

many exceptions—of library technicians who do incredible things with the classes and students they see, and of teacher-librarians who keep immaculate shelves and pristine collections—but think of the possibilities, to paraphrase Rick DuFour, beyond “the tyranny of OR” into “the genius of AND”! With a divided focus, something has to give, and running a school library should not be a one-person task. *Achieving Information Literacy*, the Canadian School Library Association’s standards, states that an acceptable level of staffing in elementary schools with 300–499 students is 1.0 teacher-librarians and 1.0 clerical/technical staff.

A helpful analogy would be that of doctors and nurses in a hospital. Although each profession can do the work of the other, it is not often expected that the nurse would perform the duties of a doctor and vice-versa. Both professions are within the health sector and are trained differently for different purposes but the same goal. Hospital environments would not choose one profession over the other—both doctors and nurses work in harmony to provide the best service to their clients.

Cynics and realists are probably chuckling at this point in the article—how is this realistically possible, considering that having any qualified personnel in a school library is more of a gift than an expectation? Battling for the meagre placements and misunderstanding the roles of each profession has bred tension and antagonism. Teacher-librarians have worked so long to advocate for the position of teacher-librarian as library instructional leader that the advocacy inadvertently ignored other school library personnel who matter. Library technicians exist in a netherworld of being support staff but viewed in a different light than office administrators.

The OSLA has begun the reconciliation with changes to its by-laws. The new by-law wording states:

2. The objects of the Division are:
 - a. to further the development of school library programs and school libraries in Ontario,
 - b. to strengthen and unify the voice of teacher-librarians as curriculum leaders,
 - c. to work with the full library community on shared issues and programs,
 - d. to represent the profession of teacher-librarianship as a subject association

recognized by the Ontario Ministry of Education,

- e. to provide professional development opportunities for teacher-librarians and other qualified school library staff, and
- f. to promote research related to effective school libraries.

The second point clearly delineates the role of teacher-librarian as curriculum providers. The fifth point explicitly includes individuals such as library technicians. For the purposes of this article, we focused on library technicians not to exclude other library service providers but to reflect the most common working situation in Ontario school libraries.

Both teacher-librarians and library technicians need to work together, instead of being critical of each other. Some secondary school libraries are models of what is possible when teacher-librarians and library technicians work together. A library technician in York Catholic District School Board reported that “At the secondary level the relationship between the teacher-librarian/library technician I feel is more successful because they both work together everyday as the position is full-time for both of them.” Yes, money is tight, but if both sides keep giving the key message, that both teacher-librarians and library technicians are necessary for a fantastic school library, then like waves on a rock, eventually resistance will be worn away and changes will occur. It may take years, but it is worth the wait. Can a teacher-librarian buddy up with a library technician to exchange services—not as a master and servant relationship, but as equal partners sharing tools and assisting with operations? We think it is possible... let’s think outside the box! Begin with mutual respect and take it from there.

A few weeks after my visit to my children’s school library, I received a phone call from Ms. J. She wanted to reciprocate and offered to come to my school to help reinvigorate my messy shelves that I had complained about when I compared them to her pristine, immaculate ones. She came and it was wonderful. It just felt... right. I was able to concentrate on my lessons while she shelf-read and managed to put the shelves into order. Both tasks benefited the students—having resources organized made finding needed resources possible, and having lessons on how to use the resources with a critical eye made learning relevant skills possible. ■