

# Answering Rita

## Rita Resourceful



**T**he editorial team of *The Teaching Librarian* collaborates on the content and organization of our magazine and we have decided that it's time for Rita to retire. Rita has been the incarnation of a number of Ontario teacher-librarian writers over the years and the content has been the result of brainstorming, long discussions, sometimes concerns, and always multiple solutions.

As we transition from “Agony Aunt” Rita to a 21<sup>st</sup> century, crowd-sourced column, we are asking our readers for their help with some ongoing teacher-librarian questions and, as a result, we have a crowdsourced Rita to take us into the next phase of *The Teaching Librarian*, the official magazine of the Ontario School Library Association.

The responses came from a number of different school boards across the province and from a variety of school library experiences. Once again, thank you for taking the time to respond using the Google Form and, although all contributors to this article cannot be listed, you know who you are.

### **1. How do you advocate for a real 21<sup>st</sup> century Learning Commons in your school?**

An advocate for the 21<sup>st</sup> century school library is one role I really hadn't considered when my career path brought me to the position of teacher-librarian. Publicly supporting and taking up the cause of moving into the 21<sup>st</sup> century as a teacher-librarian in a school library was the last thing on my to-do list. Successful advocacy may well depend on the open minds

of a supportive administration or school council, but with backup using professional resources, knowledge of trending ideas, and planning for the needs of your school community, this task will become more natural. Use of the teacher-librarian and the learning commons space by staff can help encourage change. We can manipulate the timetable to incorporate large blocks for inquiry or project based learning and we can propose co-teaching in order to model new directions in education. Once some of our colleagues have been introduced to the benefits of these experiences we can leverage these converts to share their experiences with other staff. Making the “library and TL integral to the culture and structure of the academic climate” (Goodhand, 2017) will benefit the development of your learning commons.

The best help to a teacher-librarian advocating for change toward a 21<sup>st</sup> century learning commons is the school clients.

### **2. How do you submit an effective budget proposal to your school administration in September?**

In some cases, budget proposals are submitted in May, June, or October. Proposals can take the form of spreadsheets, tables, paper, and pencil proposals, slideshows, Animoto or even more creative “year in review” compilations of spending and activity in the library/learning commons.

Budgets allocated to school libraries vary widely from school to school and expectations of the administration change from year to year, not only for