



photograph by Jim Graham

# Guest Expert

**Joyce Kasman Valenza** ([joyce\\_valenza@stsd.org](mailto:joyce_valenza@stsd.org)) is the School Librarian at Springfield Township High School. She writes a weekly column [techlife@school](mailto:techlife@school) for the *Philadelphia Inquirer*.

## Ten Reasons to Hug Your School Librarian

Classroom teachers—you are not alone. Just down the hall, your librarians (aka media or library information specialists) are your partners in curriculum, in teaching, and in learning.

We do have a PR problem. Although we can be a powerful part of the learning team, many educators don't know who we are. If your contact has been limited to a request for books or for suggestions on new materials, you are not making full use of us. Here's how we can help:

1. Planning instruction? Librarians are trained in instructional design. With a full picture of the curriculum across grade levels and disciplines, librarians can link process and content skills and help you identify resources in all media formats to incorporate into your lessons. We will also help you identify areas where you and your colleagues can make curricular connections.
2. Want to improve your students' thinking skills? The information literacy skills we go on and on about are really skills that support the transferable skills of critical thinking, analysis, reading, writing, and effective communication. Teacher-librarians instruct and support students as they define problems, frame good questions, search for and evaluate information for quality, authority, and relevance. We teach about effectively and ethically synthesizing information from a variety of sources to create original knowledge products, and we teach about communicating information effectively. We will even help you design assessments that value these critical skills.
3. Not sure that your students get a full picture of the best resources available? Then work with your librarian to create pathfinders, which incorporate research guidance of all sorts: search strategies, relevant call numbers, and help selecting the best Web sites, portals, quality databases, and more. Check out these **Models for Creating Pathfinders**: <http://mciu.org/~spjvweb/pathfindermodels.html>
4. Lonely? *Double-team* your students. Get out of your classroom and collaborate. Use the library or its technology labs as your classroom. Your librarian will teach *with* you. While you present the content you know so well, your teaching partner will help you deliver such transferable skills as information seeking, evaluation, analysis, synthesis, and communication.
5. Taking a graduate course? Librarians can help you get the materials you need. We can lead you to specific online educational journal databases and professional portals. We can order materials from other libraries and show you how to order ERIC documents online. Check out **On-Demand Documents** <http://searcheric.org>
6. Concerned about achievement? Current research shows that school libraries are key to learning. In the largest study of its kind, Rutgers University professors Ross Todd and Carol Kuhlthau revealed that 99.4% of students "indicated that the school library and its services, including roles of school librarians, have helped them... with their learning." Data revealed that libraries are dynamic agents of learning and demonstrated the school library's role "as an agent for individualized learning, knowledge construction, and academic achievement." See the **Findings of the Ohio Research Study**: <http://www.oelma.org/SLFindings.html>
7. Want to improve your practice? Teacher-librarians study various pedagogical strategies and techniques for delivery or instruction. We work with many teachers; observe countless strategies; read educational journals; and follow trends supported by research and observation. We intimately know how to integrate inquiry-based, project-based, and problem-based instruction. We can help you differentiate projects to meet the needs of all the learners in your class, while understanding your own teaching style.
8. Concerned about cut-and-paste plagiarism and ethical use of information? Your librarian will help you teach age-appropriate documentation skills, develop style sheets, and work with the faculty to develop policies promoting full-school academic integrity.
9. Want help integrating educational technology into your program to engage students and meet curricular and technology standards? Librarians can help you select software, databases, and online resources to meet your curricular needs. We design information systems and create Web sites that lead students to the best resources online. We are expert in the presentation and productivity software that facilitates communication competencies. See the literacy standards at **ALA's Information Power**: <http://www.ala.org/ala/aasl/aasiprof/tools/informationpower/informationpower.htm>, which resonate clearly with **ISTE's NETS**: <http://cnets.iste.org/students/>
10. Tired of leading alone? Administrators, technology directors, and department chairs can rely on teacher-librarians as leaders in the areas of information literacy, technology, reading, and instruction, to research and help present materials and strategies to faculty. We are happy to develop technology integration inservices, to demonstrate new research strategies and resources, and to teach faculty how to create environments promoting academic integrity. We will gladly share what research tells us about best practice in instruction. Principals may want to download assessment materials at: <http://www.ala.org/ala/aasl/aasipubsandjournals/aasibooksandprod/aasibooksproducts.htm#principals>

Librarians get their kicks from making you look good. Not only do they help learners learn, they help teachers teach. We are waiting with open arms, so stop on by.