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Dispositions in the Twenty First Century School Library Profession

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Within the school library profession there is an emerging focus on dispositions, defined as "a tendency to exhibit frequently, consciously, and voluntarily a pattern of behavior that is directed to a broad goal" (Katz, 1993). Directed focus groups of practicing school librarians were asked to articulate their vision for school libraries of the future. Data from these groups informed development of six dispositional continua to guide both school library education and school librarianship in the 21ˢᵗ century. This study clarifies the dispositions needed by school librarians in the future.

Introduction

"To become independent learners, students must gain not only the skills but also the dispositions to use those skills" (American Association of School Librarians (AASL), 2007). With these words the school library profession in the U.S. signaled its part in a conversation about the need to move beyond the teaching of skills to include the desire and interest in using those skills. This conversation began in the previous century and evolved in teacher preparation from a focus on skills and pedagogy to one inclusive of dispositions. AASL defined dispositions as "Ongoing beliefs and attitudes that guide thinking and intellectual behavior that can be measured throughout actions taken." Children born in the year 2007, when the Standards for the 21st Century Learner (AASL, 2007) were published, will soon be entering our schools and libraries. In ten years they will be in our secondary schools; in another ten years they may be graduating from our colleges and joining our increasingly global workforce.

How should the profession educate the school librarians who are charged with implementing 21st Century standards? We put this broad question to three focus groups of practicing school librarians. Their responses led us back to this issue of dispositions, turning the question from dispositions for K-12 students to ourselves. What dispositions will the future demand of school librarians?

Conceptual Framework

In 1999, Wright and Davie provided a forecast of future trends in school librarianship based on the vision articulated in *Information Power* (AASL & AECT, 1988) and the context of the school reform movement, which at the time was influenced by new theories of teaching/learning, site-based management of schools, and increasing pressure to radically change teacher education. In particular, they talk at length about the influence of the National Board for Professional Teaching

Standards (NBPTS) and the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). The school librarian's role as instructional collaborator and a vision of the school librarian as "a competent change agent," (Wright & Davie, p.51) were seen as key to enabling needed educational reforms.

In order to realize this vision, Wright and Davie (1999) propose and elaborate on eight principles for future school library programs. Six of these principles address traditional areas of school librarianship typically included in school library preparation courses: instruction and collection development, scheduling, planning and evaluation, budgeting, facilities and technology. Two principles, however, seemed especially novel: people and "reliability." People principles go beyond the technical skills emphasized in professional education programs including school librarian preparation and are "the human relations and communication skills that make the library skills effective" (p.84). Their forecast for the importance of "people skills" thus clearly foreshadowed the emergence of dispositions as a critical area of concern beyond the mere acquisition of technical skills. Drawn from the business world regarding high reliability organizations, the principle of reliability stressed clear goals regarding the achievement of all students through standard procedures, ongoing evaluation and feedback, collegiality, and recognized value to the larger organization and society. High reliability requires a new model of recruitment and training that involves modeling, mentoring, and continuous feedback over time. In their final sentence, these authors call for a change in attitudes from a distrust of cooperation toward full, open collaboration (p.253). Such a change in attitudes or dispositions could follow from a high reliability model of recruitment and training.

The future these authors envisioned for school librarianship was dependent on several major paradigm shifts (Figure 1) in both the library media program and the library professional.

Figure 1. Shifts in School Librarianship (Wright and Davie, 1999)

With the proliferation of digital resources, there have been shifts from a specialist serving in a centralized resource collection to that of an integrating connector who offers access to resources through distributed computer networks without regard to location. Reflecting on new technologies at the time and the growth of the World Wide Web, Wright and Davie foresaw a future of information overload where librarians would be essential in avoiding chaos. As Shirky is frequently quoted, "There is no such thing as information overload, there's only filter failure" (Juskalain, 2008). As new technologies emerge, educators continue to be challenged with the shift from any technology to that of identifying appropriate technologies that align with instructional goals and objectives. The remaining two shifts toward lifelong learning and a global economy have clearly continued to carry well into this century.

Dispositions in Teacher Evaluation

Wright and Davie (1999) do not use the term "dispositions," yet the school reform movement had clearly begun to turn in that direction particularly with the introduction of NBPTS. In the United States, NBPTS focused their core propositions on what teachers should know and be able to do. Along with excellent teaching skills, strong content knowledge, and the abilities surrounding monitoring and managing student learning, NBPTS also proposed that accomplished teachers treat students equitably based on respect for diversity and individual differences, that they reflect on their teaching practice in order to constantly improve student learning, and that they acknowledge that they are members of a community based in collaboration and integration (NBPTS, 1987).

Based on this work, the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) developed model standards which divided 10 standards into the categories of knowledge, dispositions, and performance (1992). The INTASC standards, designed for the pre-

service teacher versus the accomplished teacher of NBPTS, are widely considered the first attempt to articulate dispositions in teacher education. INTASC standards contains phrases such as "has enthusiasm for the discipline"; "persists in helping all children achieve success", and "values flexibility and reciprocity in the teaching process" (INTASC, 1992).

This was closely followed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development OECD's (1994) own foray into establishing dispositions as a critical marker in the development of teachers. Based on a case study approach stretching across eleven countries and four continents, OECD's purpose was to "identify the effects of policies aimed at fostering teacher quality, and the conditions under which such policies can be implemented successfully" (p. 13). OECD's beginning definition of teacher quality encompassed five dimensions: teacher knowledge of substantive curriculum areas and content; pedagogic skill, including the acquisition and ability to use a repertoire of teaching strategies; reflection and the ability to be self-critical; empathy and the commitment to the acknowledgement of the dignity of others; and, managerial competence, as teachers assume a range of managerial responsibilities within and outside the classroom. OECD notes the similarity of their lists to the five core propositions of NBPTS (p. 35). Their study found the following hallmarks of quality teachers, most of which might be considered dispositional: love for children, modeling moral conduct, ability to adjust and improvise, pattern of exchanging ideas with other teachers, reflection on their teaching practice, actions to advance the profession of teaching, and making contributions to society at large (OECD, 1994).

Areas of study in dispositions in teacher education involve assessment instrumentation (Almerico, 2011; Shively & Misco, 2010; Wilkerson & Lang, 2011; Johnston, et al, 2011) and intervention (Brewer, Lundquist, & Altemueller, 2011; Turnbull, 2005). Although the concept of dispositions in education is very common in the United States, mostly due to the influence of NBPTS, NCATE, and INTASC, the concept is relatively new in other countries. A focus on dispositions has been slow to emerge in the research literature beyond the United States (Brewer, Lundquist, and Altemueller, 2011). That is beginning to change most notably in Canada (Ruitenburg, 2011), Australia (Turnbull, 2005) and England (Tickle, 2001). Tickle (2001) commenting on the Induction Standards in England, noted that they did not contain "aspects of character and attitude, which include compassion, tolerance, reflective thinking, flexibility in the application of teaching techniques, sensitivity to the needs of others, enthusiasm, sincerity, trustworthiness, and imagination" (p. 60). Turnbull used dispositions to frame her case study research with student teachers in Australia (2005). The discussion of dispositions is not without controversy. Ruitenburg (2011) points out the difficulties in designing teacher education programs around belief systems where there is no evidence that these belief systems might be used to predict teacher conduct.

Dispositions in Librarianship

Dispositions are also of interest in library science education. In 1982, Otto conducted a predictive Delphi study on the "future functions, roles, and status of academic librarians and the skills, knowledge, and academic credentials seen as necessary to fulfill those future functions (p. 85, 1982). Otto's findings indicated that the future (meaning the year 2000) would need academic librarians who were focused on personal interactions with users, teaching one-on-one bibliographic instruction, and advocating with the public for the library. Miller and Wallis (2011), although they did not use the term "dispositions", focused on the need for teaching and evaluating empathy in LIS programs. Fleischmann, Robbins, and Wallace (2009) did not directly discuss dispositions, but examined what they called information ethics, helping LIS professionals to be better equipped to work in a global economy with multicultural patrons and situations.

Van Housen and Sutton's (1996, and later 2000) article on the changes needed for LIS education argues that the competition caused by changes in the information environment would compel LIS programs into a new look at the forces for survival in an increasingly competitive age. Bourdieu's work on the dispositions that determine habitus was a primary basis for this work. Bourdieu wrote that there were conditions that created habitus, or "systems of durable, transposable dispositions" (p. 72). Bourdieu of course never fully explained the concept of habitus, using it instead as a useful concept to describe dispositions that operate within structures of the rules and policies of organizations. Bourdieu is also the theoretical basis for others writing about dispositions related to educational research (e.g. Nash, 1999) and pre-service teacher education (e.g. Grenfell, 1996).

Dispositions in School Librarianship

The *Behavioral Requirements Analysis Checklist* (BRAC) (Case & Lowrey, 1976), a compilation of job functions and tasks statements for school librarians, was based on activities of the School Library Manpower Project which ran from 1968 to 1973. Its purpose was to identify behavioral characteristics necessary for professional school library media specialists. Many of the items identified are skills, competencies, or required knowledge. However, even though the word "dispositions" is not used, dispositional elements are scattered throughout. For example, the school librarian is urged to practice fair and consistent demands in working with people, demonstrate interest and enthusiasm, create a congenial attitude, and create a climate in the library that is conducive to inquiry (p. 4 -5). An entire section of the book is devoted to professionalism and includes terms such as: practice effective interpersonal relationships, advocate to improve the profession, practice ongoing personal education and reflection, and display a professional media philosophy (p. 51-53).

School library standards in the United States have provided numerous examples of the importance of dispositions desired in a school librarian. In 1945, the post-war *School Libraries for Today and Tomorrow* identified the following personal traits as important: "good humor, a pleasing appearance, friendliness with people, dignity and self-control, and energy and initiative" (Committee, p. 16). The 1960 standards used terms like competent, effective, and creative. A school librarian was identified as someone who "is adept in human relations and works cooperatively, effectively, and happily with all" and "has an enthusiasm for books and reading" (AASL, p. 58). By 1969, the emphasis was more on qualities of leadership, public relations and administration. It stated that "the head of the school library media program (…) creates (…) a professional atmosphere in which media staff members work harmoniously" (AASL & DAVI, p. 11). Even though the 1975 standards focused on media programs, some attention was devoted to the qualities of professional staff. A "disposition to problem solving," "personal efficiency," and "effective human relationships" were identified as desirable traits (AASL & AECT, p. 22).

The first *Information Power* (AASL & AECT, 1988) mentioned appropriate dispositions for school librarians. These include: "appreciation of the link between critical reading listening and viewing skills and successful living," and "understanding the importance of lifelong learning" (p. 33). *Information Power: Building Relationships for Learning* (AASL &AECT, 1998) also identifies dispositions recommended for school librarians. While advocating for collaboration with teachers, the standards identify approachability, flexibility, and persistence as traits needed to support such work (p. 51) and calls for a school librarian who is steady, visionary, and proactive (p. 52). Overall, there is ample evidence that the national standards for school libraries in the United States have long advocated for dispositions identified as necessary among practicing school librarians. *Empowering Learners* (AASL, 2009) identifies characteristics of good leadership which are essentially dispositions such as "passionate about their work," "foster an environment of creativity, innovation, and openness," and "welcome and encourage input from others" (p.48).

Research and literature related to the roles of the school librarian and in particular, of the school librarian as leader are replete with references to qualities understood as dispositions. The *Alliance for Excellence: Librarians Respond to a Nation at Risk* suggests, "How effective lifelong learning is in a library setting will depend on how knowledgeable, supportive, current, imaginative, and committed the librarians working directly with patrons are" (Alliance, 1984, p. 26-7). Shannon (2009) surveyed principals in South Carolina schools who said that interpersonal skills such as being a team player, being approachable, and being congenial were key qualities they desired in a school librarian. Roys and Brown (2004) noted that an ability to work with others was ranked first by principals, library and information science (LIS) faculty, and LIS students as important for the ideal candidate for school librarian. In a review of the literature regarding the competencies needed by school librarians, Shannon (2002) concluded there was overwhelming evidence that school librarians needed effective communication and interpersonal skills and that these were "basic to all aspects of the work of school library media specialists" (unp.) and that personal characteristics were important factors in the leadership role of the school librarian as well. Summarizing general theories of leadership, Haycock (2010) concluded that attributes including focus, competence, an ability to develop strong relationships, and to exhibit trust, honesty, and respect are developed and learned over time, and are not strictly innate qualities.

The term "dispositions" did not appear on the school library horizon until the publication of the *Standards for the 21st Century Learner* (AASL, 2007) which included a major strand of "Dispositions in action" and defined dispositions as "Ongoing beliefs and attitudes that guide thinking and intellectual behavior that can be measured throughout actions taken." Ballard (2009, p. 14) sums up one of the early reactions to their inclusion as "squishy" or too soft to be meaningful or measured. Over time, she and her colleagues came to appreciate that dispositions had long been included in the identification of outstanding teachers as those who possessed qualities such as open-mindedness and enthusiasm. Good teaching is not only about skills, but also about the dispositions to use those skills well. The teaching profession had recognized this in their measures and evaluation of good teaching before the school library field. Therefore, Ballard understood that those individuals educating future school librarians might also strive to instill and measure dispositions in students.

Attention in practitioner journals on teaching dispositions to elementary and secondary students soon followed the publication of these *21st Century Standards.* Three practicing school librarians addressed the role of modeling dispositions such as perseverance and curiosity in their interactions with students (Campos, March, & Jackson, 2009). Their article highlights a dual concern with defining and measuring dispositions. They identified two particular dispositions, a love of literature and ethical use of information, and outline an approach to teaching that includes modeling, offering structured learning experiences to provide students with practice in the disposition and asking students to reflect and self-assess their own actions. Others researched the value of dispositions among students. In a study of eighth-grade students, Arnone & Reynolds (2009) provided empirical evidence of the importance of dispositions, in particular, a disposition toward curiosity and reading for pleasure, and the impact of these dispositions on increasing performance on measures of information and digital literacies. The importance of a school librarian modeling dispositions for students was the subject of a related study. Arnone, Reynolds, and Marshall (2009) found that student perceptions of their own abilities in technology were related to their perceptions of whether or not the school librarian demonstrated the dispositions of confidence and enthusiasm.

Bush and Jones (2010) brought into focus the question of which dispositions were deemed valuable in school librarians with their seminal work employing a Delphi Study to ask experts in the field which dispositions they felt were essential. Similar to work done by Katz and Raths (1986) for teacher education, Bush and Jones championed the need to identify those dispositions valued by the profession within the teaching role of school librarians and suggested the need to assess those dispositions. Several related publications have continued the discussion within the profession (Jones, 2009 ; Jones & Dotson, 2010; Jones & Bush, 2009; Bush & Jones, 2011).

Other countries have also included references to dispositions in their standards. The Australian Standards for School Librarians (Mitchell, 2006) include four standards of "Professional Commitment" such as "model and promote lifelong learning" (p. 45). The Association for Teacher Librarianship in Canada has a list of personal competencies in addition to professional competencies, and many of these contain dispositions such as "sees the big picture," "creates an environment of mutual respect and trust," "works with others in a team," "is committed to lifelong learning" and "is flexible and positive in a time of continuing change" (Association, 1997). The UNESCO/IFLA School Library Manifesto (2006) contains little that relates to dispositions of the school librarian. The emphasis in many international standards has been on the program rather than on the attributes of the school librarian.

Defining Dispositions

Our definition of dispositions for the purpose of this study has been drawn from the body of research and thought within the educational community in the U.S. particularly in the area of teacher education. NCATE, based in the U.S., has the most commonly used definition of teacher education, defining professional dispositions as "Professional attitudes, values, and beliefs demonstrated through both verbal and non-verbal behaviors" (NCATE, 2008, p. 89-90). The oft-cited work of Katz and Raths (1986) called on teacher educators to discuss how to identify and assess dispositions that should be addressed in the preparation of new teachers. These authors defined dispositions as "pattern of acts that were chosen by the teacher in a particular contexts [*sic*] and at particular times" (p. 7). They note that it's not enough to observe once that a teacher can demonstrate a particular skill of teaching; but one needs to see a pattern of choosing to use that skill on multiple occasions for it to be deemed a disposition. They also make the distinction

between "habits of mind" and "mindless habits." Equally important, these authors note that the drilling of a skill in educating elementary and secondary students, as well as in teacher education, may actually extinguish the disposition to want to use that skill once it is no longer a part of an assignment or expectation.

It's interesting, that while some authors have questioned the identification and assessment of dispositions as "squishy" (Ballard, 2009), others have argued for their importance in tandem with the higher-level skills educators generally seek to promote. Ennis (1985) advocated dispositions such as open-minded, well-informed, and orderliness as key components of critical thinking in his critique of applications of Bloom's Taxonomy. *The Standards for the 21st Century Learner* (AASL, 2007) put forth a similar association through the key question, "Is the student disposed to higher-level thinking and actively engaged in critical thinking to gain and share knowledge?" So while drilling skills may diminish the disposition to use those skills, an emphasis instead on the dispositions in tandem with skills has been recognized by some as a keystone of the higher levels of critical thinking valued in education.

Research into dispositions did not appear frequently in the teacher education literature until the late 1980's and early 1990's, yet dispositions have historically been the topic of educational theory and comment. Many note the influence of John Dewey in the roots of dispositions research. He notes that "By various agencies, unintentional and designed, a society transforms uninitiated and seemingly alien beings into robust trustees of its own resources and ideals." (1916, p. 30). He notes that over time, by designing experiences for an individual that reinforce the ideals of a society, "thus it gradually produces in him a certain system of behavior, a certain disposition of action" (p. 13). This "system of behavior" is implied in many definitions of dispositions that suggest a disposition is a pattern that cannot be observed on a singular occasion. Based on an extensive reading of these and other resources and on collegial discussions, the definition adopted in this study is "A disposition is a tendency to exhibit frequently, consciously, and voluntarily a pattern of behavior that is directed to a broad goal" (Katz, 1993).

Statement of Purpose

Drawing on Wright and Davie's (1999) forecast for the future of school library programs, the purpose of this study was to ask today's school librarians to extend that forecast into the next decade. Our research question for this study was: How should the profession educate the school librarians who are charged with implementing 21st Century standards? In particular we asked participants what changes they anticipated in the following four areas: 1) knowledge, skills and dispositions, 2) teaching and learning, 3) spaces and facilities, and 4) resources and collections.

Method

This study complements the knowledge base provided by the Delphi study of Bush and Jones (2010) that invited input from editorial board members from school library journals, academic scholars and association leaders.

Three separate focus groups comprised of seventy-one practicing school librarians at three sessions were held during two regional conferences in the southeastern United States. A focus group is an established method of collecting qualitative data (Merriam, 2009) that involves drawing together a group of people who possess knowledge about the topic of concern. Whereas Bush and Jones invited select scholars and leaders, our participants were practicing school librarians who voluntarily joined a session entitled, "Shift Happens! Envisioning the Future of School Libraries in an Era of Change."

One could argue that these participants were not necessarily representative of all practicing school librarians since they a) attend their state's school library conference; b) chose to attend this session; and c) did not leave the room when they were told they would be expected to participate in this session. However, these choices on their part are also evidence of the kinds of professional dispositions one would hope to instill in pre-service and in-service school librarians. Demographic data about the participants, such as specific job title, school demographics, or years of experience, was intentionally not collected. The intention of this research and the methods employed were to identify group meanings socially constructed by the participants rather than to identify local

concerns or differences. Because these sessions were held in the larger social context of a professional conference, participants may have been influenced by what they heard in other sessions. Clearly, these could be limitations of this study.

Each session opened with a broad overview of the major shifts identified in 1999 by Wright and Davie. Participants were then asked to partake in a "Send-A-Problem" method, adapted from cooperative learning (Kagan, 1994). As a research technique, a focus group draws from a constructivist approach to learning with an assumption that meanings can be constructed through interactions with others (Merriam, 2009, p. 94). Cooperative learning is an instructional technique often used in classrooms in the United States that involves asking students to work together in small groups (Slavin, 2010). This technique provided a structure that was compatible with the focus group and provided clear directions for participants. A minimum of four small groups were formed in the room. At one session where over forty people were present, eight groups were formed. Participants were informed of the purpose of the study, of our intention to use their responses for research, and informed consent was acquired.

Drawing from the eight principles identified by Wright and Davie (1999) in consultation with the ALA/AASL *Standards for Initial Preparation of School Librarians* (NCATE, 2010), we identified four major areas of concern as important to the future of school librarianship:

1) knowledge, skills and dispositions,
2) teaching and learning,
3) spaces and facilities, and
4) resources and collections

Each group was provided with a large envelope, paper, and pencils. On the outside of each envelope was one of the four areas of concern. Each group had a different envelope and a different area of concern. Groups were instructed to discuss the future trends in that one area. A person in each group wrote down the ideas expressed by the group on a sheet of paper. When ten minutes were up, each group was told to put the sheet of paper with their answers into the envelope. The envelopes were then passed to another group. The process was repeated until every group had addressed each of the four areas. Each group was instructed not to read what any previous group had written, but simply to add their responses to the envelope. In this way, no group was influenced by the answers of the other groups. For the last round of discussion, envelopes were returned to the original group. At this point, each group could open their envelope and read the responses from the four groups including their own. Their task was to construct a synthesis of all responses, and that synthesis was shared with the room to close the session.

For this study, the responses from the individual group discussions were compiled for each of the four areas of concern from all of the sessions. Data were analyzed in the aggregate using a qualitative ethnographic analysis to get at shared or cultural meanings (Merriam, 2009; Spradley, 1980) that identified patterns in responses to each question and across questions. In this paper we are reporting on our findings related to the dispositions segment of the question of knowledge, skills, and dispositions.

The responses in the area of knowledge, skills and dispositions were initially categorized according to those three dimensions. As the category of "dispositions" took shape and outgrew the others, we returned to this category and employed a domain analysis (Spradley, 1980) to code the dispositions. Spradley recommends that the researcher examine data to discover what he identifies as cover terms, included terms, and semantic relationships. For example in our data we frequently noted the term "flexible" and made it a cover term. Eventually other terms or phrases became synonyms for flexible or examples of flexible. For example, "adapt to change" was an included term under the cover term flexible and the semantic relationship was established that "adapt to change" was a type of flexibility. The three members of the research team coded data together, developing codes as they emerged from the data and asking about each segment of data: does this fit an existing cover term? If not, what cover term might we assign to it? These cover terms became the list of codes for the analysis.

We then began to explore the relationships between and among the codes in order to develop a taxonomy of codes (Spradley, 1980). Wright and Davie's (1999) method of identifying shifts became a heuristic for thinking about some of these clusters we had identified. While Wright and Davie characterized these shifts as "radical paradigm shifts," the fact that they still seem to be occurring over a decade later implied continua rather than abrupt shifts. For example,

the disposition of "affable" or positive and welcoming was related to the disposition of open to "all kinds of people." As the various shifts in dispositions along continua took shape, we collapsed and expanded some codes returning to the original data to confirm or disconfirm their inclusion. This phase of the analysis became what Spradley defines as a "componential analysis" where dimensions of contrast and similarity begin to emerge. Our findings are presented below through these continua.

Findings

Dispositions of 21st Century Leaders

The analysis resulted in seven categories that became the foundation for Figure 2. Because of the wording in the feedback from the focus groups, it was necessary for the researchers to carefully study and discuss the meaning of terms used by the participants. After several sessions examining and evaluating the data, these continua emerged. The possibility of such patterns evolving from the data was not anticipated in advance. Since these patterns were data-driven, they have the potential to allow school library professionals to view dispositions in a new light.

Expertise	Library-based	Affable	Cooperative	Ethical	Love of Learning	Facilitative
Advocacy	Community-based	Open	Collaborative	Modeling ethics	Professional Growth	Flexible

Figure 2. Dispositional Continua

Among the findings, leadership was at first coded as a disposition but many of the other dispositions also seemed to be elements of leadership. Leaders may need to be congenial or flexible for example. One striking remark in the data was that "some just don't want to do extra mile, some just want to do minimum, but education is losing heart not respected as much as in past, respect being from top." While negatively stated, this quote seemed to be a strong plea for respect from the top, to go the extra mile, and to find heart. Combined with the other findings in the data, a strong picture emerged of a kind of 21st Century leader desired in the profession. Our data suggests that tomorrow's leaders should be moving along the pathways suggested in each continuum that follows. The following figures outline each continua and include sample responses from the data illustrative of each concept.

From expertise to advocacy.

From
Expertise to
Advocacy

- proactive
- technology, data and stakeholder driven
- should we be an expert on everything
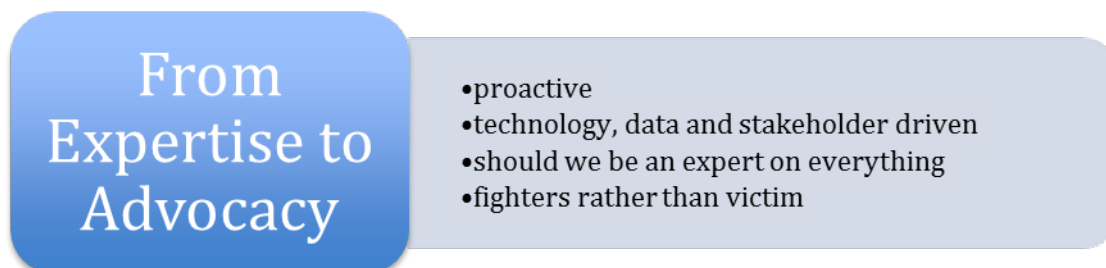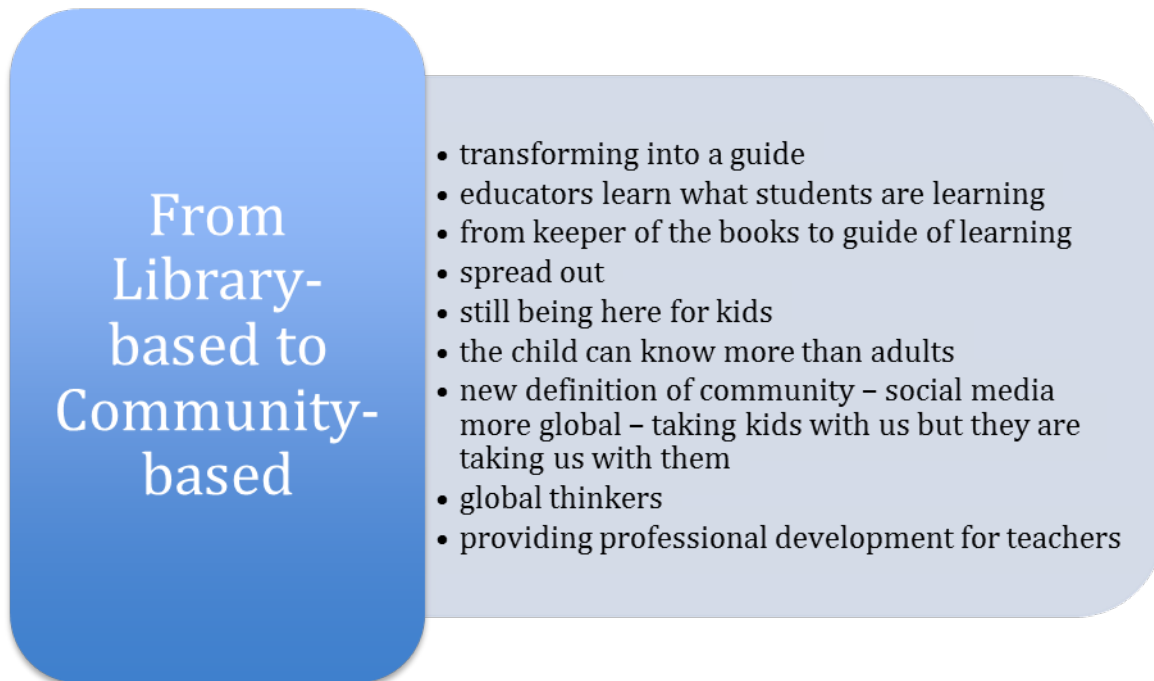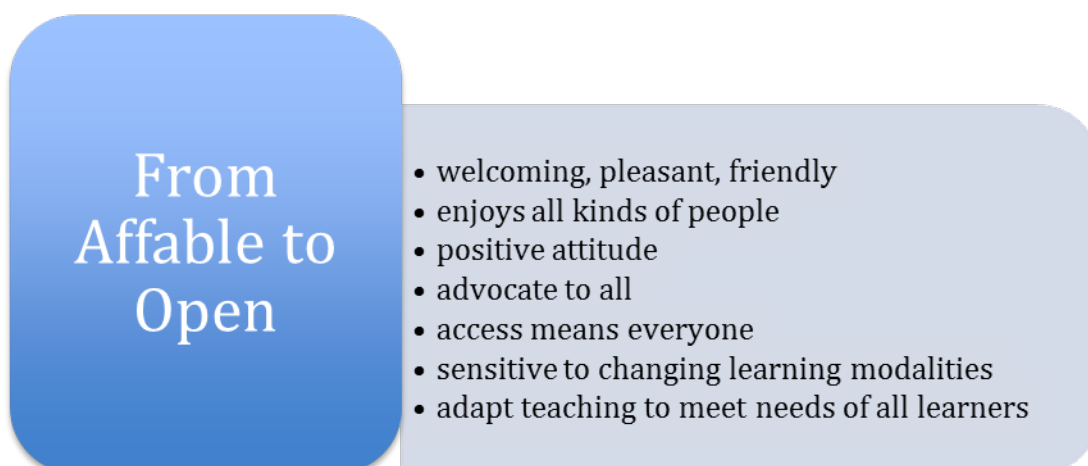- fighters rather than victim

Figure 3. From Expertise to Advocacy

A common theme of advocacy or informed advocacy emerged from the data. This led to the recognition that one of the continua should acknowledge the movement in school librarianship from a leadership style based on expertise to a leadership style infused with advocacy.

From library-based to community-based.

From
Library-
based to
Community-
based

- transforming into a guide
- educators learn what students are learning
- from keeper of the books to guide of learning
- spread out
- still being here for kids
- the child can know more than adults
- new definition of community – social media more global – taking kids with us but they are taking us with them
- global thinkers
- providing professional development for teachers

Figure 4. From Library-based to Community-based

Another group of statements focused on the broader context of how rapidly changing technologies are impacting the world. It became evident as we examined this set of terms that they referred to the reality that school librarians can no longer be effective with a library-based program. Instead, it is important to recognize and acknowledge that society is more global in scope, and for the school librarian to acknowledge, accept, and exploit these changes. Therefore, this continuum moves the school librarian from being library-based and more isolated in the school to someone who is ready to engage the school community to effectively learn and work in a global arena.

From affable to open.

From
Affable to
Open

- welcoming, pleasant, friendly
- enjoys all kinds of people
- positive attitude
- advocate to all
- access means everyone
- sensitive to changing learning modalities
- adapt teaching to meet needs of all learners

Figure 5. From Affable to Open

Another set of terms focused on a personality trait that has long been associated with school librarians – that of being a nice person. In today's world, it is no longer enough to just be a nice person. Instead it is important for the school librarian to display behaviors that indicate a

willingness to go beyond being pleasant to becoming a person who embraces diversity. We characterize this particular continuum as moving from being affable to being open.

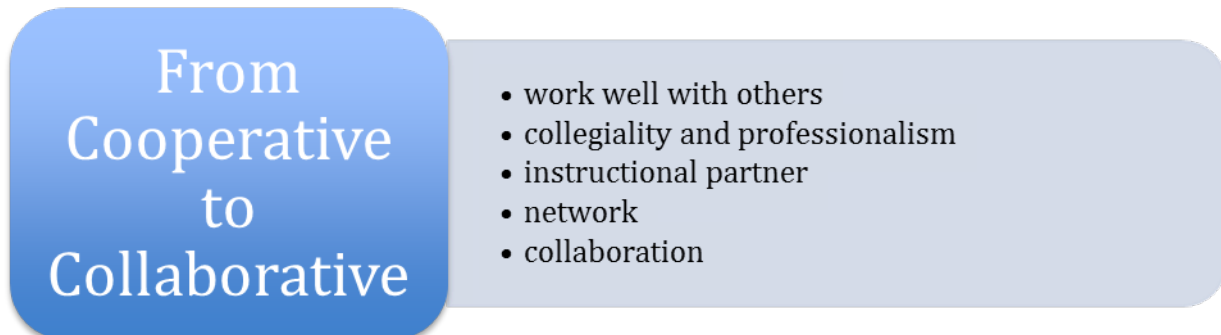***From cooperative to collaborative.***

Figure 6. From Cooperative to Collaborative

Participants in the focus group did repeatedly used the term collaboration as being a desirable activity for school librarians. Only rarely was this term elaborated upon. Occasionally a term, such as collegiality, partner, or network, was incorporated. This was the only area for which participants in the focus group did not give more robust information. It is possible that, given the acknowledged value of collaboration in the school library field in the United States today, participants believed there was no need to articulate anything more than the term identifying the concept. This could indicate the success of the profession in articulating the value of collaboration to practitioners and a move along the continuum from the role of the school librarian as cooperative to the role of the school librarian as a full collaborative partner in instruction.

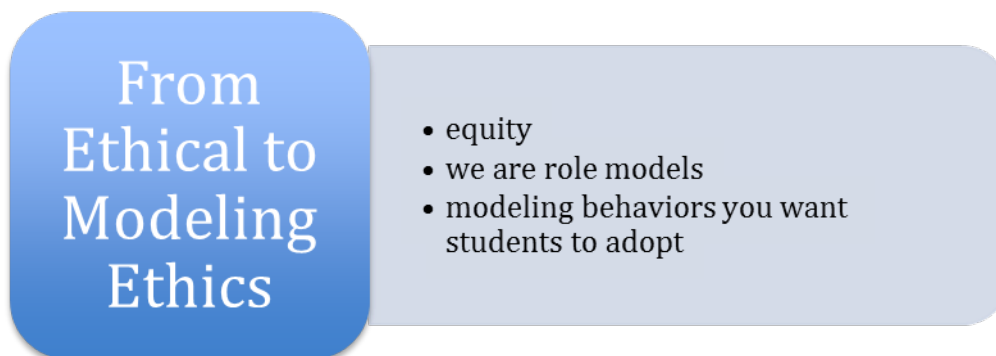***From ethical to modeling ethics.***

Figure 7. From Ethical to Modeling Ethics

A minor category which emerged focused on ethics. Terminology emerging from the focus showed the need for the ethical school librarian to become a role model or to demonstrate ethical behavior for the school community. Because of this, one of the continua that emerged from this project was the changing role for the school librarian from being ethical to modeling ethical behavior.

From love of learning to professional growth.

Figure 8. From Love of Learning to Professional Growth

As our world continues to change, it is becoming increasingly apparent that professionals in many fields must work to stay current. This need was articulated in repeatedly across the focus groups. The variety of terms indicate the robust nature of this category.

From facilitative to flexible.
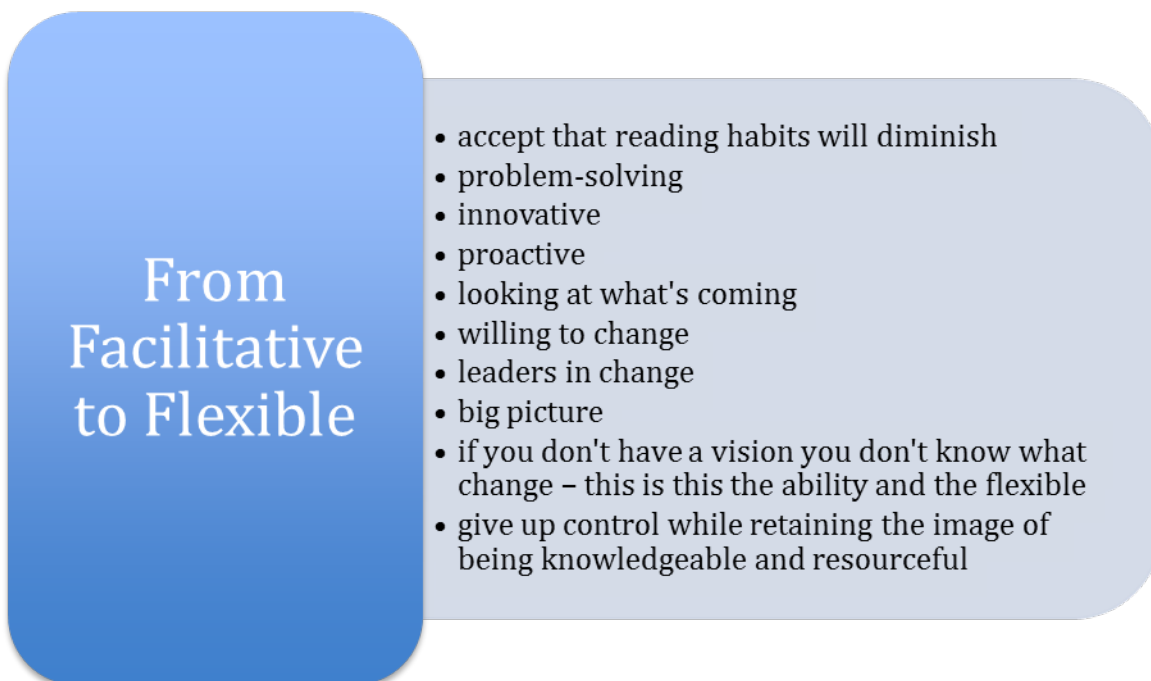
Figure 9. From Facilitative to Flexible

Some of the terms that emerged focused on how the school librarian would deal with change. Discussion of this feedback from the focus groups led us to the realization that this continuum dealt with moving from working within the structure to changing the structure itself. This is a fundamental shift in focus which led to the characterization of this continuum as moving from facilitative to flexible.

Conclusions

OECD notes that Churchill once said that courage is the virtue that makes all other virtues possible, but they note that "in the case of teachers the quality that makes all other qualities possible is commitment" (p. 36) We agree. This research study has defined commitment in terms of dispositional qualities that might be taught, observed, and measured along the continua identified in this study.

Following the definition adopted in this study of "A disposition is a tendency to exhibit frequently, consciously, and voluntarily a pattern of behavior that is directed to a broad goal" (Katz, 1993), dispositions must be observed over time and through actions. Bush and Jones (2010) suggested that the way to teach dispositions was through modeling. Stripling (2008) suggested that the way to teach dispositions included modeling within structured learning experiences that allowed students to practice the behaviors that were "expressions of the disposition" (p. 48). She also suggested that the teacher scaffold the experiences over time so that the behaviors become dispositional patterns. In the context of school library education, we see the need for faculty to model dispositions and also for faculty to create experiences that challenge and scaffold students as they practice behaviors that are evidence of dispositions and to reflect on those behaviors. We often tell our students that they are in the process of "becoming" school librarians. Becoming school librarians means moving along each continuum to the higher level. Faculty designed experiences reinforce the ideals of school librarianship; students reflect on their learning along these continua of dispositions. This offers a way for students to think about themselves in a process of change and these professional dispositions as emerging and incomplete.

These continua also provide a framework for the establishment of a life-time professional growth framework. Further research could lead to the development of a rubric or matrix to establish benchmarks along each continuum. Those benchmarks could also be used to assist those current professionals who are not yet performing as 21st century school librarians. The first step in behavioral change is to focus on one continuum, choose appropriate interventions, and engage in a positive change process. This moves from a deficit model of job evaluation to a more positive process that establishes the need for change as an inevitable circumstance that simply has not yet occurred. With the continuing need for strong school library professionals, this process offers an alternative to encourage retention and retraining of experienced personnel. Too often, school librarians who operate successfully at the lower end of the continua are marginalized or ignored, thereby insuring they will not move forward.

The question regarding how to measure and teach dispositional continua has been particularly salient for us as school library educators. Thus it's not a matter of having or not having a particular disposition but of degree and process. We would argue, for example, that most graduate students enter our program with a "love of learning" evidenced by their entrance into graduate study. Our task is to direct that curiosity and willingness to learn into self-reflective, continuous professional growth. We would provide them with the knowledge and skills to maintain professional currency but would also design experiences that model and nurture the disposition to become a professional committed to both personal growth and contributing to the growth of the profession. Also, since dispositions are defined as a "pattern of behaviors," it makes sense to see them as continually in process along a continuum.

John Dewey wrote in 1922 "We can retain and transmit our own heritage only by constant remaking of our own environment." (p. 20) and "We cannot change habit directly, that is magic. But we can change it indirectly by modifying conditions, by an intelligent selecting and weighting of the objects which engage attention and which influence the fulfillment of desires" (p. 20). It is the challenge for the school library profession to identify experiences that will foster dispositions, to encourage school librarians to exhibit and reflect on these behaviors, and to create assessment measures that will form a basis for conversation and professional growth.

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