

Flowing through Change

Column

by Anita M. Cellucci, April 2019

"Life is a series of natural and spontaneous changes. Don't resist them; that only creates sorrow. Let reality be reality. Let things flow naturally forward in whatever way they like."—Lao Tzu

There has long been a lot of talk of change in the library profession: change of attitude, change of perception, change of title, changing the name of the space, change related to equity, change of our students, the list seems endless. Perhaps what we need to speak more to is the reason that change is necessary for growth, innovation, and passion. I often think about how resistance to change is actually the issue, as whatever is changing becomes our sole focus. I consider myself to be a "go with the flow" sort of person. As I began writing this, my day has been one unexpected event after another and I needed to create a space for pause as I was dealing with my day. I have come to realize that change can often push us to think about things differently and occasionally also results in a better procedure, policy, or personal experience if we allow it.

I have found that it is better to continuously look for ways to move forward through consistent, thoughtful, and intentional practice. To me, it seems essential to reflect on the constantly shifting community needs. These needs are based on new staff, new initiatives, and the abilities and situations of our students as well as outside forces that we may not be privy to information about. If we embrace the fact that change is our constant, it becomes easier to manage and is then part of the process. I have long believed that the secret to overcoming resistance to change is to embrace the idea that librarians can actually help to shift this attitude within their schools and community. I've been successful by making the person in front of me the priority. I am suggesting that we pause and think about the feelings someone is experiencing and offer suggestions on the spot to manage the change. As a high school librarian, I find myself in this scenario quite frequently and can often find a comfortable way to bring change to a resistant teacher. This change often relates to a new teaching strategy, pedagogy, student issues, or school-wide initiative. This strategy can be transferred to students as well. If we view each interaction with compassion, the flow naturally begins. Building trust with those around me is the best way for us to work through changes together.

The following are some important areas to consider regarding change to our school libraries:

1. Diversity and inclusivity—Collection development; awareness of implicit bias
2. Equity—The Legislative Special Commission on School Library Services in Massachusetts has published "The Massachusetts School Library Study: Equity and Access for Students in the Commonwealth" (<https://mblc.state.ma.us/programs-and-support/youth-services/school-libraries-study.php>).
3. Supporting all learner populations—Programming for the ESL and special education students
4. Health issues, including mental health and the opioid crisis—Education, programming, student clubs
5. Social and emotional support—Education, programming, and student support
6. The library as a safe and welcoming space—Ongoing assessment of the space in terms of the needs of students and school community

Each of these issues deserves full pause and reflection. Reminding myself of the impactful nature of this work motivates me to overcome the frustration and feelings of being overwhelmed. If I focus on my role in these changes instead of the actual change, the compassion I feel for my community overrules my fear of change.

Further Reading

American Library Association. *The State of America's Libraries*. 2018. <http://www.ala.org/news/sites/ala.org.news/files/content/2018-soal-report-final.pdf>

School Library Journal. "A Diversity and Cultural Literacy Toolkit." 2018. <https://www.slj.com/?detailStory=diversity-cultural-literacy-toolkit>

MLA CITATION

Cellucci, Anita M. "Flowing through Change." *School Library Connection*, April 2019, schoollibraryconnection.com/Content/Article/2196090.

<https://schoollibraryconnection.com/Content/Article/2196090?topicCenterId=2253166>

Entry ID: 2196090

