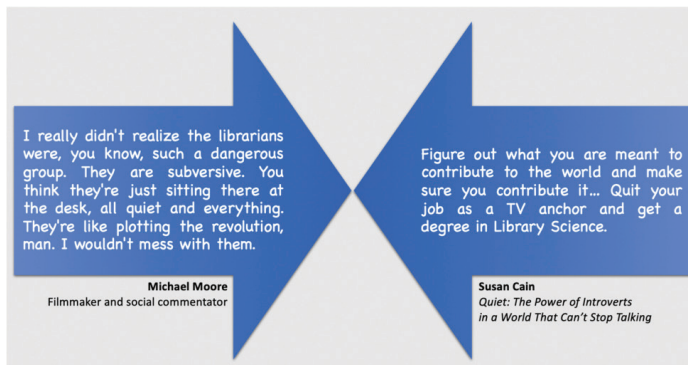


Quiet People Making Noise for School Libraries



These two quotes are known to practically everyone who works in libraries. On first look they present completely opposing views. In fact they present different aspects of the same idea: the librarian as introvert.

I am an introvert. That doesn't mean that I am shy and socially anxious. I am not a delicate flower. It does mean that I am generally quiet, reserved, and introspective. The "quiet" part of this description may surprise those of you who have seen me present, or tried to get a word in edgewise when I extemporize on a favourite topic. The fact is that, like many quiet people who are driven by passion, I have developed some extroverted tendencies.

Do you recognize yourself in the Michael Moore quote? I do. Isn't plotting the revolution part of the job description when you work in libraries? Aren't we all driven by the fundamental belief that libraries and everything they embody can change people's lives? So why are we quietly plotting at our desks?

On first reading, Susan Cain's quote appears to be a shocking stereotype of the shy and retiring shushy-bunhead librarian. But let's fill in the rest of the paragraph, which focuses on passion: "Figure out what you are meant to contribute to the world and make sure you contribute it. If this requires public speaking or networking or other activities that make you uncomfortable, do them anyway."

And when it comes to quitting your job as a TV anchor to become a librarian, Cain qualifies this by saying, "But if TV anchoring is what you love, then create an extroverted persona to get yourself through the day." School libraries are not the domain of the quiet, as we all well know. Substitute teacher-librarian, library technician or whatever job you have for TV anchor, and Cain may have a point.

Of course we're not all introverts. Far from it. But there is something about working in a school library that keeps us quiet, professionally speaking. We may thrive in the lively atmosphere of the modern school library learning commons, but struggle to have our voice heard in the education world.

I so often hear the complaint that nobody understands what we do. Of course they don't! They don't have the professional knowledge and training that we do. How can we expect them to understand what we are capable of, and most importantly, how that capacity can help them achieve their own goals? It's up to us to help others understand the unique value of the library learning commons.

If we want people to understand the positive impact of the school library and school library professionals, then we need to speak up. Get on the agenda, write that annual report, get active in online networks! Explicitly share how you and the library program help students succeed and the school achieve its goals.



STANDARD

Advancing the Learning Community to achieve school goals

The ultimate goal of the library learning commons is improved student achievement through the refining of instruction for essential literacy, research and inquiry and communication skills. As such, it is also a key to building opportunities for student learning and innovation to be demonstrated, shared and showcased. Forming a team to lead the learning commons is an effective way to intentionally plan for and assess the success of the goals of this learning space. Strong leadership for the learning commons is vital to ensure sustainability and attainment of school, district and provincial/territorial student learning goals and outcomes.

Find out more at: lsop.canadianschoolibraries.ca

Need some ideas? *Leading Learning* can help. Find yourself on the continuum and decide on your strategy. Be a positive influencer. We can all find our voice. ■