

Coping with crisis @ your library™

Roberta Henley



The Editorial Board of *The Teaching Librarian* had no problem in August when deciding upon the themes for our three issues this year. The publication of Ken Haycock's report, *The Crisis in Canada's School Libraries*, was generating much discussion. We knew we have been living and working in crisis mode for a long time. I mean, which one of us doesn't live and breathe the consequences of cutbacks — improper staffing, lack of funding, frustration... ? Because of the trend of the last 10 years, our school libraries have been left in a dreadful state, and it's the children who suffer. As the OLA Summit on School Libraries

Communiqué concluded:

"There is a real crisis in the literacy and knowledge creation abilities of Ontario's young people...

The competencies needed for students in a knowledge-based society are not being adequately addressed in Ontario schools.

Properly staffed library teams and school library programs make a significant difference to standardized scores and to student learning.

Inequities of access to learning resources are disenfranchising a significant part of Ontario's student population.

Communication about what is required and essential for effective library programs is dangerously poor among educators, parents, school boards and the business world..."

(Ontario Library Association, June 28, 2002)

But progress is being made. In Ontario and across Canada, our voice continually becomes stronger. Many of us worked long and hard leading up to the last provincial election to educate the public and those in a position to make a difference. *The Crisis in Canada's School Libraries* was widely circulated to educators, administrators, and government leaders. It succinctly argues the case for investment in school libraries and teacher-librarians and it outlines steps the Ministries of Education should take to revitalize Canada's school libraries. We are confident that the recent change in Ontario's government will pay real dividends as Premier McGuinty follows through with his promises.

Back to the boardroom... Our discussion then led to how our colleagues were coping. What are we doing about this? How have some of us been getting by, some even managing to deliver fabulous programs? Are we doing ourselves a disservice by doing more with less? Are there strategies and resources that we are unaware of out there to help us cope? What are our elementary and secondary peers doing? How do library coordinators and consultants manage? How are the rest of Canada's school libraries coping? What is taking place in school libraries internationally? Many of these questions have interesting and surprising answers found in the articles in this issue.

Our next two themes should prove to be equally stimulating and applicable: ICT @ your library and Ethics @ your library. Because the nature of our work encompasses expertise that is continually growing and changing and because we make such a difference in the lives of our students, there are no shortages of topics. Our hope is that this issue and others to follow address our concerns, offer assistance where needed, and continue to highlight the incredible work that we do! ■

TL

the editor's notebook