



A public library and sch

The school library view by Donna E. Berzaitis

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times” perfectly describes the humble beginnings of the St. Aloysius Gonzaga Secondary School library. When Gonzaga first opened its doors in September 2000 to approximately 240 grade 9 students, the permanent school building wasn't even ready. It was located at a temporary site in Georgetown while construction on the real school continued in Mississauga near the Erin Mills Town Centre. In the cleaning and preparation process prior to September 2000, the library was converted into a cafeteria and music room. In essence, the students did not have a library or teacher-librarian for their first year of high school (nor did they have a vice-principal as a matter of fact!). Despite these setbacks of location, limited space and resources, we managed to grow into a close-knit school community. Perhaps the knowledge of what rewards lay ahead made these sacrifices more manageable.

Sharing philosophy and vision

The “real” St. Aloysius Gonzaga was going to be a state of the art facility physically joined to a community center, swimming pool and public library. It would be named the Erin Meadows Community Centre and Library. This unique partnership forged between the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board and the City of Mississauga and Public Library

was going to be the envy of and prototype for other interested communities. In the meanwhile, my teaching duties were full time English as well as department head of English. It was always a desire to include librarianship as part of my teaching profile, so when the school board sanctioned that all high schools would be staffed with a full time teacher librarian by September 2001, I decided to pursue the Gonzaga library position. Before the actual move into the new facility, I had an opportunity to meet with Mary Anne Wilson, Library Manager for Erin Meadows, and Sue Coles, Senior Librarian. In a very productive session, we exchanged and shared philosophies and visions for the upcoming academic year. Both Mary Anne and Sue had been involved in this very special project for quite some time (see Mary Anne's piece, Part 2). I was a newcomer to this set up. For one more year, I was still going to teach some English, maintain the English headship duties and administer and organize EQAO's Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test.

Our greatest learning ally

The Erin Meadows Community Centre and Library unofficially opened in July 2001. Its opening proved to be an immediate success based on the heavy traffic of customers. The library itself boasts tens of thousands of items in a 22,000 square foot space. From books to reference materials, CDs, DVDs, scores of computers which offer excellent internet links and a wealthy supply of electronic data bases, the Erin Meadows Library would become and continues to be Gonzaga's greatest learning ally. With two months of operation under its belt,

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