

# What Primarily Drives the Changes You Make in Your Library Program?

The question for this month's One-Question Survey was prefaced with this: "Libraries are in a constant state of change, responding to technology, education, and program trends." Then, we asked, "What primarily drives the changes you make in your school library program?" Our 270 respondents chose their inspiration for change as follows:

- Professional development you've attended—23.4%
- Curriculum needs—18.8%
- Student input—14.8%
- School or district mission, vision, goals—14.8%
- Other—10.3%
- Teacher requests—7.7%
- Administrator feedback—3.7%
- Advice from colleagues—3.7%

When I first became a school librarian, fifteen years ago, a friend gave me a set of books that I think she found at a garage sale. They were all library science books from the 1940's. One of them, *Library Workers*, has given me serious food for thought in regards to this month's survey question. Despite being 80 years old, many of the tenets of good librarianship outlined in this book remain true today, and I find comfort in this. While the impetus for change in the library world, specifically the school library world, is multifaceted all of these drivers of change are rooted in the basic guiding principles of librarianship. I believe that we should look at change very carefully, and instead of fighting it, look at it as a valuable asset to our profession.

As certified, degreed, professional librarians, we must remember the theory behind our practice. Sound theory that has stood the test of time establishes and guides our best practice. That the library is a growing organism is one of the Five Laws of Library Science as penned by S. R. Ranganathan in 1931 (Yucht 2001). The *Library Workers* book points out that "Out in the community, lives are changing, horizons expanding, because a library is within reach" (Keliher 1940, p.8). As school librarians, we are adjusting our programs, spaces, and practice based on the changing needs of our communities when we take input from students, administrators, teachers, and our colleagues as nearly 30% of our respondents indicated. On the survey, Ashley Freeman told us, "Student input is a very close second. I feel that the teachers have the best pulse on what the students need/want in the library, so I take their suggestions very seriously." By employing change based on such feedback, we continue to make the library a relevant place to the changing lives and expanding horizons of our students

In order to be change agents and use our knowledge of current educational trends in thoughtful and meaningful ways, professional development was highlighted as being particularly important by those surveyed. The *Library Workers* book tells us, "Librarians in all fields of the work engage in... 'professional' or 'in-service' activities [to] help librarians to keep growing in their profession and to keep the fresh outlook so necessary in their work" (Keliher 1940, p. 23). Tiffany Whitehead connected PD to another option on the survey, "The library program has to align with the school's mission, vision, and goals. I find that I am most motivated and inspired to make changes after great professional development or inspiring ideas from my PLN, but it always has to be aligned with the mission and goals of my school." I also agree with another librarian who told us, "Honestly, I think social media content from other librarians and educators plays a significant role. It's the best informal PD, especially being in a small district with only one other elementary librarian. Of course, I also consider student input, school needs, and so forth, but social media keeps me fresh." It is through seeking out relevant and current professional development from those leading and sharing best practice in our profession that we can learn and apply thoughtful changes to our libraries.

If the school library is to be a growing organism, school librarians need to treat it as such. By harnessing the power of thoughtful change, we can use changes to our library programs, spaces, and work to help steer the choices we make regarding our individual libraries and to our profession as a whole. Nancy Jo Lambert said, "We need to completely abandon the mentality that this is how I've always done it, so this is how I will keep doing it. I think a balanced library program acts on all of the above. If you take all of these things into consideration on a regular basis, then you are creating a responsive library program that will evolve as the needs and wants of your stakeholders change."

By embracing change, we create spaces and places that enrich the lives of our students and inspire all those who walk the halls of our school. Emily Northcutt summed up our end game as a profession, "When I learn more about the possibilities of what my school library can and should do, I'm inspired to come back to my building and try new things. I want to give my students the best experience possible so that they will hopefully love and support libraries throughout their lives." Her statement s.

## Works Cited

Keliher, Alice Virginia, et al. *Library Workers*. Harper & Brothers, 1940.

Yucht, Alice H. "Guiding Principles." *Teacher Librarian* 28, no. 5 (2001): 38.

## About the Author

**James Allen** is a teacher librarian and EDhub Director at Eminence Independent, a K–12 public school in Kentucky. He is an organizer and regular moderator of #KyLChat, which gives librarians across Kentucky a place to share and explore new ideas. He is also a co-founder of the #KyGoPlay movement, which is changing the way people think about libraries, makerspaces, and play in school. James is a Google for Education Certified Innovator. He is also a past president of the Kentucky Association of School Librarians.

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