



Essential summer reading  
for professional development

# Summer Reading

DAVID V. LOERTSCHER

**E**ach summer we recommend a few titles to be part of your professional development activity to refresh your mind and stimulate your vision. In the past, we have recommended a wide selection from which to choose. This time, we very strongly recommend just three exceptional resources.

## STEVEN JOHNSON

WHERE GOOD IDEAS  
COME FROM

THE NATURAL  
HISTORY OF  
INNOVATION

FROM THE BESTSELLING  
AUTHOR OF *TECHNICAL  
MIND TO COMPLEX TASKS*  
AND *THE INVENTION  
OF AIR*

Where Good Ideas Come From: The Natural History of Innovation by Steven Johnson (Riverside Books, 2010, 326 p., \$26.95, ISBN: 9781594487712)

Before you read the short review of this book, I suggest you view Johnson's fabulous cartoon booktalk in the YouTube video cited below. You will find his TED talk about his book in the second link.

YouTube Video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NugRZGDdbPFU>

Ted Talk: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0af00UcTO-c>

Interest aroused? Why, you might ask, should teacher librarians be concerned about where good ideas come from. What is rarely known or appreciated in the school environment is that there are

only one or two persons on the staff who see across the school and have an opportunity to discern patterns and trends, to see mediocrity and excellence in practice, and to develop a sense of school culture as a whole. One of these persons should be the principal or another administrator. The second person should be the teacher librarian. Every working day, data about the school as a whole come into your head, and if you pay attention, those data

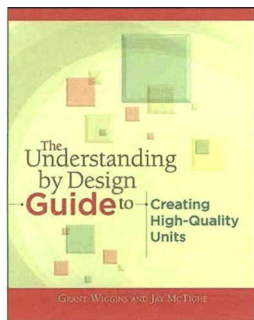
can be used to stimulate ideas for improvement. It is a role many teacher librarians do not appreciate as a source of leadership and power.

Translating the data that cross our minds each day into good ideas is a characteristic of creative leadership not taught in any library school. It can be learned, however, and that is where Johnson's book comes in.

Johnson scours history and use the art of storytelling to present seven ways to recognize and develop good ideas:

1. The adjacent possible – good ideas are ahead of their time and require certain conditions to be implemented.
  2. Liquid networks – many ideas develop in coffee house conversations, informal discussions, and networking.
  3. The slow hunch – good ideas emerge over a long period of time; something that has bothered you seemingly forever but suddenly the solution appears.
  4. Serendipity – by chance, you run into something that stimulates a great idea or solution.
  5. Error – all ideas are not created equal and many fail before the good ones emerge.
  6. Exaptation – taking an idea used for one solution and transferring it to solve another, different problem.
  7. Platforms – ideas stacked on other ideas that finally emerge into a solution.
- All day, every day, teacher librarians observe what is happening and face seemingly insurmountable problems and challenges. This book will help you realize that you have the capability of developing work

rounds, innovative interventions, and, most of all, recognizing good ideas in students and encouraging creativity wherever you see it budding. After reading this book, I spent an hour discussing it with a fine scientist. What a great think! Johnson is on to something. Something that will give you great confidence in your role.



**The Understanding by Design Guide to Creating High-Quality Units** by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe (ASCD, 2011, 121 p., \$26.95, ISBN:9781416611493)

Most teachers and teacher librarians are familiar with or have used the Understanding by Design ideas from Wiggins and McTighe for the past decade. These are general design principles of learning using backwards design ideas of planning, assessing, and teaching activities. In this volume, the authors revise their strategies in what they term UbD 2.0. Their revised template is in three stages: Desired Results, Evidence, and Learning Plan. In stage one, Desired Results, the authors include both the content (meaning and transfer) to be learned and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills to be mastered. In stage two, Evidence, they build in assessment measures both during and at the end (formative and summative) of the process. In stage three, Learning Plan, they develop the actual learning activities. In this last stage, the authors have designed their model for three different types of teaching strategies: direct teaching, facilitation, and coaching. This is an interesting dimension for teacher librarians who prefer inquiry rather than the narrow concept of direct teaching.

Almost half the book is devoted to the building of engaging goals and essential questions. In fact, they have tried to design the book as if the reader is engaged in a model learning experience.

We have spoken to the authors about two concepts which they have yet to come to terms with in their work. The first is the push into the wide worlds of information and technology. The second is The Big Think or metacognitive activity after the unit is over. (see Loertscher, Koechlin, and Zwaan's book about this concept. *The Big Think: 9 Metacognitive Strategies That Make the End Just the Beginning of Learning* by David V. Loertscher, Carol Koechlin, and Sandi Zwaan. Hi Willow, 2009, ISBN 978-1-933170-45-9; \$35.00.)

Why is this book in its very detailed approach to unit planning essential? For several decades, teacher librarians have been urged to be experts in co-planning and co-teaching learning experiences. It is an elusive goal to our profession, but it won't be if teacher librarians understand a technique like UbD 2.0 and can actively demonstrate that two heads are better than one. Teacher librarians who can demonstrate that, every time they are involved in the learning process, better results happen, will also demonstrate their indispensability.

You can probably only handle one chapter of this book at a time because you are going to want to have the details automatically engrained in your head rather than having to follow a very detailed list of steps. So, a chapter a day followed by

thinking and thinking and thinking would refresh your method of collaboration with teachers.

Andrew Churches, a New Zealand educator writes a blog about technology in education that can be viewed at: <http://www.open-education.net/2008/04/11/blooms-taxonomy-and-the-digital-world/> He also has done extensive work and thinking about technology and the revised Bloom's Taxonomy. His wiki on this topic is titled: Educational Origami and is at: <http://edorigami.wikispaces.com/> There is so much valuable information on the wiki, especially excellent concepts about technology, expect to take a few hours to read and think your way through it. For example, there is a fine description of the 21<sup>st</sup> century teacher and what a 21<sup>st</sup> century classroom might look like for the digital native learners of today. There is a great deal to use here in crafting vision statements, policies, and just plain thinking about technology and learning.

P.S. If you want to keep informed about important documents and other information, subscribe to David Loertscher's Twitter feed. The name is davidloertscher and these tweets end up on the <http://teacher-librarian.com> web site. We try not to fill your in-box, but Tweet only about significant items.

