



**The library entrance, then and now.**

**Photos by: Vox Lycei and Lucie Gagnon**

that is cultivated in school libraries through reading circles, book clubs and the provision of engaging material for independent reading. Another key role in the contemporary school library will be to guide users through a maze of information and to help them learn to ask the questions that will make their searches meaningful. The teacher-librarian, library technician, or school librarian has an overview of technology, resources and the curriculum that comes from working with teachers of many subjects and grade levels. Equally importantly, the library, with its diverse resources, can often support independent research in a way that a classroom cannot.

In *Library: An Unquiet History*, Matthew Battles quotes Guglielmo Sirleto, a Vatican Librarian during the counter-reformation, as having observed, “The best place to hide books, often, is the library.” The irony in this observation is equally evident in the age of the Internet as students who do not ask the right questions, and who do not know how to use search engines to refine searches, struggle to find the information they need. Rather than rendering school libraries redundant, the proliferation of information has made them ever more important to the process of learning.

In his recently published novel, *The Makers*, Cory Doctorow writes about iconic corporations that transform themselves by using their infrastructure to support innovative entrepreneurial activities. In a sense, traditional school libraries are similar to those corporations, with expertise, infrastructure and goodwill. Building on our expertise in accessing and organizing information, and taking advantage of the resources and physical spaces that are part of the school library heritage, we can respond to rapid social and technological change by supporting individualized and innovative teaching and learning.

School libraries provide an excellent venue for students to learn about their own heritage and to share their expertise with others. The library’s value is in its position as an ideal provider of resources and expertise, that in turn enable teachers, students and the community to teach and learn from each other. The institution’s value is less vested in books and hardware; the emphasis has shifted to its location as a curricular crossroad where individuals with diverse expertise, experience, age, perspective and curiosity can meet and explore the constantly expanding galaxy of resources to which they now have access. ■