

A Model of Inquiry: SSLA Fall Conference

Saskatchewan School Library Association

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Chris Arnstead
SSLA Executive



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Carol Koechlin is *trying* to retire. However, Carol and her long time colleague and collaborator Sandi Zwaan, are too much in demand to be fully retired. School districts and conference organizers contact Carol regularly to share her expertise in the areas of inquiry learning and the transformation of the school library into a *learning commons*. Never have the talents of qualified teacher librarians been needed more than now. Over one hundred and ten teacher librarians benefited from a workshop Carol lead on Monday, October 25 in Regina at the SSLA Fall Conference. In this workshop, Carol modeled the methodology she encourages others to use to foster inquiry. Participants engaged in activities to learn more about the process of inquiry and the concept the learning commons. The key inquiry questions for the day were:

How does the 21st century school library program support inquiry learning?

How do we

- meet the needs of learners today?
- help users be smart users of information?
- encourage positive mindsets?
- foster deep learning?
- be inclusive of all learners?

What is a learning commons and how can this approach enable successful inquiry learning?

Carol is enthusiastic about the renewal of the Saskatchewan curriculum, which encourages students to construct understanding of content and skills through inquiry. According to Carol, this renewal creates an open door for teacher librarians. Their knowledge and expertise is much needed by classroom teachers of all grades and subject areas as they struggle to understand and implement these changes. Carol had prepared engaging activities and selected thought provoking videos for the workshop. In the morning, participants worked together to expand their knowledge of today's learners and their needs. In the afternoon, the focus shifted to an exploration of the concept of a learning commons and its role in supporting successful inquiry.

According to Carol, the key to learning is approaching information or any task with questions. She involved the table groups in an entertaining exercise to discover how inquiry is like a ladder? Or like a menu? A river? A diary? A butterfly? Using an online Google spreadsheet participants were able to contribute simultaneously their ideas on a common topic. People were very enthusiastic about trying this technique in their own schools. In the teacher librarian spirit of sharing and collaboration, Carol created a wiki containing the materials she used in the workshop and has generously allowed it to be shared: <http://sslallearningcommons.pbworks.com/>.

Each participant received a copy of Carol and Sandi's latest publication, *Building Info Smarts: How to work with all kinds of information and make it your own*, and left the session with a wealth of fresh ideas and enthusiasm.

Thank you to organizers Joanne Beltramini (Regina Catholic School Division), Geneise Ott (Prairie Valley School Division), Maureen Erlendson (Prairie Valley School Division) and Rhonda Wills (Regina Public School Division).

Background information

Carol Koechlin and Sandi Zwaan are experienced educators who after formal retirement continue to contribute to the field of information literacy and school librarianship writing books, articles for professional journals, facilitating on-line courses, and presenting workshops in Canada and the United States. Their current work is to help schools address the needs of learners by teaching questioning skills and designing 'high think' assignments and projects that ignite student interest and utilize collaborative learning environments. Working with Dr David Loertscher, Koechlin and Zwaan have developed foundations for the transformation of school libraries and computer labs into a Learning Commons. Schools are invited to view and participate in this work in progress at <http://schoollearningcommons.pbworks.com/> .

Carol and Sandi's newest Canadian publication, *Building Info Smarts*, is published by Pembroke Publishers in Canada. This unique flipbook is a handy reference for teachers and an engaging tool for students. *The Big Think* co-authored with Dr. David Loertscher is published by Hi-Willow Research and Publishing in United States. This powerful teaching tool, presents 9 metacognitive strategies to turn the traditional end of a unit into the beginning of knowledge building and real growth. Both publications are now available in Canada through the OLA Bookstore.

Books include:

- Koechlin, Carol and Zwaan, Sandi. *Building Info Smarts: How to work with all kinds of information and make it your own*. Toronto: Pembroke, 2008.
- Koechlin, Carol and Zwaan, Sandi. *Q Tasks: How to Empower Students to Ask Questions and Care About Answers*. Toronto: Pembroke, 2006.
- Koechlin, Carol and Zwaan, Sandi *Info Tasks for Successful Learning*. Toronto: Pembroke, 2001.
- Koechlin, Carol and Zwaan, Sandi. *Information Power Pack: Junior*. Toronto: Pembroke, 1997.
- Koechlin, Carol and Zwaan, Sandi. *Information Power Pack: Intermediate*. Toronto: Pembroke, 1997.
- Koechlin, Carol and Zwaan, Sandi. *Teaching Tools for the Information Age*. Toronto: Pembroke, 1997.
- Koechlin, Carol, Rosenfeld, Esther and Loertscher, David. *Building a Learning Commons: A Guide for School Administrators and Learning Leadership Teams*. Salt Lake City UT: Hi Willow Research and Publishing, 2010.
- Loertscher, David, Koechlin, Carol and Zwaan, Sandi. *The Big Think: 9 Metacognitive Strategies that Make the Unit End Just the Beginning of Learning*. Salt Lake City UT: Hi Willow Research and Publishing, 2009.
- Loertscher, David, Koechlin, Carol and Zwaan, Sandi. *ISSUES: Think Models for Collaborative Knowledge Building*. Salt Lake City UT: Hi Willow Research and Publishing, 2009.
- Loertscher, David, Koechlin, Carol and Zwaan, Sandi. *PEOPLE: Think Models for Collaborative Knowledge Building*. Salt Lake City UT: Hi Willow Research and Publishing, 2009.

Loertscher, David, Koechlin,Carol and Zwaan, Sandi. *PLACES: Think Models for Collaborative Knowledge Building*. Salt Lake City UT: Hi Willow Research and Publishing, 2009.

Loertscher, David, Koechlin,Carol and Zwaan, Sandi. *The New Learning Commons: Where Learners Win*. Salt Lake City UT: Hi Willow Research and Publishing, 2008.

Loertscher, David, Koechlin,Carol and Zwaan, Sandi. *Beyond Bird Units*. Salt Lake City UT: Hi Willow Research and Publishing, 2007

Loertscher, David, Koechlin,Carol and Zwaan, Sandi. *Ban Those Bird Units*. Salt Lake City UT: Hi Willow Research and Publishing, 2004

Koechlin, Carol and Zwaan, Sandi. *Build Your Own Information Literate School*. Salt Lake City UT: Hi Willow Research and Publishing, 2003.

Published articles include:

1999 *Moving Beyond," All About Projects"* Teaching Librarian Volume 6 Number 3

1999 *Information Literacy 2000* School Libraries in Canada Volume 19, Number 2

2002 **Making library programs count: Where's the evidence?** School Libraries in Canada Volume 22 # 2

2002 *Focus on Understanding* Teacher Librarian Volume 30 Number 1

2003 *Advocating the Evidence* Teaching Librarian Volume 10 Number 3

2003 *Kick It Up a Notch* School Libraries in Canada Volume 22, Number 4

2005 *Ontario Canada is Connecting* IASL Newsletter Volume 34 Number 3

2006 **Knock Knock. Who's There?** Teaching Librarian Volume 13 Numbers 1-2

2006 **Are We There Yet? Visions of Learning - Online Conference Australian School Library Association (ASLA).**

2007 **Assignments Worth the Effort** Teacher Librarian Volume 34 Number 3

2008 **Everyone Wins** The Medium, Saskatchewan Teacher Librarians

2008 **Everyone Wins: differentiation in the school library** Teacher Librarian Volume 35 Number 5

2008 **The Time is Now: transform your school library into a learning commons** Teacher Librarian Volume 36 Number1

2009 **Engage and Grow with Questions** School Libraries in Canada Volume 27, Number 3

2009 **Leading the Way in the Learning Commons** Teaching Librarian Volume 17 Number 2

2010 **The Big Think: Reflecting, Reacting, and Realizing Improved Learning** Next Issue of Teacher Librarian

2010 *Rethinking, Revisioning, Transforming* IMPACT

Other Publications

2007 *The Student as Questioner Power Point* for DVD Powerful Pedagogies for Learning. South Australian Department of Education and Children's Services

2009 *The Student as Questioner Power Point* for DVD The South Australian Teaching for Effective Learning Compass. South Australian Department of Education and Children's Services

Wikis

Wiki With Us <http://wikiwithus.pbworks.com/FrontPage>

The New school Learning Commons <http://schoollearningcommons.pbworks.com/>

TM Canada <http://tmcanada.pbworks.com/>