
Enhancing Teaching and Learning: A Leadership Guide for School Library Media Specialists, 2nd Edition, Revised, by Jean Donham, an established leader in the field, is a solid introduction to the challenging tasks confronting school library media specialists. This guide to the profession was first written in 1998, the second edition was published in 2005, and this revised edition came out in 2008. A revision of the original was necessitated by the American Association of School Librarians’ (AASL) publication of Standards for the 21st Century Learner (2007), which set new standards for educators and which focused on the need for learners to gain specific competencies in information literacy.

The author’s stated purpose is "to help school library media professionals effect change in their program by integrating it into the school's overall instructional plan" (p. ix) with emphasis on the library media specialist providing leadership by engaging with the teacher, student, administration and parents in cooperation, collaboration and mutual support. The AASL Standards have emphasized the need for educators to become aware of students’ cognitive and affective needs. This requires the school library media specialist to engage in leadership activities by advocating for library media centres and ensuring equal access and learning opportunities for all students and teachers served. Throughout the book, Donham encourages experimenting with teaching and media options while engaging students in a learning process.

The library media specialist is in a unique position to provide leadership, advocacy, and a supportive role for both the teachers and the students. Donham clearly articulates throughout the book the important roles of the library media specialist in addressing the curriculum needs of teachers by engaging students in interactive, visual and concrete learning aids; in addressing individual student learning styles; and in bringing knowledge and competencies to bear that complement those of the teacher.

The book is divided into two main sections: the first delving into the school and community environments and the second guiding the reader through the programming in which the school library media centre is engaged. Part I, The Environment covers students, curriculum and instruction, the principal, the school district and the community. Part II: The Library Media Program offers information on collaborative planning, scheduling library media activities, collection development, literacy, technology, information literacy, assessment of student work, program evaluation and leadership. Each chapter is well laid-out, offering a stand-alone resource for the reader. The chapter starts with a brief overview of learning expectations and ends with action strategies, a scenario for discussion and references used. Within each chapter are Enhancement in Action boxes that offer clear examples of how the chapter’s subject matter has been put into actual practice. The suggested readings at the end of the book under chapter headings would have been better placed at the end of each chapter.

The book is almost exclusively aimed at the library media specialist practicing in the United States, given the emphasis on addressing the standards set forth by AASL, the
No Child Left Behind Act, US copyright legislation and the lack of references to information from other countries that actively publish in this field.

The author index is an excellent tool, but the subject index is weak and missing some elements, for example, three of four text occurrences of wikis. The inclusion of the full titles from the further reading list complicates matters, and reduces the utility of the index as an effective subject access point.

Unrevised content detracts from the revision of the book and the reader is left with the sense that the scope and depth of the revision were not extensive enough; for instance, the use of older references and resources rather than more recent content. A notable example, was the author's continued use of the original Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives from 1956 with no reference to the highly-regarded and tested revision of that taxonomy by Lorin Anderson in 2001 (Anderson and Krathwohl, 2001) or the use of a collection development guideline chart from 1984 (p.166-167) even though many newer publications dealing with collection management in the school library setting exist (one of these texts was included in the further readings section but not referenced in the chapter focusing on collections in library media centres).

This title provides a broad introduction to the role of the school library media specialist: it clearly sets forth the many challenges that the specialist faces, outlines current issues facing American school libraries and steps to be taken by the school library media specialist toward building an environment of collaboration and leadership within the school setting. Overall it is a useful reference for understanding the role of the school library media specialist, the essential leadership they can provide and the need for advocating for and integrating school library media specialists into the core of all schools. Enhancing Teaching and Learning would also be a useful handbook for practitioners seeking to refresh their knowledge, particularly regarding the impact of the new AASL Standards and those interested in taking on the roles of leadership in and advocacy for school libraries and media centres.


Tiina Payson, Manager, Woodcroft Branch, Edmonton Public Library, tpayson@epl.ca, and Instructor, Information Management and Library Technology, Grant MacEwan College, Edmonton, Alberta.
This review copy was provided by way of The OLAStore. Neal-Schuman titles are distributed in Canada by the OLAStore. Members of the Partnership (http://www.thepartnership.ca/) will generally receive a discount of 5-10% on most publications. For further information about this title, please visit www.accessola.com/theolastore or contact orders@accessola.com.