

Who knows that you make a difference



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Not too long ago, I was told by a senior librarian in the University that we should not worry that much about our mission given that it was not really a "matter of life and death". And on first glance that may be true. We do not make the same difference to those under the knife in surgery or to those who have broken bones, or encountered an impacted wisdom tooth. I was thinking about how appreciative I was to my dentist after that nasty impacted condition. But I think that it is wrong to sell our place in the sun short just because we may not make life and death decisions.

I think that the differences we make to children and students we serve (or is it better to say) our libraries serve, may be just as important to the life of the individual as that life saving operation. The conditions of service are not equal, just different enough to be considered separately. There is no question that the body is essential, but without the spirit, without the spark - there is really not much purpose behind that body. That is why I have always thought that the teacher was far more important than the physician. They can repair damaged parts. We can have an effect - not completely on our own, but with our tools - on the whole life of an individual.

That is why we have the best job in the world. That is why it is so important that we have the tools to do our job. We make significant differences without being fully aware of our role in the change. Let me expand this notion through all the players:

The Teacher

We affect teachers just by being in the school. In one school in Ontario's north a long time ago, I was told that I made a huge difference just by wearing a tie. I was the only "teacher" who wore one! That was when I thought tone was important. Teachers in that school accused me of being a "reader". My first reaction was gloom, thinking that I had in some way let the side down. In that northern town way back then, ties and