

Teacher-Librarian Donna E. Berzaitis

the Erin Meadows Library Staff eagerly awaited its newest customers on September 4, 2001: the students of St. Aloysius Gonzaga. By this time, in Gonzaga's second year of operation, we had added another grade and some new programs. From a small student population of 240 grade 9's, the school expanded to a population of 750 grade 9's and 10's, including an extended French program, Career Path (i.e. vocational) program and an autism program. Another forty or so teachers joined the original staff, including a vice-principal. We certainly seemed to be swallowed up by our huge and grand surroundings. Even so, we weren't using our entire building: our second floor was occupied by St. Mark's elementary school whose building was being renovated). There were many adjustments to make but it was worth the countless benefits the entire Gonzaga community enjoyed. By our second year in the facility, Gonzaga added another grade to top the student population to 1,260 students. We have hired on another 40 or so teachers (teaching staff of 85) and the entire building is now inhabited by Gonzaga students.

The library agreement

The Library Services Agreement Contract set the framework for how Mary Anne and I are to conduct business. Normally, in our board, the high school teacher-librarian works with a team of a library technician and library secretary, on a schedule that is purely decided by budget. In other words, the teacher-librarians might not have access to these very important resources on a full-time basis. As well, the teacher-librarian establishes a budget, organizes the processing and cataloguing of materials, and oversees circulation, reshelving, and collection of fines.

In some schools, teacher-librarians might be in charge of audiovisual equipment and, of course, computers. My teacher-librarian position at St. Aloysius Gonzaga is entirely different. Since we share our facility with the Mississauga Public Library System, the library is operated and organized by their Central Branch. The Erin Meadows Library employs approximately 30 people on a full- and part-time basis. These people oversee circulation, acquisitions, budget, promotions, and special programs, carried out according to their chain of command. My role, as outlined in the Library Services Agreement Contract, is specifically to serve the curriculum needs of the students and teachers of Gonzaga. Essentially, it is the quintessential teacher-librarian job.

That is not to say that I do not have a say in acquisition of materials and budget matters. Since our target audience is narrowed down to high school students in a Catholic system and not the general public, our school has purchased thousands of dollars of books to complement and supplement the current library resources. If I see a specific area of curriculum that could benefit from additional materials in our library (e.g., titles which address the new Ministry curriculum expectations), I submit a budget for these items. I get to offer suggestions to Mary Anne on resources being purchased by the public library, including periodicals and electronic databases.

Identity and operations

Along with curriculum matters, the Library Services Agreement Contract addresses the issue of student discipline. It is clear that any classroom management issue that takes place in the library during school hours is strictly the



domain of the teacher-librarian. The contract stipulates that all classes are to be accompanied by their classroom teacher. This factor definitely assists me. It is also my responsibility to supervise the students before the school day and during lunches. The library opens at 8:00 am and school begins at 8:20 am. This early opening is a boon to the public since most Mississauga public library branches open at 10 am on weekdays.

Because we have uniforms, identifying Gonzaga students is a straightforward task (for me and the Erin Meadows branch). I wear the school uniform as well to separate me from the Erin Meadows staff and to allow students to locate me easily; some of the teachers and administrators also wear the uniform.

The student photo identification card serves as the student's library card at any Mississauga branch. This library card set-up was co-ordinated by the Erin Meadows staff and Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board. The Erin Meadows library staff has a pictorial directory of our students so that if concern about a student or group of students arises, they are to provide me with names. In fact, the contract does cover after school hours discipline

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