

Documenting the journey: Using research portfolios to enhance

Jo-Anne LaForty

Jo-Anne LaForty, a secondary school teacher-librarian in the Toronto District School Board and a Past-President of the OSLA, has made a name for herself at the forefront of a new wave of understanding of how teacher-librarians can help improve student achievement. In addition, she has made a name for Ontario's teacher-librarians as she took her message about how we implement *Information Studies, K-12* using OSLA's research portfolios to the Australian School Library Association Conference in October 2001 where she was a keynote speaker. What a wonderful advocate we have in Jo-Anne, not only throughout Ontario but, now, internationally! This article was first published in *Access*, an Australian magazine for teacher-librarians, in advance of her keynote address entitled: "Choreographing the Chaos: Teaching Information Literacy". Jo-Anne has just been named Librarian of the Year by the Canadian School Library

Inquiry and research is a complex journey and in Ontario we have learned first-hand that all students benefit when they are guided through it.

Teacher-librarians, with their unique understanding of information problem-solving strategies, are in the ideal position to serve as tour guides for this journey. They teach students the research process and work with them as they receive or conceive their topic, develop a focus and move towards their final destination.

Building an optimistic outlook and sustaining momentum throughout the process is a challenge with all learners, but especially so with less academic students. On this journey students need a ticket, a map, a travel diary, a souvenir case, and a photo album.

A research portfolio is all of these in one, and when given at the beginning of the research project, conveys the message that this journey is important and that each stop along the way will be valued.

RESEARCH PORTFOLIOS

A portfolio literally means to carry paper. In education, a student portfolio "is a purposeful collection of student work that exhibits the student's efforts, progress and achievements in one or more area." (Paulson, L.F., Paulson, and Meyer, 1991, 60.) Seen as much more than a