacher workshops



If library media specialists can take the best programming ideas they have now and integrate them into the instructional program, they will be demonstrating their worth instead of just talking about it.

• *Level Eleven—Curriculum development: along with other educators, the library media specialist contributes to the planning and structure of what will actually be taught in the school or district.* Curriculum development is more than just an invitation to attend curriculum meetings—it means that the library media specialist is recognized as a colleague and contributes meaningfully to planning. The knowledge of materials, sources, media attributes, present collections, and teaching/learning strategies makes the library media specialist a valuable asset as curricular changes are considered and implemented.

Working with the taxonomy

This taxonomic concept of the school library media center has two essential components: first, the development of a place in each school where a rich collection of multimedia materials and equipment is available and easily used by teachers and students, and second, a library media staff that has a direct involvement in the educational process.

As this concept has emerged since the 1940s, there have been many elements that are similar to public, academic, and special library programs, but the differences are significant. These differences are the result not only of visionary dreams but also of the demands of the general public on the public schools. School library media centers are being asked to make a measurable difference in public education or else face extinction. This demand legislates against the passive role of a self-help warehouse as an end in itself and requires active outreach into every classroom and into every student's life, as exemplified in the upper levels of the taxonomy.

As the new role of the school LMC has emerged, a number of our school library media specialists have become guilt-ridden. They have often seen the new role as an addition to an already overcrowded role. Some don't even

know a new role exists; others have rejected it. But many are experimenting and succeeding with the curriculum in ways that are giving them a most exciting and satisfying experience.

The first step in putting the taxonomy into practice is to accept the entire taxonomy as legitimate roles of instructional involvement. This means that each level is accepted as "good"—each is necessary to achieve a comprehensive impact on instruction.

Next, the taxonomy will require sound and consistent planning on the part of the library media specialist. We must realize that any level can become a rut and a dead end if it is so overworked that it crowds out services on other levels. Beware! Each level can also be used improperly and can contribute to poor instruction. The planning necessary to implement a total program needs time to develop, needs the support of an administrator who has been involved in the planning, and needs administrators who fully understand the concept and the potential of each level and who are willing to facilitate its fulfillment.

Teachers need time to think through the concept—to discuss it formally in order to understand the differences between traditional program services and services at levels that have been untried. Teachers need to understand clearly the advantages and the pitfalls of each of the levels and to help the library media staff achieve the best of each level.

There are many schools in which schedules, long-standing expectations, and traditional approaches lock the LMC staff into a narrow range of services to the exclusion of others. The taxonomy is just one way of re-examining our role and focusing on the very purpose for our existence. If library media specialists can take the best programming ideas they have now and integrate them into the instructional program rather than concentrating on enriching the curriculum or supplementing it, they will be demonstrating their worth instead of just talking about it. ☐