

Looking for D

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If you're reading this article, it might be because you recognize that different types of media can be important allies in boosting the image of your school library. On the other hand, you could be wondering why library staff should take valuable time from other activities to work on building a positive public profile with the media.

Media collaboration doesn't guarantee your school library "fame and glory". It is unlikely to inflate the number of requests for your autograph, or increase your library's ultimate value in the eyes of your patrons. It can have several practical effects, however.

Media recognition of work done by students and teachers in libraries can be a powerful motivating factor: it reinforces the message that their work is valuable. Most school libraries are publicly funded, so they are accountable to the community. The media can help give taxpayers an understanding of how the school and its library serve the interests of students and the broader community. The publicity generated by a dynamic school library may attract new students, as well as additional funding to a school. Stories from, and about, school libraries can also raise the general public's awareness about issues researched and studied in the library, such as literacy, social justice, and the environment.

Ross Virgo, Manager of Public Affairs and Communications for the York Region District School Board, explains just why the media might be interested in your school library: "Events are newsworthy when they command attention, pique curiosity, or provoke emotional responses. News editors are always on the lookout for stories that feature unusual or unexpected human behavior: exceptional generosity during hard times; outstanding achievement in the face of adversity; deep compassion in response to anger and conflict. These are the 'hooks' that capture the interest of news people and make them want to cover an event."

In media training workshops, Sharlene Hunter, Coordinator of Communications at the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, notes that issues and events that affect children's education and lives are frequently

550 students sign petition to lengthen library hours; Principal says staff constraints.(GTA)

"550 students sign petition to lengthen library hours; Principal says staff constraints.(GTA). ." The Toronto Star (Toronto, Ontario). (May : Periodicals). Gale. SOLS - Oakville Public Library. 16 July 2009 <<http://find.galegroup.com/itx/infomark.do?&contentSet=IAC- Documents&type=retrieve&tabID=T004&prodId=CPI&docId=CJ1990>

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The students at York Mills Collegiate love their library - so much so they demanding the school reinstate morning hours so they have more time

Two Toronto Star articles that dealt with
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newsworthy. She explains that reporters are looking for stories that are new or timely. They are attracted to conflict and controversy and to stories that will appeal to a wide audience. They like stories that are relevant to other events in the news or that are "simply surprising."

Jeff Keay, Head of Media Relations at CBC English Services, sums it up nicely: "It has to have that magical interesting 'hmmm' factor when you see it, hear it, or read it."

Having identified a newsworthy event in the school library, library staff can assist the media in bringing the story to the public's attention. Anna Caputo, Communications Officer for the Toronto District School Board, suggests preparing stories for the media. "If you have an event happening, or you want to share some good news, write an article and send the editor photos to accompany it. This way, if they have space, they can drop in the story. Photos really add to a story. However, it's important to have signed media release forms for photographs of students."

Ms. Caputo also suggests that it is a good idea to develop a relationship with the editor of the local community papers to share information about school events. A media advisory or news release should be sent out a week before the event. News editors review the releases and choose which events they will attend. Even if a reporter cannot attend an event, if enough detail is provided, a media advisory will sometimes form the basis of a story.

Not every story will win the competition for media attention, unfortunately. Jeff Keay says that in his