In This Issue . . .

School Library Impact
Learning Commons
Collaboration
Coteaching
Advocacy

SOUTH CAROLINA SCHOOL LIBRARIANS
MAKE SCHOOLS STRONGER

The SC School Library Impact study conducted by RSL Research Group reveals that SC school librarians positively impact student performance in South Carolina schools

Well funded school libraries, staffed by certified librarians, **EMPOWER** students with the skills they need to succeed

Statewide reading scores **INCREASE** in schools with certified librarians

Scores on standardized achievement tests **IMPROVE** in schools with certified librarians

Certified librarians collaborate with teachers and **LEAD** students to develop 21st century learning skills

teacher | librarian

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FEATURES

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Treasure Mountain Streamed Live!

David V. Loertscher and Elizabeth "Betty" Marcoux

An upcoming event will stimulate much thought and discussion on how to change from the "traditional" mechanics of the school library to that of the forward-thinking Learning Commons concepts. It is David Loertscher's proffessional retreat, Treasure Mountain, to be held the day before the AASL (American Association of School Librarians) conference which runs November 5- 8 in Columbus, Ohio. The articles in this issue are some of the great ideas that will be heard at this conference. For the first time, Treasure Mountain will be streamed live and available for all who wish to attend virtually. The retreat will be streamed at https://sites.google.com/site/treasuremtresearchretreat/.

Don't miss this important event, even if you can't attend it in person. Many of the authors of various articles in this issue will be present and speaking as will authors of articles in previous issues and many leaders of the profession.

In order to legitimize much of what is said, the lead article in this issue is the Phase 2 findings provided by Gavigan and Lance. While the study was done in South Carolina, its findings resonate with all school libraries and schools. Consider what it shows us about the perceptions of the teacher librarian in schools. Mueller offers a first-hand account of how she transitioned a traditional school library to a Learning Commons in Canada. This article offers significant information about how to create both a physical and virtual Learning Commons. Murray, an elementary teacher, shows us in her article what the Learning Commons means to her, her classroom, her school, her students. She talks about the issue of collaboration between a classroom teacher and the teacher librarian. Wolfe and Reuling take this work even further with an article that follows about how the collaboration between a classroom teacher and the teacher librarian move their "traditional" school library to something relevant and exciting to learning.

The Kaaland/Seasholes article is another significant study—conducted in Washington State—about the value of the teacher librarian. This article presents information about its value, and how to use it with advocacy work as well as lobbying. Washington has taken this to heart – they take this information forward to establish how meaningful a school library and its professional can be in the learning life of a student. Kachel notes the importance

The Virtual Makerspace

A New Possibility?

David V. Loertscher

From Consumption	To Creation
Read a book	Write a book
Play a game	Create a game
Use an App	Create an App
Listen to music	Compose music
Watch a YouTube video	Create and publish a YouTube video
Over to you...	

The excitement over creating makerspaces in school and public libraries continues to grow as the library transforms into a learning commons. However our patrons can get to our library learning commons, they can now find a myriad of things to do, make, construct, build, discover, and collaborate with others in a project-based environment. Suddenly, we are in a world of self-directed learning as opposed to a constant stream of young people just trying to compete. It is a breath of fresh air for students as they realize that discovery is actually possible at school.

As setting up a physical makerspace provides its own set of challenges, including expenses and even facility redesign and renovation, it often progresses at a slower pace than any of us would like. Master's degree students at San Jose State University and I would like to introduce to you a concept that can be implemented much more quickly while the physical space is developing. We call it the Virtual Makerspace.

We envision a virtual environment where students and adults can create, build, and invent and where all the other creative, informal, educational self-directed learning passions can develop.

You mean that it would be a 24/7 virtual space that is not part of an assignment? Something I would not be tested on? Something that might be an antidote to boredom? A place where I am in command of my own learning?

Unheard of.

In pursuing the idea, we discovered there already are a plethora of such apps, tools, or experiences—whatever you want to call them—begging for an audience of children, teens, and adult users. Best of all, many are free or low cost. We set to work developing templates that could be used with various grade levels and interests and that could work on a variety of devices. We thought that if you see how a template works, you will get the idea and then have the whole school participate in the construction of such a virtual environment. It would not replace the need for a physical makerspace, but it would enhance opportunities over and above what could happen and should happen right now.

To grasp the idea, we first did some thinking on a T chart. Here is a starter chart; you can add to it.

In the past several years, the students and I have created free Google templates for teacher librarians to replace their library websites with a Virtual Learning Commons. To access them, use the following links.

The general virtual learning commons template: at: http://sites. google.com/site/templatevlc

An elementary school virtual learning commons at: http://sites. google.com/site/templatevlcelementary/

A middle school virtual learning commons at: http://sites. google.com/site/templatevlcmiddle/

A high school virtual learning commons at: http://sites/google. com/site/templatevlchigh/

You can see one of the real virtual learning commons products created by Julie Chamers and team at: **http://tinyurl.com/n5tk46b** There are others if you google them using the term "virtual learning commons."

Since Julie and team's example, our class has added what we call a Design Hall to each of the templates above. These are the virtual rooms in which the virtual makerspace can reside, and we predict that by placing it there, it will draw traffic to your VLC site as a whole.

In the Design Hall, you will be pointed to a Symbaloo group of webmixes that are public. We have created webmixes for K-3, 4-6, 7-9, 10-12, by Interest, and Adult. Each webmix was created by a team of students. Then the entire group offered suggestions and revisions. When you find a webmix you like, you can first create your own and then transfer the tiles you like from our webmix, add some of your own, and you are up and running. We have included links to Google documents that explain the idea.

In order to include more tools/apps, we created "groups" of tiles like folders in Google Drive, under a category, complete with a link to an instructional sheet. Our categories include: coding, book making, music, video production, game creation, and 3D modeling just to name a few.

You should, of course, create your own categories if you like that style. You also can separate each grade level out into its own independent webmix rather than having all the grades together as we have done.
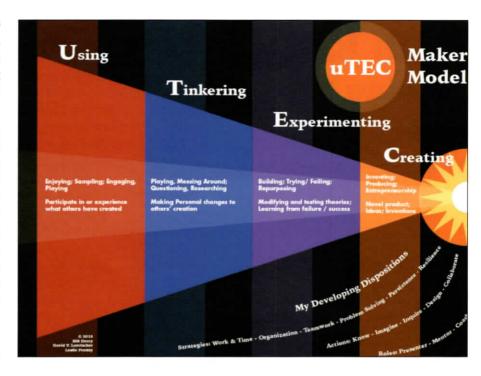
There is a growing chorus of experts writing and presenting across the world on the need for creativity and self-directed learning. Many schools respond by having genius hours connected to fab labs or makerspaces in the school, at the public library, or in the community. We find, however, that the concentration is on physical and hands-on learning and there is certainly nothing wrong with that. Add a virtual makerspace on top of the physical one and you have something that does not require a hall pass or a class visitation schedule to enjoy. And, groups of students can choose one or several tools, link them to each other and do some kind of independent project collaboratively as they simulate the real world of business or industry.

In your virtual makerspace, we recommend a wide variety of tools that range from easy to challenging for the target audience. It is all about choice that matches skill level or, in educational jargon, differentiation. While teachers might include the virtual makerspace in a "curriculum project," we recommend that this not be its focus. To connect formal with informal learning just might kill the latter.

In order to sell the concept of a virtual makerspace, we suggest that you print out a copy of the uTEC Maker Model created by David Loertscher, Leslie Preddy and Bill Derry at: https://sites.google.com/site/learningpostersgallery/

If studied carefully, this model, including the dispositions listed at the bottom, provide a pathway leading into the use of inventions and technology toward the creation of new ideas and inventions. Such an experience seems to be central if students of all ages are to prepare and compete successfully in a networked world. Working in a virtual makerspace can lead not only to personal skills but also to cooperative work habits that lead to the development of collaborative intelligence.

The secret to a successful virtual makerspace, we believe, is not to "build it for them." Rather, if they help build it, they will use it. Thus, for every webmix you create, you will want to have an editorial team of students helping, listening to friends, and searching for the latest fasci-

nating tools and apps out there. Yes, we know that the AASL committee on the best websites of the year publish an annual list, but many of those sites are geared at teaching content connected to the curriculum. Perhaps their focus is to divide into two sections. We have not seen lists devoted purely to creating, making, and discover, but no doubt they are out there.

One of the core ideas of the library learning commons is to honor the idea of the consumption of knowledge as our traditional role, but now to add a second and equally important piede: the creation of knowledge. We believe that this central idea will give new life to the library concept that has been squashed in many schools and in decline elsewhere. The most progressive in our field seem to be branching out beyond just a role for teaching the love of reading and the skill of inquiry. Perhaps the virtual makerspace is a whole new world of inquiry far beyond the writing of reports and term papers. After investigating the possibilities, what do you think?

For even more ideas on the creation of both the physical and virtual library learning commons, we recommend the following publications:

The Elementary School Learning Com- *mons* by David V. Loertscher and Carol Koechlin. Learning Commons Press, 2015. (available from LMCsource.com)

The Secondary School Learning Commons by David V. Loertscher and Carol Koechlin. Learning Commons Press, 2015. (available from LMCsource.com)