The Student Taxonomy

The student is the central figure in the program of the school library media center. However, the chief means by which the LMC affects the student is vicariously through the teacher. Direct services are extremely important, but lack of influence on the teaching process, on the assignments and activities set by teachers, relegates the LMC to a peripheral role in a student’s educational career.

An interesting probe of students’ perceptions of the role of the LMC in their lives is to perform the lunchroom test. In this test, a stranger to the school interviews groups of students eating lunch in the normally crowded, noisy lunchroom. Students are asked about their school library media center and the LMC staff. Student responses can range from total lack of interest to a very enthusiastic response, with every shade of opinion in between.

Historically, the school library was a place to find recreational reading. That role has now expanded to become a high-tech learning laboratory providing information technology in the LMC, the classroom, and the home. Just a few of the expected benefits for students of the modern school library media center include:

- A place to learn to become a capable and avid reader.
- A laboratory to learn the value of information, materials, and technology.
- A place to learn how to communicate in print, multimedia, or computerized formats.
- A central repository of information for personal needs, such as what to do about acne, what college to attend, or how to deal with the death of a friend.
- A place to enjoy.
The best source of materials and information to complete assignments.

A place to learn how to locate, evaluate, and use information.

The center for the culture of the school and of the world.

A place to discover, to probe, to find out what is or is not known.

A repository of the best print, multimedia, and information technology.

Such a place is created by caring library media staff, interested teachers, the determined support of administrators, and parents who expect and demand quality education for their children. A quality program for students begins with easy access to materials, space, and the LMC staff. The quality improves as young people are involved in active programs that demonstrate the value of the center.

INTERACTION OF STUDENTS WITH THE LMC PROGRAM

A model or picture of what happens as students interact with an exciting LMC program shows consistent growth, from a child with great potential to a mature user of information and technology, as illustrated in figure 5.1. The model illustrates the need to build, stimulate, motivate, encourage, cultivate, and nurture a young person in an LMC program from the moment schooling begins until it ends. The imperative is not just to create a place where students may find respite from the demands of the school day but to build, in their minds, a center that is indispensable to their growth and development. Having space, materials, and an adequate staff is no guarantee that the intended result will materialize.

The taxonomy for resource-based learning (figure 5.2) shows the developmental stages of student growth toward competence in the information society. Through a combination of motivation and design, students are taught to become increasingly knowledgeable and self-sufficient.
Figure 5.1: The student's model of resource-based learning.
The Student’s Taxonomy of Resource-Based Learning

1. NO INVOLVEMENT
   The student is prevented from using or has no desire to use the library media center materials, technology, or program.

2. SPONTANEOUS INVOLVEMENT
   The student unexpectedly finds materials or activities of interest in the library media center.

3. INFORMATION/MATERIALS/TECHNOLOGY ASSISTANCE
   The student requests and obtains specific information, materials, technology, and production assistance for personal, recreational, or curricular use.

4. DIRECTED MOTIVATION/PROGRAM
   Students read, view, listen, computer, produce, or perform in response to a motivational campaign of the library media center staff (not necessarily curricular related).

5. UTILIZATION SKILLS
   The student learns basic skills needed to use the resources of the library media center, other libraries, computer networks, and community resources.

6. STRUCTURED INTERACTION
   The student participates in planned activities designed to carry out a curricular or recreational objective.

7. THE STUDENT BECOMES A POWER READER
   The student has developed a reading habit as a capable reader and is an avid reader across a wide variety of genres, information types, and various print technologies.

8. THE STUDENT BECOMES A POWER LEARNER
   The student uses the principles of information literacy and their own learning style to build their own personal information literacy model.

9. LIFE-LONG USE
   Reliance on libraries and information networks carries over after schooling into intelligent use of media and information for personal, educational, and recreational needs.

Fig. 5.2: The Student Taxonomy of resource-based learning
THE STUDENT TAXONOMY EXPLAINED

**Level 1 — No involvement:** The student is prevented from using or has no desire to use the LMC materials, technology, or programs.

Often school rules prevent students from getting to the LMC. Bus schedules, hall pass regulations, teacher restrictions, and LMC rules combine to effectively lock a student out of the LMC. At other times, students show a lack of interest in the materials and activities of the center. It is true that the student does not always need the services of the LMC. It is hoped that library media staff, teachers, and administrators work together to ensure that maximum access to the center is the rule rather than the exception and that a concerted effort is made to lift students out of this level if it is a behavior pattern. In many cases, elementary students are assigned 45-minute periods in the LMC so that teachers can have a planning period. Many of these programs may be worse than no involvement at all because the experience can be so negative that the ultimate effect is detrimental to future use.

**Level 2—Spontaneous involvement:** The student unexpectedly finds materials or activities of interest in the LMC.

Library media specialists often spend a great deal of time and effort to make the LMC both attractive and inviting to the user. Comfortable seating near popular magazines, displays of good books to read, and displays of student work lure the student to probe, examine, enjoy, and discover. In chapter 14 we title this area “Books n' Stuff.” Such passive but important features of the LMC may be just the stimulation needed to begin a life-long reading interest, a career, or a hobby. At times, however, students might consider the LMC as a recreational center rather than a center of learning.

**Level 3—Information/materials/technology assistance:** The student requests and obtains specific information, materials, technology, and production assistance for personal, recreational, or curricular use.

There are three important services in this level for the student. The student has the opportunity to be creative by producing print, multimedia, and computer-based products such as web sites. The student can request a good book or get access to a computer software package or information system. Reference questions can be answered or a database queried for help on a research paper. At this level, the student is given the assistance without question and is not necessarily required to gain independence in any of the skills listed. The focus is on creativity, analysis, and evaluation, not on retrieval skills.
Level 4—Directed motivation/program: Students read, view, listen, use the computer, produce, or perform in response to a motivational campaign of the LMC staff (not necessarily curriculum related).

Library media specialists create many programs and activities designed to entice students to engage in media and information consumption and enjoyment. Booktalks, special library week programs, demonstrations, advertising campaigns, reading challenges, and other activities have the common goal of presenting great quantities of media to students. The advent of movies, television, and the Internet has made it much more difficult for teachers and library media specialists, who must compete with Madison Avenue professionals for students’ attention.

Level 5—Utilization skills: The student learns basic skills needed to use the resources of the LMC, other libraries, computer networks, and community resources.

Traditionally, this level has been titled "library skills." The trend is now toward "information literacy." Emphasis is placed on the acquisition, use, and communication of information as part of the research process. The library media staff integrates information literacy skills into the curricular units at the time of need rather than teaching a curriculum known as "library science." They include information skills for normal life and living and information skills related to fun and relaxation. Retrieval, evaluation, analysis, and synthesis of information are stressed. This level also includes the necessary skills to operate audiovisual and computer equipment.

Level 6—Structured interaction: The student participates in planned activities designed to carry out a curricular or recreational objective.

Recognizing that many students must be purposefully motivated or even required to seek information in the LMC, library media specialists and teachers design units of instruction in which meaningful activities and skills in the LMC lead the student step by step along the path toward higher levels of the taxonomy.

Level 7—The student becomes a power reader: The student has developed a reading habit as a capable reader and is an avid reader across a wide variety of genres, information types, and various print technologies.

Students become so used to having all they want to read at their fingertips, information technology at hand, and access to a print-rich environment at home that they consider reading a natural
and normal part of the activities of the day both for educational and recreational purposes. In short, reading is "cool." When questioned, students identify themselves as "power readers"—people who have a large vocabulary, are good spellers, recognize and use good grammar, and have confidence in their own writing style because they have read enough to know the language well.

**Level 8—The student becomes a power learner:** The student uses the principles of information literacy and his or her own learning style to build a personal information literacy model.

Students may have used an information literacy model as practice for systematizing the research process, but as they mature, they combine what they know about their own learning styles and the principles of information literacy to build their own personal information literacy models. Questioned, they can identify and discuss their own models and are confident that they can embark on a quest, a problem, or an engaging question with confidence that they know how to proceed.

**Level 9—Life-long use:** Reliance on libraries and information networks carries over after schooling into intelligent use of media and information for personal, educational, and recreational needs.

School personnel will never observe this level while students are under their direction. They will probably never know how many of their students ever achieve this plateau of self-fulfillment. Many adults never achieve this level. Nevertheless, this goal must be the central focus of all activities, the raison d’être of the library media program.

**THE PROGRAM ELEMENTS OF THE LMC AND THE STUDENT**

One of the four program features, collaboration, is directed at teachers, who in turn influence students to use the resources of the LMC to advantage. The other three program elements have a direct impact on what students are learning.

**Reading.** There is no more important life-long tool than becoming a capable and avid reader. When the LMC can provide access at every moment of the day to a wide variety of attractive and enticing reading materials, students are much more likely to build their own reading habit. But the library media staff, in cooperation with teachers, can influence how much and what is read. Reading aloud, sustained silent reading, reading challenges, and promotion of various kinds of genres and nonfiction are just a few ideas that stimulate the reading habit. Most of all, access to reading material (I can check out an
unlimited number of items.) is the best strategy to support and encourage the reading habit.

**Enhancing Learning Through Technology.** The maze of technology tools and versions of software seems to be increasing exponentially, each having its own idiosyncrasies. There are not only basic features and skills to learn but also ways to use a particular technology to make one a better and more efficient learner. Adults often assume that technology skills come naturally to a young person with little or no intervention. While helpful friends, technology assists, and quicky tutorials might help, "just-in-time" instruction is often needed to make the technology a real tool rather than an obstacle. Searching skills, summarization skills, mind mapping tools, instant lookup, formatting assists, and product creation tools are just a few of the features to learn as the student is confronted with a problem.

**Information Literacy.** A close second to the value of reading is the understanding of the research process as a life-long learning tool. Understanding and using a systematic process that enhances their own learning style allows students to learn more, more efficiently. It gives them the confidence to be able to attack problems successfully, the attitude that "I am in control." "I am a power learner." "If I don't know, I know how to find out."

**SELF-EVALUATION CHECKLIST FOR STUDENTS**

Students can and should know that the goal of the library media program is to have them become life-long users of materials, information, and technology. They should be able to measure their own progress in acquiring these skills on some sort of chart. The self-evaluation checklist in figure 5.3 can be modified for the students of a particular school. It can be used for upper elementary grades through high school.

**Directions.** Revise the questions to meet an individual school situation. Students will answer the questions and then color in their own "My Use of the LMC" thermometer graph (see figure 5.4). For a longitudinal study, file student responses and summary charts and administer the self-evaluation form yearly. Have each student or local researchers evaluate progress over time. Data from many student questionnaires can be compiled on the "Student LMC Taxonomy Summary Chart" (figure 5.5). This chart will indicate what percentage of the students checked each of the items on the questionnaire. For easy analysis, a mark-sense answer sheet could be used. Note: A student who claimed to be a life-long learner would not color in level 1 of the thermometer chart.
Student Self-Evaluation Checklist

Put a check on the line in front of those items that would be TRUE about yourself and how you use the library media center in your school, its networks in your classroom, and its availability through networks from your home.

1. I don't use the LMC because:
   _____ a. I don't go there.
   _____ b. I can't get there when I need to:
   _____ c. Access is blocked from the classroom or from home.

2. When I go to the LMC and walk around, I might find:
   _____ a. books I'd like to read.
   _____ b. magazines to look at.
   _____ c. multimedia to use (videos, CDs, computer software).
   _____ d. displays to look at.
   _____ e. activities to participate in (discussions, cultural events, educational games, etc.)

3. When I go to the LMC, the LMC staff helps me by:
   _____ a. finding answers to questions I have.
   _____ b. helping me find a book/ magazine/ computer information source I'd like to use.
   _____ c. showing me or helping me to make multimedia materials (videos, computerized presentations, digital photography, or graphics for projects).
   _____ d. helping me find materials for classroom assignments.

4. When I go to the LMC, the LMC staff may:
   _____ a. try to interest me in some books, multimedia materials, or information sources.
   _____ b. give me a book list to encourage me to read.
   _____ c. advertise books or multimedia or information resources to use.
   _____ d. try to involve me in some LMC activities.

5. The LMC staff and/or my teacher try to:
   _____ a. teach me how to locate materials in the LMC.
   _____ b. teach me how to use the catalog or other indexes to materials.
   _____ c. teach me how to do research.
   _____ d. teach me about information available outside the school (other libraries, the Internet, the community).

6. When I go to the LMC with my class or group, there are:
   _____ a. short lessons to introduce me to finding and using information.
   _____ b. classes to sharpen my skills in using computers.
   _____ c. Instruction on how to use equipment I need (such as video cameras, digital cameras, desktop publishing assists).

7. I consider myself a power reader because:
   _____ a. There are plenty of interesting books, magazines, and newspapers for me that attract my attention.
   _____ b. I can take all I want to read home from the LMC/ classroom.
   _____ c. I make it a habit to read every day.
   _____ d. Reading is one of the things I like to do in my free time.

8. I consider myself a power learner because:
   _____ a. I can locate materials in the LMC for my needs.
   _____ b. I am very critical about the quality of the information I use from the LMC and the Internet.
   _____ c. I know how to use various types of equipment to create presentations.
   _____ d. I know how to use the steps of the research process to investigate a topic.
   _____ e. I have created my own information literacy model and use it regularly.

9. When I think about library media centers and my future, I
   _____ a. Think I will always want to use libraries for materials and information I need.
   _____ b. Think I will always use libraries for recreational materials.
   _____ c. Will take my children and friends to the library

Fig. 5.3. Student self-evaluation checklist.
Fig. 5.4. Thermometer graph for student use of the library media center. For each question, count the number of checkmarks you made. Then color in a bar for each check on the thermometer. Example: On question 2, if I check only one item, I color in one block and leave the other four blank.
Fig. 5.5. Student LMC taxonomy summary chart.