



TL the profile

Mei-Lan Marko: Partnering her program

Interview by Dianne Clipsham

As part of a series profiling key people working in school libraries in Ontario, *Teaching Librarian* asked Mei-Lan Marko, teacher-librarian at Rideau High School, a multi-cultural school in east-end Ottawa, to join us.

TL: How did you become involved in school libraries in the first place?

I was a teacher of High school English and History when I had the opportunity to work again with my friend and Principal Pat Irving, a former teacher-librarian herself. She drew me into her plans to renovate the Library and make it integral to the whole school as a teaching centre. The goal was to provide strong curriculum support through collaborating with teachers, developing assignments and evaluating students, as well as providing a literacy program to serve the needs of our diverse population. I was given the chance to direct the library program, a real challenge and opportunity to experience a change in my career. Entering my new role gave me a new perspective on education – Pat encouraged me to see the global picture of the school, learn about new curriculum areas, and place the Library at the center of it all – it's been a new and exciting challenge!

TL: How long have you been in the library, and can you tell us more about your School?

This will be my fifth year in Rideau's School Library. Like many Ottawa city high schools, members of the population speak over 50 languages, so it is an ESL Centre and an English Literacy Development Centre as well. Our school web site tells you more: http://www.ocdsb.edu.on.ca/profiles/2002_2003/RIDE.pdf. Students here originate from many different countries, so the cultural and ethnic diversity presents many challenges and opportunities to reach out to other parts of the country and the world. In addition, Ottawa is the center of communications technology in the country, and that has afforded us some opportunities to use that capacity in the programs we have created.

TL: Have there been any outstanding moments for you?

Yes – many! Last year, for example, Rideau HS Library hosted a school-wide initiative on *Landmines*, highlighting speakers and a video-conferencing session, which connected our students with those in seven other Canadian