You Know You're a

▶ **JOYCE KASMAN VALENZA**

Twenty-First-Century Teacher-Librarian If . . .

AT OUR STATE LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE this summer, the theme was paradigm shift. The goal was to think outside the box to build a new strategic plan for school libraries in our state. Early in the meeting, a librarian in her twenties asked a question about change. Her honest voice continues to resonate with me. Here is the essence of her question:

I am recently out of library school, and from what I can see, we're all doing different stuff. The other school librarians I know are not doing what I am doing. Some don't even know about the state databases. Some maintain Web sites and blogs; others do not. Some have seriously retooled; others have not. What should we be planning for? What does a twenty-first-century librarian look like? How do we know what we are really supposed to be doing now?

This young librarian's question got me thinking about how incredibly dramatic the change has been since I first got out of library school in 1976, and then when I had to do that Masters over again for my educational credential in 1988. Yet the changes occurring between 1976 and 1988, when the personal computer and automation were becoming ubiquitous in libraries, had nothing on the changes that we have seen in the last two years.

My reflection continued. Within a couple days of our state conference, David Warlick raised the question of library obsolescence in his blog. Colleague Kathy Schrock turned me on to a provocative document, **The Future of Libraries: Beginning the Great Transformation** (*http://www.davinciinstitute.com/page.php?ID=120*), by Thomas Frey, Executive Director of the Da Vinci Institute. He identifies ten key trends that "give clear insight into the rapidly changing technologies and equally fast-changing mindset of library patrons."

Much of what I am reading these days urges me to consider libraries and change. The public library blogs—Jenny Levine's **Shifted Librarian** (*http://www.theshiftedlibrarian.com*), Stephen

Abrams's **Stephen's Lighthouse** (*http://stephenslighthouse.sirsi.com*), and Michael Stephens's **Tame the Web** (*http://tametheweb.com*), to name just a few—reflect on the changes now labeled Library 2.0.

My personal vision is very clear. In school libraries, we can do a lot more for learners. We have a unique opportunity to offer customized, 24/7, just-in-time, relevant, and authentic service and instruction—but only if we retool. It is not an option but an urgent need. Teacher-librarians cannot expect to assume a leadership role in information technology and instruction, and we cannot claim any credibility with students, faculty, or administrators, if we do not recognize and thoughtfully exploit the paradigm shift of the past two years.

I began the following list as a blog post and it just kept growing. I welcome your comments and additions.

You know you're a twenty-first-century teacher-librarian if . . .

1. You ensure that your learners and teachers can access developmentally appropriate and relevant databases, portals, and Web sites. If teacher-librarians don't work toward this goal, we will contribute to the development of an *information underclass*. You are considering federated search solutions for organizing these growing resources.

2. You organize the Web for learners. You create signage and guides for new additions to your "collection." You are investigating the role of informal tagging and folksonomies in helping users to access materials. You have the skills to create a blog or a Web site to pull together resources to meet the information needs of your learning community. You consider moving your pathfinders to blogs and wikis, opening them to students and teachers for collaboration and comments.

3. You think outside the box about the concept of "collection." Your collection and your students' best resources might now

include e-books, audiobooks, blogs, open-source software, streaming media, wikibooks, and much more! You create guides and search tools for these resources.

4. You are thinking about the interactive services that you might provide online. You are planning to post your materials-suggestion forms, book reviews, and calendar online.

5. You partner with classroom teachers to consider new interactive, collaborative, and engaging communication tools for student projects. You think Web 2.0 for learners. You know the potential that new technologies offer learners as both information consumers and producers. You are exploring the pedagogical uses of digital storytelling, wikis, podcasts, streaming video, and student-produced learning objects as possibilities beyond paper and PowerPoint. You continually think about the best possible communication tool for a particular project and how you might use the new tools for teaching, practicing, and reflecting on information fluency.

6. You consider just-in-time, just-for-me, blended learning your responsibility and are proud that you own the real estate of one desktop window on your students' home computers, 24/7. You are planning learner-centered, learner-empowered landscapes and are becoming the knowledge-management center of your school. You collect and share the learning tools that your community is most likely to need and you post them in the most effective possible media formats.

7. After reading Tom Friedman's **The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century** (Farrar Straus Giroux, 2006), the bible for twenty-first-century change, you wonder what exactly it is you do that might be better done by **Google** or by Bob or Tiffany in Bangalore. You plan and implement customized services that will *not*, cannot be outsourced to Bangalore.

8. You consider your role as info-technology scout. You look to make "learning sense" of the authentic new information and communication tools used in business and academics. You figure out how to use them thoughtfully and you help classroom teachers use them with their classes. You invite learners to help you in this exploration.

9. You consider ways to bring experts, scholars, authors, and other classrooms into your library and your school using telecommunication tools like Skype and Internet2. You seek partnerships with local universities to help you establish connections.

10. You grapple with issues of equity. You provide open-source software alternatives and Web-based applications to students and teachers who need them. (Here's a starter list: *http://mciu.org/~spjvweb/opensource.html.*) You lend flash sticks and laptops and cameras and whatever else it takes to achieve digital equity.

11. You consider new ways to promote reading. You are exploring downloadable audiobooks. You are investigating lending iPods for e-books. You (and your students) are creating digital booktalks. (See examples here: *http://mciu.org/~spjvweb/movietrailers.html.*) Your literature circles meet with other classrooms around the country or world through telecommunications.

12. You are rethinking the concept of library space. "Library" may become less book space and more creative-production and experience-sharing space. You respond to the increasing need for group creative-production space—iMovie, podcasting, blogging. You recognize "library" as group planning/collaborating space, "library" as performance and presentation space, "library" as event-central for telecommunications and remote author/expert visits, while "library" continues as study/reading/gathering space.

13. You model respect for intellectual property in a world of shift and change. You share examples for documenting new types of media. You insist on appropriate documentation for media in all formats and recognize the growing number of copyright-friendly portals. (Here's a starter list from our Web site: *http://mciu.org/~spjvweb/cfimages.html.*) You understand the new, flexible protections and freedoms made possible by **Creative Commons** (*http://creativecommons.org*) licensing, and use its resources to find copyright-friendly video, audio, images, and more. You point to tools like *Get Creative*, a video describing the White Stripes' approach to sharing their music without intermediaries (*http://mirrors.creativecommons.org/getcreative*), to help explain the new licensing concepts to learners, educators, and content creators.

14. You know that now is only the beginning of social networking. Students will get to their **MySpace** accounts through proxy servers despite any efforts to block them. You plan educationally meaningful ways to incorporate student excitement (and your own) for social networking.

15. You recognize your iPod as *way more* than a tool for exercising to music or passing time by listening to music. (Contributed by Catherine Nelson, Northside Elementary School of the Arts, Rock Hill, South Carolina.)

16. You read both edtech journals and edtech blogs, not just the print literature of our own profession. Blogs publish professional news and new strategies before they can travel through the traditional publishing process; they are essential strategies for keeping up as a professional.

17. You seek professional development that will help you grow even if you cannot get official credit for that growth. Learning happens between annual conferences. You attend conferences without traveling—by viewing and listening to keynotes online. You use tools like David Warlick's **Hitchhikr** to visit conferences that you cannot physically attend.

18. You do not take "no" for an answer when a network administrator or technology director refuses to support a pedagogically sound activity. You seek a way to get to "yes" if learners will benefit.

19. You are flexible and recognize that your growth as a professional cannot stop and that you may learn from unexpected others. You ask your students to help you master additional skills. You engage learners in helping to create learning materials. (Our students began creating learning objects to share with fellow learners this year. See *http://mciu.org/~spjvweb/infoskillsvideo.html*. Much more to come.)

20. Even if you are a *digital immigrant*, you learn the language of *digital natives* AND you consider what you want to unpack from the trunk that you carried from the old world. Rigor and information fluency matter, no matter the medium. So do excitement, engagement, and enthusiasm.

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