Handouts for:

**E-Books, E-Learning, E-Gads!**
**How Librarians Can Avoid Extinction**

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c. 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table of Contents</th>
<th>p.</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Library in Your Hand: The Impact of E-Books on the Library and Librarian</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is Educational Climate Change Ahead?</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter from the Flat World Library Corporation</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All handouts can be downloaded from &lt;www.doug-johnson.com/presentations&gt;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Synopsis for E-books, E-Learning, E-Gads!**
The practical e-book, already here in many forms, will have a significant impact on our schools, libraries, and our profession. Learn what a real e-book might contain, based on current products and trends along with strategies for staying relevant as a physical presence in our schools and students’ lives. For warned is for armed!
Activities

My personal e-book must have:

(Edward De bono?) Activity

Imagine a situation in which every student and teacher in your school has a practical, powerful e-book with access to nearly an unlimited number of books and other educational resources through it. Using the form below, jot down some ideas about what may be good, what may be bad, and what is interesting about this scenario. (You must have some ideas in each column.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What’s good?</th>
<th>What’s bad?</th>
<th>What’s interesting?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A Library in Your Hand: The Impact of E-Books on the Library and Librarian

School Library Journal, November 2004

The technology of "the book" has already seen a number of transitions in its long history: from clay to wax to papyrus to vellum to cloth to paper, stored as tablets or scrolls or folios or books, bound in horn or leather or cloth or paper. With each metamorphosis, the role of the librarian has changed – from scribe to guard to copyist to archivist to selector to teacher.

I, for one, am looking forward to the next iteration of “the book” when well-designed silicon replaces cellulose as the means for publishing. Our current paper books often rapidly disintegrate. They go out of print. They are expensive to produce, bulky to store, and back breaking to move. Access to them is limited because of their very physical nature. While I am sentimental about the associative memories particular books evoke, it is really the excitement of the story, the perspective of the author, or the lyricism of the language to which I am reacting when I say, “I love books.”

The impact of the wide-scale use of e-books will be a major who-moved-my-cheese event for our profession and it will happen within many of our working lives. What might a genuinely useful e-book look like and what ramifications might such a device might have on the profession of school librarian? For each prediction, I have footnoted a current product or event that foreshadows it.

The e-book of 2015 (1)
The digital book in its mature form will have many advantages over that of the now defunct Sony Bookman, cumbersome, expensive laptop, or handheld device with its tiny screen. It will be a new kind of book with which one can cuddle up in bed, take to the beach, or carry on a bicycle. From reports of developing technologies, one may safely conclude a true e-book:

• **Will be highly portable, durable, and customizable.** Mine will be a slim padded six by nine inch notebook bound in calfskin weighing ounces, not pounds. (2) It will run on a watch battery that needs replacing once every three years, supplemented by a solar panel (3). It will have high-speed wireless connections to the Internet and peripheral devices, such as projectors, printers and earphones. (4) All its memory is static and the screen is made of strong, semi-flexible plastic. (5) A bump or drop may scuff, but not break the device. Special models for students needing adaptive technologies will be available.

• **Will offer a screen with higher resolution than the printed page.** Open my e-book and the left hand side will show a softly glowing, backlit, glare free screen that can switch from landscape to portrait layout. (6) My wife can sleep while I read in bed. My page's background would be a rich ivory color with the resolution of paper and be flicker-free. The text's font can be changed to suit one's personal taste and the size adjusted for aging eyes. A tap will bring up a dictionary definition and pronunciation for any word, and in many cases, an illustration. Automatic translation of texts in languages other than English is instantaneous. (7) The other side of the notebook will hold input and output devices of my choice - keyboard, track pad, stylus, speaker, microphone, and camera.

• **Will be fully multimedia.** The page displays full color graphics, digital video and offers text to speech in a natural voice. (I’ll download James Earl Jones and Kathleen Turner to be my narrators.) Audio books with full dramatization and magazine and newspaper articles can be downloaded and listened to, as well as motion pictures, radio programs, and television programs. (8)

• **Will allow annotation, searching, and bookmarking of e-texts.** One can doodle in the margins with a stylus on the touch sensitive screen or via the keyboard on electronic sticky notes. The user can search the full text and notes and set referenced bookmarks.

• **Will have both internal and online storage space.** Dozens of books plus all standard reference sources will be instantly accessible from the terabyte storage chip within the device. Lesser-used items will be accessible from online personal libraries, through worldwide public or private lending sources, or
through online bookstores. E-texts and downloadable audio books will be less expensive than their physical cousins, reflecting cost saving realized by not having to print, transport, store, or remainder any item. One of my books happens to be a great Dorothy Dunnett novel, unavailable in paper for 10 years. E-books mean never having to say out of print.

- **Will change the nature of “fiction.”** Many writers may experiment with text that is customizable by the end user for both artistic and commercial purposes. The reader may substitute the name of his or her current inamorata or inamorato for the protagonist (or murder victim). The latest Stephen King can be set to mild, scary or terrifying, or Harold Robbins to suggestive, lurid, or … well, let’s not go there. Video games and fiction may merge and the skills and choices of the reader/player may determine the outcome of the plot. (9)

- **Maybe integrated into a more fully functional “e-backpack.”** This device will be a means of storing notes, papers, and teacher-generated study materials and customized e-textbooks; an e-portfolio documenting the exploration of a series of related topics, each assignment building on the last; an e-organizer with appointment calendar, to-do-list, and address book; an e-wallet that serves as a library card, lunch ticket, petty cash, and sports pass protected with biometric security; and an e-communicator capable of transmitting both voice and data, including digital video. The e-backpack will include interactive learning programs prescribed as part of every learner’s IEP and include basic productivity software such as a word processor, spreadsheet, web editor, database, video editor, and graphics tools.

- **Will be affordable.** (10) The price of e-book hardware is a non-issue. The devices themselves will be no more expensive than school supplies in the past. Software distributors and e-text publishers practically give them away with subscription services. The funds schools once spent on textbooks and printing costs heavily subsidize the costs of this equipment for children whose families cannot afford it.

- **Will contain a monitoring chip.** With the passage of the Patriot Act of 2009, all electronic communication devices used in schools will have a Mind Police chip that automatically sends logs to the school’s office of testing and assessment, the vice-principal’s office, and the Department of Homeland Security for data-mining. Of course, all students have discovered how to disable the chips. (11)

The students of more well to do families are using newly available wearable e-books with a wristwatch type CPU, retinal laser displays, and virtual keyboards. That kid in the back row is probably twitchy because he's paging through *The Hobbit*, solving a chemistry problem, or drawing her friend a valentine.

**Implications for the role of the librarian.**

The practical e-book will have a more profound and far more sudden effect on the role of than librarian than did the printing press. Just as printed books freed hand copied manuscripts from the chains that held them to a library’s tables, so will e-books free the content of books from any particular physical space. How might our spaces, tools and jobs change as a result?

**1. The physical library.** Schools will be made of bricks and mortar for as long as they are expected to provide not just educational, but custodial services by the public. While home schooling and virtual schooling are growing, both serve a small fraction of the total PK-12 population. Most families will expect schools to contain and shelter their children as well as educate them. But will the library itself remain a physical entity when all the resources of today’s library and more are accessible via an affordable, practical e-book?

The library should house the infrastructure technologies needed to insure that e-books connect to each other and the rest of the world. It is also the logical place to house the technical staff where one of our tasks will be help them prioritize their tasks and possibly supervise. A production lab containing computers with massive processing power used to do high-end image and video processing and number crunching will be a part of tomorrow’s media center.
The library will remain a physical learning space if we begin creating facilities and environments where kids and teachers want to be. The library must have comfortable chairs, a pleasant ambiance, and a friendly, low-stress, safe, and forgiving atmosphere. (12) It must contain flexible spaces that can be used by individuals, small groups, and whole classes. Physical books that still have value but are not yet digitized, may still be present, but will eventually be sent to historical society or university archives where they can be better preserved. Security systems will be a thing of the past since there will be no “books” to steal.

Collaborative learning and the need for social interaction will require our libraries are places of active learning. While the e-book will make virtual communication readily available, providing a place for face-to-face interaction is role the library can fill. I personally hope that storytelling, puppetry, live debates and demonstrations will be part of every child’s education. And while most of a child’s education will be highly individualized to meet specific learning goals and styles, interpersonal and collaborative skills will also be a part of the curriculum.

As librarians, we will need to compete for patrons using our space. Since we are no longer the only game in town for information, it will be our skills, especially our interpersonal skills, to which patrons will be drawn. The librarian needs to be a good reason to go to the library rather than to avoid the library if we are to exist. (13)

If the library is not a wonderful place to be to learn, to socialize and to relax, students and teachers will use their e-books in places that are.

2. **Resources.** The librarian, of course, will be selecting commercial digital materials to be made available to students and to staff. While it may mean continuing to purchase some single titles of resources, it will more likely be the librarian’s job to purchase access to collections of digital materials. (14) These collections will need to complement and supplement state-provided resources (15), the commercial Internet, and materials that come standard (dictionaries, thesauri, atlases, etc.) on e-books designed for school use. And of course, it will be librarian’s job to budget for, acquire, and track the licenses needed to use these products.

Materials will need to be even more carefully chosen to support the curriculum and specific instructional needs of teachers. With so much information available, maintaining a highly useable library webpage tailored specifically to meet the needs of the individual school’s curriculum will be a primary job of the librarian.

The librarian’s expertise, available online and accessible through e-books, may be the single most valuable “resource” the library will offer. The questions will be difficult and we will need to not only have expertise ourselves in locating specific materials, resources and information, but be able to use expert systems that rely on artificial intelligence as well. (16)

3. **Jobs.** Teachers and administrators must come to us for help with problems only we can solve. As printed textbooks become obsolete, librarians will use the experiences and skills learned creating pages of selected web sites and webquests to assist teachers in building individualized (to the student) e-textbooks accessed and read on e-books. We will still need to be experts in children’s and young adult materials – regardless of their format – to meet the needs of both the struggling and advanced learners. And we will continue to provide staff development opportunities in information technologies.

Classroom teachers will continue to send kids to the library only if the librarian is better at helping them find information or complete a task than the teacher himself. We also need to have responsibility for
teaching an identified set of skills, virtually and in person, which no one can teach better. (Might the very best teacher-librarians free-lance to schools willing to pay for their teaching talents?)

Information-literacy skills will be more important to student’s future success than ever. Because of the growing glut of information, we will to increasingly focus on helping students:

- Define their information-related problems and questions.
- Search ever-larger amounts of available information.
- Carefully determine the reliability of information sources.
- Interpret, organize and analyze information.
- Construct powerful means of communicating their findings, especially using technology
- Evaluate and reflect on the effectiveness of both their products and efficiency of the process.
- Make safe and ethical decisions while online. (17)

In the end, it may well come down to our knowledge of individual children, their special needs and the personal relationships with form with them that will be viewed as indispensable by parents, and therefore by administrators. In Neal Stephenson's novel The Diamond Age a youthful heroine is assisted through a very rough childhood by an e-book-like device titled A Young Lady's Illustrated Primer. This wonderful tool is a library and self-paced tutorial that offers her just the right skill, bit of information, or advice when needed. Although she didn’t know it, her primer's power and usefulness were because the lessons were planned and monitored by a caring human mentor. The best schools will be the ones that provide the most human teaching; the poorer schools will increasingly rely on the economical technologies. (18)

And finally, we need to remain our schools’ intellectual freedom-fighters - continuing our battles against the censorship of digital resources, advocating for patron privacy, and helping enforce copyright. We will need to have the expertise to advise students on the safe and ethical use of all information technologies. We will need to continue to be not just the brains of the school, but its soul as well.

In my darkest dystopian fantasies technology directors do the selection of not just library materials, but entire library programs. (19) If a commercial LIBRARIES-R-US can provide the resources and services virtually and cheaply, what will keep a school from outsourcing? It’s a question those of us who want to continue working in the public sector need to answer soon.

There will not be a guaranteed place for librarians in tomorrow’s schools. Our profession will once again need to build and define its own role as the needs of our patrons and schools change, as our technologies mature, and as the definition of education itself is transformed. But we’ve done it before and we will do so again, if we look upon the change as opportunity and with the excitement and optimism I have about getting my first real e-book.

Sources:
1. In his book, In the Age of the Spiritual Machine ( ), author Ray Kurzweil makes a compelling argument that Moore’s Law – that computing power will double every 18 months - will not only continue but accelerate exponentially well into the foreseeable future. Nearly all the functionality of my desired e-book is now commercially available, but at a high price.
2. Fully functional notebook computers can now be found that weigh less than 3 pounds.
3. Calculators have used this technology for some years.
4. Both Wi-Fi (802.11) and Bluetooth are rapidly becoming standard on most portable computing devices.
5. Brainium’s W-Book <www.brainium.com> uses only static memory. Floppy disks are rapidly being replaced by thumb drives as a means of transporting computer files physically. One company developing a “digital paper is PARC Research <www.parc.com/research/dhl/projects/paperdisplays/>. 6. Many tablet computers already have this feature.
7. Google <google.com> now translates webpages into over 100 languages, including Elmer Fudd.
9. Today’s most highly rated video games are plot-driven. *Metal Gear Solid: the Twin Snakes* is an example, according to my gamer son.
10. Think graphic calculator prices and cell phones give-a-ways.
11. Computer use logs and e-mail monitoring systems, such as Symantec's *Mail-Gear* are common in schools.
12. Bookstores, public libraries and some high school libraries are adding coffee shops and paying great attention to the décor and comfort of their spaces.
13. A frightful quote was given in the Pew study "Digital Disconnect" by a middle school student: "The Internet is like a librarian without the bad attitude or breath." “The Digital Disconnect: The widening gap between Internet-savvy students and their schools.” 8/14/2002 <www.pewinternet.org>
14. Currently, libraries select full-text periodical databases comprised of dozens of titles, rather than individual periodical titles. Streaming video services like DigitalCurriculum <www.digitalcurriculum.com> offer collections of educational titles. E-texts, while available for individual purchase (at eBooks.com for example), are as likely to be offered as ready-built collection such as Questia <questia.com> and the International Children's Digital Library <www.icdlbooks.org>.
15. Minnesota’s ELM project <www.elm4you.org> is an example of a state-wide purchase of electronic resources. ELM includes netLibrary’s collection of 13,000+ ebooks.
16. I am fascinated by the primitive “consumer advisory” services now provided by services such as Amazon <amazon.com> and NetFlix <netflix.com> that use past acquisition patterns to recommend other materials one is likely to like. The University of Minnesota’s Assignment Calculator <www.lib.umn.edu/help/calculator/> provides a personal research tutorial service by asking students questions related to a specific assignment.
17. The Big6 <big6.com> information literacy process is widely used and its adoption is growing. All but two states have adopted information and technology literacy standards.
18. This was predicted as early as the mid 1980’s.
19. The James J. Hill is the de facto library for scores of small and midsize businesses, offering a range of fee-based services. Several popular search engines currently offer fee-based searching. Nexus/Lexis and other legal databases have decimated most law firm libraries. Schools are outsourcing school lunch programs, technology services, and transportation. Are libraries next?
Is Educational Climate Change Ahead?

Like many educators, I am impatient for the kinds of educational changes that will make schools better able to meet the needs of today’s and tomorrow’s students. But unlike many change advocates, I am old and cynical about schools being able to change themselves. My experience has been that only forces from outside the established educational community create fundamental changes in schools - for good or ill. Schools are, after all, about preserving culture and the current social structure, not fomenting revolution.

But I believe a meteor is on the educational horizon that will so dramatically alter the school climate that our current dinosaur-friendly environment will cease to exist and give rise to a new breed of educators - affordable 1:1 computing. Why am I thinking about this today?

Because just last week I was a part of a group of local educators who spent six hours attending a workshop delivered over interactive television. I noticed a few things about the day's stand-and-deliver experience:

- Adults have no more patience with un-engaging materials than kids have.
- Everyone's standards for engagement are rising. Are we all becoming ADD?
- Technology itself does not make an educational experience engaging.
- Given the opportunity, learners will find a way to be engaged – with or without the teacher’s help.

About half of us had laptops. Our venue provided guest wireless access. So work/learning continued for those of us with laptops - even when the program was about something we had already heard, was something we already knew, or was simply not delivered in style that invited attention. (I am trying to say this politely since the presentations were no better or worse than any one would see at any educational conference. But the MEGO – My Eyes Glaze Over – factor was about at 8.5.)

Those of us with our own means of engagement tuned out - at least partially. We've all seen this happen at meetings and workshops - anywhere people have access to computing devices and a means to get online. Marc Prensky says "Engage me or enrage me." I don't know that the situation is that dramatic - "Engage me or something else will." seems more likely.

What will happen when parents both provide wireless access devices for their kids and demand that their children have access to them through out the school day? The calls by parents for student cell phone access grow after every school shooting. The line between cell phones and PDAs and laptops is blurring more everyday.

We need to begin to identify the skills and practices of teachers who survive this meteoric change of a classroom environment – the new climate where engagement/distraction is always available and to every student. I'd put my money on those who:

- are diagnosticians who use technology to help them create effective Individual Education Plans for all their kids using evaluation data that is accessed and manipulated electronically
- are masters of differentiated instruction
- can identify, organize and prescribe online learning activities
- understand and use the concepts of gaming in learning
- communicate online effectively and easily
- lead dynamic and engaging discussions
- team with other educators to specialize in learning styles rather than content areas
What do you do when you have their bodies in your classroom, but their minds are everywhere but? I hope our pioneering 1:1 laptop educators in Maine and Africa and elsewhere will be offering guidance!

Climactic shift brought on by that big meteor was bad for the dinosaurs, but where would we mammals be without it?

**Are Libraries (and Librarians) Heading Toward Extinction?**

As a profession, librarians have gone on the defensive, justifying in increasingly worried and frantic tones, just why they and their institutions are ever so much better than the Internet.

Mark Y. Herring's article “10 Reasons Why the Internet Is No Substitute for a Library” (*American Libraries* April 2001 <www.ala.org/alonline/news/10reasons.html>) and even a column of mine “Why Do We Need Libraries When We Have the Internet?” (*Knowledge Quest*, 1998 Vol #2 no. 1 <www.dougjohnson.com/dougwri/internet.html>) are examples of this concern about our physical resources, space and even profession being replaced by Google, e-books or and their virtual ilk.

I am beginning to wonder how helpful such articles and arguments really are for the health of our profession. Neither article suggests ways to keep our patrons from having their information needs increasingly met independently of print, libraries, and librarians, other than to shout ever more loudly, “But we are so much better!” to each other.

OK, true confession time. I don't blame Jane and Joe Blow for increasingly using the Internet rather than libraries. I’m doing it myself, despite the fact I am a big fan of libraries and my livelihood depends in large part on their continued existence. For example, I recently saved a very short walk from my office to our lovely high school media center to find a copy of an R. L. Stevenson short story by finding it in about 3 minutes on the web and printing it out. And my 17-year-old son deems anything not on the Internet is not worth knowing and is nearly a stranger to both his school and public library. According to the Pew study “The Digital Disconnect” (August 2002, <www.pewinternet.org/reports/toc.asp?Report=67>) he is typical of his generation. People of all ages are simply finding it is really, really handy to have one's information needs met right at their desks or in their homes.

Yet, I have no doubt that many libraries and librarians will evolve and survive despite the increasing use of the Internet to fulfill needs those libraries and librarians previously met.

The libraries that will continue to thrive will be those which meet real needs that cannot be met by the Internet (or bookstores or classrooms). Our profession should be defining, discovering and emphasizing those needs in the current budgetary and political climate rather than simply complaining and justifying our existence to each other through professional publications.

There are a great number of physical businesses and institutions that might have felt just as threatened by the public’s increased use of the Internet: book stores, travel agents, public libraries, and banks, just to name a few. Even virtual schools are now taking the place of brick and mortar buildings for many students. Just how are the savvier among these institutions escaping being replaced by the Internet?
1. **By providing a physical comfort that the Internet does not.** I still buy books and spend time at our local Barnes & Noble bookstore because I like having coffee there, sitting in the comfy chairs, and handling physical books. I still buy more books there than I do online.

2. **By providing expertise an Internet user may not have.** My travel agent knows more about vacation destinations than I do - or am willing to take the time to research and read about on the Internet. She can find better fares under some circumstances than I am able to. And she has the time to the time to look for “deal”s that I don’t have.

3. **By providing "high touch" experiences to offset the "high tech" environments.** John Naisbitt in his early '80's book *Megatrends* that predicted that the more people use isolating technologies, the greater they will need avenues for face-to-face human interaction and socialization. This is why I still like going to the public library to read the paper sometimes instead of reading it online - I see and meet people there. Internet usage is lonely - even for the chronic chatters, I'm guessing.

4. **By recognizing and using the Internet to compliment one's mission.** I still value my bank down on Hickory Street even though I check my miserable account balances online, have my paltry paycheck direct deposited, visit impersonal instant tellers to get cash, and pay my horrendous bills electronically. I don't go in the physical building much anymore, but I use their banking services more than ever. I don't see the Internet displacing Wells-Fargo anytime soon.

Let's take just these four ways in which our physical existence may be superior to or enhanced by the virtual experience and think about how we in school libraries can capitalize on these qualities rather than try to compete head-to-head with the Internet. (Darwin called this adaptation and recognized successful species were good at it.)

4. **Physical comfort and welcoming environment.** This means creating a library where kids and teachers REALLY like to be. Comfy chairs, friendly atmosphere, low-stress, safe, and forgiving. If my library is not a wonderful place to be, everyone will stay on the Internet or in the classroom. Period.

    A frightful quote was given in the Pew study "Digital Disconnect" by a middle school student: "The Internet is like a librarian without the bad attitude or breath." OUCH! What does this say about how welcoming my staff and I need to be to our kids and staff? 

    In practice:

    *I'm lucky enough to have been able to design our own new library and I think one of the choices that I made that has pleased the students the most are the chairs. The soft seating area chairs are soft and comfortable, "comfy. And the tables all have 3-position chairs which I call "teenager chairs." I don't have to tell them to stop leaning back in their chairs and I don't miss that. Perhaps most importantly, so much of creating a welcoming atmosphere is being a non-judgmental, supportive person who can help students and faculty find out the answers to the serious and the silly. Sara Kelly Johns, Lake Placid (NY) Schools.*

    *Instead of worrying about making the library welcoming, perhaps our efforts would be better spent making the students welcome. Think about that for a moment. It's not just a turn of phrase. Kids will hang out together on a street corner, in the parking lot of 7-11, or wherever they feel comfortable. I think it has less to do with the physical comfort than acceptance of each individual. Your library furnishings can be hopelessly dated, your chairs uncomfortable, and you may not have a expresso machine; but if kids know you're happy to have them there, and if they*
can sense that you value them, they'll come. It all comes down to being child-centered. Herb Wilburn, Ashby Lee Elementary School, Quicksburg (VA)

5. **Expertise.** Classroom teachers should send kids to the library because the librarian is better at helping them find information or complete a task (especially in technology) than the teacher him/herself can. We need to have responsibility for a curriculum and important, identified skills that no one but us can teach. We must be better at selecting books and other print materials, organizing them and especially getting them into the kids hands than the reading or English teacher. Teachers and administrators must come to us for help with problems only we can solve.

In practice:

Here's how librarians make a contribution. Show students and teachers how to use information for learning on an ongoing basis. Support teacher efforts by organizing higher-order mini-research projects around essential topics and then working with students to build the critical thinking skills that should be the basis of Information Literacy. Most teachers don't know how to do this because they teach from textbooks and give multiple choice tests. Librarians know how to do this and that makes them important in an era of state testing that integrates critical thinking processes more and more. Carl Janetka – ProQuest-bigchalk

[In my] inner-city school we had few proficient readers in the lower grades and a new "school reform/reading" program that had taken all the fairy tales, nursery rhymes, and holidays out of the K-1 curriculum which gave me a ready curriculum. Dorothy Tissair, Old Saybrook (CT)

Do whatever you can to make teachers' lives easier even if it's something that makes yours a little harder. If you can get the teachers to feel like you really care about them, they will also send in their students more often and ask you for your help. Lorraine Smith, Lake Pointe Elementary School, Austin (TX)

6. **Social experiences.** Are our libraries places for kids to interact with each other in positive ways? Instead of the library being the tomb and the study hall/computer lab being socialization central, maybe we should reverse those atmospheres.

In practice:

*I keep the library open for an hour after school Monday through Thursday. It is a very popular gathering place. We call it "Hang Time". Students may use the computers for homework OR recreational use (I am there to supervise), play board games, sit and visit, or do jigsaw puzzles. We currently have Mancala and Pente tournaments underway. I keep music playing and we usually have some sort of snack provided by the school lunch program. I am looking to offer a few more activities to pull in some of kids who don't always know how to mix with others. I plan to make an Origami Table and a Create a Bookmark Table. I would like to find some "brainy toys" for the kids Robie Martin, Parsons (KS) Middle School

If you took everything out of my library, you would have a large barn, so what I have done is partition it into 'rooms' using the shelves (no lines of stacks here) and so immediately it is more inviting. This year about a third of it is for seniors (Yr 5/6) only at lunch time, and they have a lounge suite, coffee tables, computers, work spaces, their senior fiction collection AND a loud CD player which is on all the time during lunch break. Never have I seen so many in there at
lunch, and the most unlikely kids! Chess is popular, some do their homework (and there is research evidence to suggest that this age group cannot work in silence), others just chat or read. But they are there - they are exposed to what we offer and are forming habits and attitudes about libraries. Barbara Braxton, Palmerston (Australia) District Primary School

7. **Complimentary use.** This means not buying (or buying less of) the sorts of things kids are now getting online - paper magazines, current events sources, print indices, etc. It means buying more online resources since that is the format kids find most usable and convenient. It means having a very useable library webpage tailored specifically to meet the needs of the school curriculum that is accessible from the classroom, computer lab and home. It may mean providing online reference services.

In practice:

*Show off. Use the web to get what they're looking for as they watch. Point out those databases that nobody uses. Teach classes for your staff.* Maggi Rohde, Allen Elementary School, Ann Arbor (MI)

*I have relied upon the online databases to supply much of what we formerly got from magazine subscriptions. Now that I don't have to order as many for research I find that I can order things like Car & Driver, Motor Trend and the like. These types of magazines really attract the kids that I have noticed are reluctant researchers. Those that didn’t “hang” in the library are now here before and after school reading the magazines and using the computers. They seem to be more relaxed in the library and unafraid to talk to us when they have questions. I think that has been the greatest payoff I have seen from the investment in the online databases.* Pati Daisy, Southern Cal Schools (IA)

We also may need to remind administrators that a primary reason libraries exist is to share commonly-used instructional support materials. While book collections, magazines, and videotapes would be nice to have in every classroom, having a central pool of resources that all users can draw from makes more sense economically. Materials that are catalogued, inventoried and circulated tend not to be materials that walk out the door when a teacher leaves the building. Didn’t libraries start because not everyone could afford a copy of every book?

I am deeply troubled by reading about cut after cut after cut in school library programs throughout the nation and deeply sympathize with those whose jobs are gone and feel their work has not been appreciated. We can and should mourn with and for them. As my father used to say, "There but for the grace of God go I."

But as professionals, we simply cannot let our reactions end with only being sorrowful. We need to figure out how our services should change in order to meet the needs of teachers and students who do use the Internet, to remain absolutely vital to schools that are strapped for funds, and to be seen as important by decision-makers who do allocate funds in zero-sum game.

We all keep thinking about things we can do than the Internet can't.

Oh yeah. And do them.
A couple years ago, Linda, the Left Overshoe Middle School SLMS, read Thomas Friedman’s book *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century* (Farrar, 2005). She felt sorry for the legal researchers, medical technicians, and technology support personnel whose jobs were being outsourced to countries like India and China.

When Robert, the high school SLMS, learned that a local business had closed its library and contracted its research to a private research firm, he thought it made good business sense.

Louise noticed an increasingly larger percent of her elementary budget was going to electronic resources, most of which were “packages” tied to her state’s standards. Her teachers didn’t seem to need as much help finding support materials for their units. She was glad to have the extra time.

All the SLMs in the Left Overshoe schools encouraged their students to use a 24/7 electronic reference service, similar to AskUsNow <www.askusnow.info/about/> because it worked so well with the district’s one-to-one computer to student laptop initiative.

But Linda, Robert and Louise met frantically one afternoon after school at the local pub to discuss a photocopy of a letter each of them received, along with a note from the superintendent. It read:
March 15, 2007

Superintendent Dennis Hookworm
Left Overshoe Public Schools
Left Overshoe, MN 56034

Dear Superintendent Hookworm:

We at the Flat World Library Corporation can offer you a complete library program at a very attractive price.

For considerably less than you currently pay for your K-12 library program, we can provide a full range of library resources AND library services – all on line.

For only pennies a day per student, FWLC will:

1. Provide a full range of reading materials (periodicals, picture books, fiction and non-fiction titles), videos and reference sources that are tailored to your state standards, your district’s curriculum and your digital textbook series. These resources are being constantly updated, and are available, of course, in a wide range of lexile ranges to support your differentiated instruction efforts. You can specify the level of community tolerance for issues ranging from abortion to gay rights to evolution from “university community” to “small town Kansas.”

2. Provide ready reference services, student research help, readers’ advisory service, and curricular planning advice through our real-time connections (video, chat or e-mail) to our experts in Bangalore, India. These highly-qualified MLS certified professionals will be available 24/7 to both your staff and students from school or home. (Do you get 24/7 service from your current library staff?)

3. Allow teachers to submit student work for comment and assessment. Our staff will give each project a consistent grade, check for plagiarism, and provide a report for each child that teachers can share with parents about the research and technology skill strengths and weaknesses of every individual student. We can even help your teachers design assignments and assessments, so they are free to lecture.

Just think of the advantages:

• No musty books from the 1950’s cluttering your library shelves. No more lost or missing books.
• No library facilities. Turn that old library space into those badly needed special education classrooms.
• No more pesky librarians who want more money for materials, support staff, and staff development. Our highly skilled Indian librarians are happy to have their $5 per hour jobs!
• A single, semi-competent technician in your district can maintain your entire library program.
• You can justify your district’s expensive 1:1 computer/student initiative.
• No more contentious book or curriculum “challenges.”

Please read the attached study (scientifically-based and conducted by FWLC’s very own research department) that empirically demonstrates that this product can dramatically improve student performance where it counts - on high stakes tests. (FWLC has been approved by for Federal Title and grant funding – unlike traditional library materials and librarians.)

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Flat World Library Corporation
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By Doug Johnson

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