

Art? In the *Library*?

By Gina Brohm

This was the refrain from my mild mannered, not often flustered custodian Shirley, who had always supported me in all of my initiatives as a new teacher-librarian.

Yes, I could certainly see this venture from her perspective. A group of 32 large bodied, hormonally afflicted Grade 8 students were to leave the sanctity of their four-walled, sink-enhanced, heavily-tiled classroom to express their artistic flare in our plumbing-void, open concept, heavily-CARPETED Information Centre.

“But Shirley,” I said, “the Grade 8s need to learn about the World’s Greatest Artists!”

“Yes, indeed they do,” was her reply, “however I don’t recall Michelangelo ever painted the ceiling of a LIBRARY. They can use their own room!” And off she went, my former supporter and ally, with nary a glance over her shoulder to view the incredulous look on my face.

Needless to say, I now had to figure out how I would parlay this unforeseen issue with my Grade 8 colleague with whom I had promised to do a collaborative inquiry and research artist unit. The site of this joint venture: our school’s Information Centre, of course.

“Where better to work on this?” I said to Rob,

“We have art books, encyclopedias, periodicals, computers, walls to hang art samples on *and* lots of tables to both research *and* create on.

“I’m in.” he said. “I need both a first term visual art and research mark, so let’s start the art!”

Fellow teacher-librarians, I was fortifying our destiny as experts in curricula, rescuer of harried teachers, truly *masters of our domain*. However, I was unknowingly breaking one of the tacit rules of our school: don’t upset your custodian by doing art in the library!

Why, you may ask, do I want to rock the boat—or in this case, *the school*—with the notion of teaching art in the Information Centre? Aren’t there

enough collaborative activities to be doing in the library such as research, novel units, Web quests, literature circles, author studies, and so forth? As a teacher-librarian, isn’t it

my responsibility to review, compare and select exemplary resources for my staff to use from picture books, teacher guides, videos, art books and research materials to support *them* as *they* teach visual arts in the classroom?

Well.....yes.

After much introspection and some recent inspiring art in-services (along with reading

**“You Must be Crazy!
You Want to Teach
Art in the Library?”**