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# "Consider with Whom You Are Working": Discourse Models of School Librarianship in Collaboration

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## Abstract

*The question of why school librarians still struggle to fully enact the roles defined in* Information Power *and* Empowering Learners *may be viewed as a struggle to gain recognition from others that this is what a "real school librarian" does. Discourse Analysis offers school library research a new theoretical and analytical tool to explore how these roles or identities are created or contested in interactions with others by examining the moment-to-moment talk for the presence of larger meanings, or "discourses." Applying a discourse analysis to an exchange that occurred near the end of an ethnographic study of collaborative discourse between a school librarian and a team of second-grade teachers, this study uncovered the presence of several alternative meanings of "school librarian" in the talk, or "discourse," of the participants, including the stereotypical "shhhh librarian" or "story lady." Discourse analysis foregrounds the ongoing struggle by school librarians to implement new roles and new standards.*

## Introduction

*"I'm sure it will be wonderful, but you've got to consider with whom you are working. I don't want to come in here and have to fuss and just..."*

With those words, Dianna, an experienced second-grade teacher, opted out of a library lesson that her two teammates had enthusiastically developed in collaboration with the school librarian to have their students research endangered species in the library. Coming at the end of a school year that had included several collaboratively planned and successful lessons and units, Dianna's decision not to participate was puzzling and might have been viewed as the failure of the school librarian to broker, with this particular teacher, the inclusion of the school library in instruction for this unit. Taken out of context, Dianna's comment raises several questions: to whom or what do the pronouns "it," "you've," and "with whom" refer? And where was the "in here" with which Dianna felt she would have to fuss? This exchange occurred near the end of the school year and near the end of an ethnographic study of collaborative discourse, which included recording eight planning meetings with this grade level over the course of a school year. Thus this exchange provided an opportunity to consider the meaning of these words in some depth as

well as how they were situated in discourse across the school year. In fact, the passage that contained this comment illuminated the presence of several alternative meanings of school librarian in the talk, or discourse, of the participants, including a stereotypical "shhhh librarian" or "story lady." While this meaning of school librarian is not particularly surprising to those of us in the profession, a discourse analysis helped explain how this meaning and others are accomplished, reproduced, and negotiated in moment-to-moment interactions with others. The purpose of this paper is to explore discourse analysis as a new theoretical and analytical tool to explore the various roles or identities of a school librarian as they shape and are shaped in collaboration with teachers, including the exchange with Dianna above.

# Theoretical and Research Perspectives

## Collaboration: A Black Box

Meaningful collaboration is difficult to attain for many practicing school librarians (Todd 2008), and numerous barriers have been identified, including lack of principal understanding or support for collaboration, time limitations, and rigid library scheduling (Brown 2004). While much has been written about the need for collaboration (e.g., Kuhlthau 2003), how to get started (e.g., Buddy 2007; Dickinson 2006; Harvey 2008), and the products of collaboration (e.g., Bacon 2008; Markley and Johnson 2008), the content of the collaboration itself remains what some discourse analysts call a "black box" (Sawyer and Berson 2004, 405). There have been few to no studies illuminating the actual work of collaboration or how language is used on site to enact collaboration between school librarians and teachers. Instead, much of the literature takes for granted that collaboration occurred if two or more people met and subsequently conducted an activity. Since collaboration entails conversation, discourse analysis seemed to offer an appropriate tool to examine the actual, on-the-spot work of collaboration. In fact, it seems surprising that a profession so obsessed with collaboration has yet to examine the microprocesses of the talk used for collaboration.

There are precedents in other fields for using discourse analysis to study collaboration. John-Steiner, Weber, and Minnis (1998) suggested that in a study of collaboration, "As language was the primary data in this study, discourse analytic techniques if used, could have provided further specificity" (778). Carlone and Webb (2006) used a discourse analysis to understand the apparent failure of a university–school collaboration. Kane and Henning (2004) employed observations and videotape to study the collaborative interactions between a teacher and a gifted and talented teacher. Scribner et al. (2007) used a discourse analysis to study collaboration of teacher teams. Their choice of discourse analysis allowed them to present a critical perspective, including "collaboration does not necessarily equate with workers becoming creative and innovative. In fact the opposite can occur" (Scribner et al. 2007, 95). Davison (2006) also used discourse analysis in a study based on observations and interviews with content and ESL teachers. Davison's discussion highlighted the different cultural and belief systems of ESL and content-area teachers. The focus, "How do we know when we are doing it right?" led to the development of a stage model for collaboration. The final stage is conceptualized as "creative co-construction where co-teaching is highly intuitive and creative and the parameters of the partnership very fluid" (Davison 2006, 466). Each of these studies suggests the value of discourse analysis in understanding the complexity of successful, as well as unsuccessful, collaborations.

## Roles of the School Librarian

While the call for collaboration has been prominent in the school library standards (AASL and AECT 1988; AASL and AECT 1998; AASL 2009), each new issue of standards has somewhat shifted the roles related to collaboration. *Information Power* (AASL and AECT 1988) delineated the roles as teacher, instructional consultant, and information specialist. The second *Information Power* (AASL and AECT 1998) added the role of program manager and changed "instructional consultant" to "instructional partner." *Empowering Learners* (AASL 2009) has retained the four roles from the second *Information Power* and added the role of leader. *Empowering Learners* reports on a survey regarding the changing roles of the school librarian that found a shift toward those of instructional partner and information specialist (AASL 2009, 16) despite the continuing evidence that we are not yet able to achieve these roles from the first two *Information Power*s. Several studies have employed surveys to measure perceptions of the roles of a school librarian as set out in the *Information Power* standards, concluding, "They reveal overall low levels of actual collaboration in instruction between teachers and library media specialists and reflect that school professionals do not agree on what the roles should be" (O'Neal 2004, 292).

McCracken (2001) employed a national survey to determine if practicing school librarians felt they were able to implement the 1988 and 1998 *Information Power* standards. Respondents perceived the role of "information specialist" to be more important than the more collaborative roles of "instructional partner" or "consultant." Church (2008; 2010) found support from principals for the role of school librarian as instructional partner and found that most principals' understanding of this role came from experience with school library professionals rather than principal training. Church (2008) also received some negative impressions of school librarians from principals who felt their librarians were too traditional and uninterested in working with teachers. McCracken (2001) identified the need for more qualitative research and in particular research regarding "how some library media specialists are able to implement more roles than others."

## Identity

Another way to talk about roles is to talk about identity. According to Gee (2000–2001), "Being recognized as a certain 'kind of person' in a given context, is what I mean here by 'identity'" (99). He delineates several kinds of identity, including "institutional" and "discursive" identities. The position of school librarian in a school is an institutional identity that may be defined in part by written job descriptions or performance-evaluation tools. Budget lines also may sanction and create these institutional identities. But a large part of this identity is negotiated through discourse, for example, during the interview and hiring process, but particularly in the daily interactions with teachers, students, librarians, and others in the school community. An identity as a "kind of librarian" is negotiated throughout these interactions. In a job interview, for example, a discussion with the principal about the expectations for the job are a negotiation about what "kind of librarian" the school is looking for. These negotiated identities are "discursive" identities that require interaction through talk or discourse as well as recognition. A person hired to be a school librarian must gain recognition from others through talking, acting, using tools, even dressing like a school librarian, or what Gee (2000–2001) would call a "collection" or a Discourse with a capital *D*. Another way to think of Discourses is as a toolkit, or all the things one uses to gain recognition for a particular identity. For school librarians, this would include the space we work in and the way we use that space (as opposed to the way our patrons use the space).

If the school librarian strays too far from the prevailing Discourse of school librarianship, he or she risks not being recognized as a "real school librarian." But at the same time, because Discourses are constantly re-created through talk, there is the possibility and likelihood that new meanings of "school librarian" and "school librarianship" can be forged. Indeed, when following someone else in a role, a person has the experience of encountering various meanings or identities that were created by the predecessor and of engaging in creating a new identity for the role. In fact, a school librarian will experience this work of creating an identity anew every time a new teacher joins the staff, the administration changes, or new families enter the school. When a new role is defined in documents, such as that of "leader" in *Empowering Learners* (AASL 2009), school librarians must struggle not only to enact that role in practice but also to gain recognition of that identity in their interactions with others. In this sense, the question of why school librarians still struggle to fully enact the roles as defined in *Information Power* and *Empowering Learners* could be seen as a struggle to gain recognition from others that this is what a "real school librarian" does. In addition to Institutional Discourses of a school librarian there may be historical Discourses, those identities that continue in individual and institutional memories through media portrayals or past associations with other "kinds of school librarians." Identities may compete with each other. For example, the struggle for school librarians to achieve a flexible schedule is in part a struggle between two identities of school librarian: one promoted by the profession and one needed to maintain elementary school schedules that provide release time for teachers.

Each of these identities has a discursive component: they must be accomplished through our moment-to-moment talk, or "discourse," allowing the researcher to look at a passage such as the excerpt above from Dianna and ask what identities are being enacted, challenged, or transformed in the discourse? What meanings of school librarian, teacher, student, or planning might be relevant to understanding the decision of Dianna to opt out of a collaboratively planned lesson, and how can we see these meanings in the talk that accomplished this? A discourse analysis, as outlined below (Gee 2005; Gee and Green 1998) was thus chosen as the method for this study.

# Method

## Setting, Participants, and Data Collection

Dianna's comment occurred near the end of an ethnographic study of a year of planning between a school librarian and a team of three second-grade teachers in Obama Elementary School (Kimmel 2010). The principal researcher for this study served in a dual participant/observer role in the year of the study and had been the school librarian at Obama Elementary School for the five years it had been open. Flexible scheduling and collaborative planning were established practices at this school. Obama was a small (fewer than 300 students), urban school serving a population affected by poverty. More than 90 percent of the students were African American and on free or reduced lunch. The three teachers on the second-grade team represented a unique configuration. Only one teacher, Dianna, had returned to second grade from the previous year. Areyanna had previously taught only first grade at this school and "looped," or moved up, with her students for this year and Brittany was a first-year teacher. Both Dianna and Areyanna had taught for sixteen years. The principal, Sally Hall, and the curriculum coordinator, Jean Maple, each attended irregularly. (Pseudonyms have been used for the school and all participants except the school librarian/principal researcher.)

During the year of this study, every grade level was given monthly block planning time; their classes were covered by assistants. This block planning occurred in the library on Wednesdays and Thursdays beginning at one o'clock and lasting for approximately two hours. For this study, each of the eight monthly planning meetings held in September through April with the second-grade team were recorded using a microphone-equipped iPod. Each meeting was transcribed in its entirety, resulting in 13.7 hours of audio or 296 pages of transcript. These meetings and their transcripts served as the primary data source for the larger ethnographic study from which the thirteen-minute passage including Dianna's remarks was selected for a more detailed discourse analysis.

## Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis is a major area of study representing a variety of theoretical and methodological perspectives. For this study, the works of Gee (2005) and Gee and Green (1998) were selected because of their focus on language as related to social activities, identities, and groups and institutions. Each work provided tools and strategies but also included the advice to apply these flexibly and to adapt them to one's own domain (Gee 2005, 6–7). From a theoretical stance, a discourse analysis assumes that people use language to get things done, to privilege some things and not others, and to enact particular identities. Gee and Green (1998) identify four types of building activities that are accomplished in discourse—identity, activity, connection, and world building—and suggest that any utterance can be analyzed for each. These four building tasks became an important heuristic used in analyzing the discourse across the school year.

A discourse analysis involves not only multiple listenings to a piece of audio-recorded talk but also a careful transcription of the text that includes attention to linguistic details that speakers and listeners use to create meaning through their talk, including pauses, interruptions, and stress or emphasis on particular words or syllables. Participants in a dialogue signal each other about the meaning of their text through context and other clues that are then also available to the researcher. Gee (2005) suggests "we shuttle back and forth between the structure (form, design) of a piece of language and the situated meanings it is attempting to build about the world, identities and relationships in a specific context" (118). A discourse analysis assumes that our smallest day-to-day discursive interactions are situated in local contexts and attached to larger historical, social, and institutional meanings (Fairclough 1989; Gee 2005), and therefore a researcher may examine these small interactions for evidence of larger meanings. This study, concerned with the cultural and historical roles of a school librarian, looked for these roles in a thirteen-minute passage but also drew on other data collected across the school year to interpret and confirm possible conclusions. The thirteen-minute passage was selected after considerable ethnographic analyses had been completed of the entire transcripts.

A fuller understanding of the situated meanings represented by a particular piece of text was accomplished by situating the selection and analysis of the passage that included Dianna's statement in a larger analysis that looked for patterns across the discourse from the entire school year. Listening to the recordings and creating the transcripts followed a three-step process using Spradley's (1980) ethnographic sequence of collecting data: first, making broad descriptive observations; second, making more focused observations; and third, making selective observations. In this case, the "observations" were of the discourse. Each level of analysis required listening to and transcribing the talk. The broad descriptive and focused observations involved a basic transcription of all of the planning meetings and provided the first level of

analysis, which looked at patterns of activities and meanings across the 13.7 hours of planning from the school year and 269 pages of transcript. The more selective observation involved a more detailed transcription requiring a deeper level of listening and analyses of selected passages. Conventions for the basic and detailed transcriptions are included (see **Table 1**). Field notes, a researcher journal, any e-mail, and other documents related to the planning meetings also were retained. A summary of the descriptive and focused observations are included below in the "**Analysis and Findings**" section, in which the justification for the selected passage also is included.

**Table 1. Transcription Conventions**

| Basic Transcription | Selective Transcription |
|---|---|
| - self interruption<br><br>( ) unclear, difficult to interpret<br><br>(( )) laugh, cough, etc | // or \\ indicates "a rising // or falling \\ pitch of the voice that sounds 'final' as if a piece of information is 'closed off' and 'finished'" (Gee 2005, 107).<br><br>: elongated vowel sound<br><br>underline emphatic—said with extra stress |

## Interviews

The three participating teachers were interviewed in the middle and at the end of the year of data collection. Questions in the interviews dealt with meanings of planning, planning as professional learning, and meanings of planning with the school librarian. Answers to particular questions about these meanings were analyzed relative to emerging categories and meanings identified across the planning transcripts and were used to refine the analysis of the planning discourse. Interviews captured the understandings of participants and offered a form of triangulation. Additionally, a member check was conducted with the three teachers a year after the data collection and after all data had been analyzed. Selected quotations from the interviews are included in the "**Discussion**" section to confirm or illuminate the interpretation.

## Validity

Validity in a discourse analysis concerns convergence, agreement, and coverage (Gee and Green 1998, 159). Convergence refers to how different analyses of the same data yield similar results. In this study, the data were subject to ongoing analytic and field notes, numerous listenings and fine-grained transcriptions, a domain analysis of the entire set of transcripts, and a more fine-grained analysis of smaller portions of the text. Agreement refers to how much native speakers and analysts agree on the interpretation. In this study, the participants were interviewed in the middle and the end of data collection and participated in a final member-checking. Additionally, a peer review by an experienced school librarian was conducted. Coverage deals with situating the analysis within a larger context of what happened before and after the passage. This was accomplished through the larger ethnographic study across the school year. My inclusion as a participant in the research site for an extended length of time also supported this type of validity (Creswell 2005). This study had a very particular and unique context and makes no claims to generalizability.

## Limitations

A clear limitation of the study was the dual role I played: I also was the school librarian in this study. Yet one could argue that this dual role also was a potential strength of this interpretive study. In any discourse there is the potential for misunderstanding, and one could argue the same for any type of research. The analyst must always ask: What might this mean? What else might this mean? What other interpretations are possible? How might I be wrong? (Maxwell 2005). As a participant, I had access to my own understandings at the time of what was meant in the discourse captured through field notes and reflective memos. Later, as I listened to the passage numerous times and considered it in larger contexts, I began to consider other meanings of the text. So the phrase that opened this paper, "consider with whom you are working," began to take on other possible meanings, which are discussed in the findings below.

# Analysis and Findings

## Descriptive Observations

The first level of analysis involved naming parts of the text for what kinds of activities were being accomplished in the talk. While Gee and Green's (1998) building activities (world, identity, activity, and connection) provided a useful heuristic for thinking about the data, eventually Wenger's (1998) modes of belonging (imagination, engagement, and alignment) in various combinations allowed an analysis of how these building activities were accomplished. Engagement is active participation in negotiating meaning, imagination is about seeing connections across time and space, and alignment is coordinating efforts to contribute to a broader purpose (Wenger 1998, 173–74). Analysis required constant comparison (Creswell 2005, 406); I compared incidents in the data and field notes to established codes and codes to codes, developing and refining the codes with each subsequent data source. Analysis involved several pass-throughs of the transcripts as activities were named and codes were collapsed and refined. These named activities or codes were grouped semantically using Inspiration software to create cover terms in a domain analysis (Spradley 1980). For example, "scheduling" was an original term, but teachers generally took schedules for granted unless they had to align them to facilitate sharing students or resources. This activity was renamed "coordinating" and also included the work of aligning their planning with curriculum pacing guides. Five activities were eventually identified: orienting, coordinating, drifting, making sense, and making connections. These are summarized in **Table 2**.

**Table 2. Kinds of Activities that Comprise Planning**

| Activity | Description | Examples |
|---|---|---|
| Orienting | Setting agendas, making decisions, checking in, getting back to topic | "So, we're stopping here?" (Brittany, Sept.)<br>"Can I jump in?" (Jean, Nov.)<br>"Okay, girls." (Dianna, Jan.)<br>"Where do we want to start?" (Sue, Feb.)<br>"We're done with social studies. Do you want to do science" (Sue, Apr). |
| Coordinating | Aligning schedules to share resources, | "Are you following the pacing guide?" (Jean, Sept)<br>"Finish lesson two tomorrow and do lesson three on Monday and lesson four on Tuesday." (Areyanna, Sept). |

| | students, or activities | "How many days in November—30 or 31?" (Brittany, Oct.)<br>"You know how it is with books, because we all do it at the same time." (Brittany, Jan.)<br>"Can you do it after lunch so that's about twelve-thirty when you get here?" (Sue, Feb.) |
|---|---|---|
| Making Connections | Connecting curriculum to resources, other curricula, or past experiences | "Your math goals fit perfectly with your weather goals." (Sue, Sept.)<br>"But you know we could definitely get a school board member to come to talk to your classes." (Sue, Oct.)<br>"Do we have a book to go with that?" (Areyanna, Feb.)<br>"I have this little transparency of who provides goods, who provides services from our old social studies unit or book." (Dianna, Apr.) |
| Making Sense | Understanding curriculum, teaching, resources, or student learning | "Alright, are we doing anything with the anemometer or are they just looking at it in the book?" (Areyanna, Sept.)<br>"Now do you have some kind of sheet that they are going to have while they do their listening walk, or are they just going to listen and come back and write something down?" (Brittany, Nov.)<br>"This may make more sense to them after we make the model." (Areyanna, Dec.)<br>"What are we doing with this book?" (Areyanna, Jan.)<br>"Is it like moving for a job? What is it? What are they trying to get at?" (Sue, Apr.) |
| Drifting | Any "other" talk that led away from the planning agenda | "I get really depressed in January." (Dianna, Dec.).<br>"I'm trying to do Malcolm's eyes. Get him into resource or something." (Areyanna, Jan.)<br>"Yes, Lord Jesus help you because they need a break from me and I need a break from them." (Dianna, Jan.)<br>"The blue kisses have coconut in them and the eggs are just chocolate." (Sue, Mar.) |

## Focused Observations

Once the five activities that occurred in the planning had been identified, each occurrence of an activity became a unit of analysis. This stage of analysis returned to the research focus on the role of the school librarian in collaborative planning with teachers and drew from Wenger's Community of Practice theory, which assumes that learning is ubiquitous and "meaning is ultimately what learning is to produce" (Wenger 1998, 4). For this reason, the focused observations analyzed each occurrence of an activity for what meanings were being produced about teaching, curriculum, the school librarian, students, and planning. These focused observations involved looking at the segments of talk coded for each activity and asking about each passage: how was the talk about what teachers were learning, how was the talk about what students had learned or would learn, and what was the role of the librarian? In this process, several solid categories began to emerge, and these became codes for the meanings created in planning: curriculum, membership, planning, librarian, students, teacher, teaching, and school. Once the codes for meanings had been finalized, it was possible to review the transcripts one more time to code each occurrence of an activity for the primary meaning that was present.

These meanings and examples of included subheadings are summarized in **Table 3**.

**Table 3. Meanings and Included Subheadings**

| Meanings of | Subheading |
|---|---|
| Curriculum | Sequence<br>Concepts & vocabulary<br>Interdisciplinary<br>Science taught in reading block<br>Textbook |
| Membership | Relationships<br>Outside relationships<br>Sharing<br>Role of Assistant |
| Planning | Sharing decisions<br>Aligning calendars<br>Sequencing lessons<br>Identifying essential questions<br>Covering objectives<br>Chocolate |
| Librarian | Identifying resources<br>Managing resources<br>Member of other "Communities of Practice"<br>Collaboration |
| Students | Labeled<br>Struggling<br>Imaginative<br>Bored when we are<br>Understandings<br>Producers<br>Free lunch |
| Teacher | Supervisor of students<br>Manager<br>Liaison with parents<br>Counselor |
| Teaching | Procedures<br>Interventions<br>Instructional strategies<br>Pacing<br>Covering curriculum<br>Building prior knowledge<br>Assessments |
| School | Building<br>School district<br>State and national |

## Selected Observation

The remarks from Dianna that opened this article came from a passage that was selected from the transcripts because it allowed a more detailed look at a chain of activities leading to the creation of a new lesson: Endangered Species. Early in the analysis, an attempt was made to name an activity "creating" to capture when a new lesson emerged, but this became problematic because planning a new lesson or unit was not a simple activity, and in fact always involved some combination of the other activities: orienting, coordinating, making connections, and making sense. The Endangered Species passage was selected because it included each of these activities and also was coded in several places for "meanings of librarian." Additionally, the Endangered Species selection was relatively compact and had all participants present, but it had some features that made it distinct from other planning meetings. At this point the team and I had been working together throughout the school year. Brittany was nearing the end of her first year of teaching. In this meeting, an idea of Brittany's, inspired by a book on the table, grew into a library lesson in which the students researched endangered animals. While every planning meeting included plans for some new lesson or lessons, in this segment everything happened "on stage," and it's possible to follow the lesson from the expression of need through the idea phase to concrete plans for implementation that include the library. The path was not smooth; it involved several shifts in plans, and each participant seemed to take up the lesson differently. Given the interest of this study in the role of the school librarian, this segment allowed for an analysis both of the role the school librarian played in forming the lesson and of the different ways the other participants seemed to position the librarian. This segment lasted about thirteen minutes and took place about thirty-five minutes into the planning meeting. The following sections offer an analysis of how the Endangered Species lesson emerged and was built to include a library lesson, as well as why Dianna decided not to participate. The analysis of this selected passage is provided in chronological detail to provide both context and transparency regarding my interpretive analysis.

Additionally, I decided to use the present tense and first person to reflexively re-create the experience and my engagement in it as participant.

### Emergence of the Lesson Idea

The Endangered Species lesson grew out of a social studies unit on natural resources. Throughout the year, the teachers had been using a new textbook closely aligned with the curriculum to plan social studies using library materials to augment the lessons in the textbook. Areyanna asks if there are library materials for the natural resources unit.

**Areyanna**: Are there what, three lessons in this unit?

**Dianna**: I think so.

**Areyanna**: Do you have books to go with this Sue?

**Sue**: I have books about recycling and I have some books about especially about water conservation. Umm there's a book—it's sort of about cutting down the woods to build, so I have a few things.

**Dianna**: Let's see what they have.

Dianna's "they" refers back to the textbook. As we move on, Areyanna states, "We can use resources. I don't like this lesson 3," an expression of discontent with the social studies textbook. A few minutes then pass in which there are several pauses and I get up and return to the table with books that they might use in addition to the textbook. Then Areyanna and I engage in a conversation about one book while Brittany and Dianna are talking about another book. The two conversations converge as we all tune in to listen to Brittany describe the book *Will We Miss Them?* (Wright 1991) and her idea for a lesson.

> **Brittany**: Because each page is a different animal so you don't have to do all of them. I was thinking about even trying to do something, umm, maybe with a partner, like giving each partner groups an animal and letting them talk about how can we make sure this animal is protected or whatnot. I don't know. It's too long to be a read aloud.

I offer to support Brittany's idea by finding books about the individual animals "because there probably are specific books about the different animals." Areyanna asks, "We're going to, say, have them partner and write about how they can help protect the animal?" Her use of the plural, "we," suggested that at least two were going to do it. Brittany outlines her idea one more time—"And then if sometime during that day I'm just going to let them present their information"—followed by a relatively long pause and then this exchange as three of us come to the same realization:

> **Brittany**: I don't think it can all be done in one day though.
>
> **Areyanna**: No.
>
> **Sue**: I know, that's what I was just thinking [laugh].

Up until this point, my contributions, as the school librarian, have been to bring materials, including the book *Will We Miss Them?* to the table for examination, to probe and encourage Brittany's ideas for using the book, and to suggest that I could locate other books about the animals in the book for her students. But as this conversation continues, I am pulled into the lesson in a different way.

**Building a Collaborative Lesson**
As Areyanna begins to imagine what this lesson might look like in her classroom, she tells Brittany "your kids might be able to handle it with just you" but that "my kids are a little bit more needy" and "would need more guidance." My response, "Well I mean I could help with it," indicates that I immediately interpreted this to be a meaning of the librarian as another pair of hands to provide "guidance." I follow with the questions "Are you just thinking about giving them like a class period really to look at a little bit of stuff about their animal? I mean, how much do you want them to know?" The next utterance from Areyanna was, "That sounds like a library lesson." We then work to coordinate how we want to schedule the library. Would it be for the whole class with "the two of us doing it"? At this point, Brittany is not planning to bring her students to the library for the lesson. As the conversation progresses, Areyanna and I continue to discuss what should be included on the graphic organizer, with Brittany chiming in:

**Areyanna**: Maybe. What does the animal…

**Sue**: Where does it…Maybe about its habitat

**Areyanna**: Yeah.

**Brittany**: Habitat, yeah.

**Sue**: Cause that's what it's in danger of.

**Areyanna**: Yeah habitat. Maybe how can we protect it?

**Sue**: Habitat, why is it endangered? How can we protect it? What does it eat? Where does it live? This is why I feel like we're getting to the animal unit. [laugh] That's why I kind of thought this would go there.

**Areyanna**: Umm hmm.

**Choosing to Opt Out of a Lesson (Or Not)**
In the above passage, we practically complete each other's sentences about what we want the students to learn about their animal. My comments about the animal unit apparently cause Dianna to remember a lesson we developed in the past for the animal unit:

**Dianna**: Are you still going to do something with insects like we have done in the past?

**Sue**: Well that's what I wanted to talk about. What we want to do for the life cycle. If we wanted to do insect research or…are we looking at that for the last three weeks because I have the book fair in the middle of that. [laugh] And EOGs are going to take.

**Areyanna**: This really won't be about insects. I think if they can get familiar this is something they could do to draw back on when they get to the insect unit. It will be all more familiar.

Areyanna's comment focused on the process as one that will build a foundation for later library research. What followed this exchange was a somewhat puzzling reaction from Dianna, which I present below to show some of the linguistic detail. Lines are shown to represent "spurts" of talk (Gee 2005) containing "one salient piece of new information" (124).

**Dianna**: Well, you know how they are, when they come to you// (high pitch) So.

**Sue**: Well, if we're both working with them that makes a difference too.

**Dianna**: Well.

> **Sue**: So if we're both working with them that helps. With a partner or a small group.
>
> **Areyanna**: It works for me. Um I think with the two of us doing it.

I had originally felt the comment "you know how they are when they come to you" perhaps indicated a meaning of librarian as a person who did not have control over students. The way Dianna drags out the "you" with a raised pitch contributed to this feeling. I have since decided that it also represented a struggle between at least two meanings of school librarian: the school librarian as specialist and the school librarian as co-teacher. Dianna's use of the third person "they" in the phrase "when they come to you" suggests that her students come to the library without her. My statements with the emphasis on the word "both" suggested that I was trying to make a point about her presence. I actually repeat "we're both working with them" twice, and Areyanna echoes with "the two of us."

As the discussion proceeds, Brittany decides to make the library a part of her lesson with the use of an inclusive "we" and "in here," referring to the library.

> **Sue**: So just have them leave here with that graphic organizer filled out and then you can do something in your classroom with that drawing a picture or - sharing it. How are you thinking of them sharing it?
>
> **Brittany**: We do Author's Chair in my room, so they would just do that.
>
> **Sue**: Just sit there and talk about what they learned.
>
> **Brittany**: We are going to do the first day in here.

I'm not sure what caused Brittany to change her mind about doing the first part of this lesson in the library. Perhaps when Areyanna suggested early on that her students could handle doing it with just her, Brittany decided she could do it that way. She made that remark before we began to talk in more detail about having a graphic organizer, what we wanted students to look for, and how students would share what they learned. I think the lesson became more complex than she had first proposed:

> **Brittany**: Umm hmmm, so instead of me reading the book aloud I'm just going to let them look through their books, find out about the animal, where the animal lives, where they live, how they can save it.
>
> **Sue**: Want me to pick the animals that are in that book? Oh, she's got it.
>
> **Brittany**: Yeah, and then sometime during that day I'm just going to let them present their information.

Brittany may have realized from the discussion that it wasn't going to be so easy to just have them *look* through books and *present* their information later that day. It may be that following the exchange with Dianna she decided it would make a difference to have both

of us working with her students. I scheduled times for both Brittany and Areyanna to come to the library, and I checked in one more time with Dianna and got the response that opened this paper, "I'm sure it will be wonderful, but you've got to consider with whom you are working. I don't want to come in here and have to fuss."

Several discourse models or storylines about the role of the school librarian are present in the above segment: the specialist who provides release time for teachers; the school librarian as helper, resource provider, and instructional designer; and a stereotypical "shhhh librarian" who is the "story lady." I address each in turn in the discussion below and provide supporting or elaborating evidence from other data sources.

# Discussion

## The Specialist
In elementary schools, a prevailing discourse model or storyline about the school library has been to include the library as one of the "specialists," meaning that students come to the library without their teacher once a week, often alternating with art, music, physical education, and sometimes a foreign language, to provide teachers with release time. This model is known as a "fixed schedule." The site for this study, Obama Elementary School, was in the minority of elementary school libraries in the school system and in the state because the school library was not utilized in this fashion. Instead Obama had a flexible schedule where the teachers and librarian collaborated to decide how and when the library would be utilized for instruction. However, the model of a fixed schedule was so prevalent that teachers and the school librarian often fell back on it when scheduling whole classes to come at a regularly agreed-upon time, and it was easy for teachers to assume they could leave their students during this time. Dianna's use of the third-person "they" in the phrase "when they come to you" suggested that she thought of her students as coming to the library without her. The fact that the Endangered Species lesson was at the end of the school year and I still felt that I had to insist on the teacher being present was indicative of a continuing struggle. My statements and Areyanna's that followed Dianna's comment in planning about "how they are when they come to you" suggested that we both interpreted what she has said to mean when they come to you *without the teacher*. I actually repeat "we're both working with them" twice, and Areyanna echoes with "the two of us." At the same time, I found myself complicit in reproducing the fixed model as I worked to schedule classes. I ask Brittany what time she wants to come ("after lunch?"), and the ease with which we find a day and time when the whole class could come to the library indicated that we had identified a "regular" time. In January's planning transcript, Brittany says, "I always come to you at twelve."

## Resource Provider
A library as shelves and shelves of books and other print and nonprint resources is one of the strongest "storylines" in our culture about libraries. In the Endangered Species segment, the role of the school librarian as the person who pulls "the stuff" is immediately apparent when Areyanna turns to me at the beginning to ask if there are other materials to support the unit, and I get up from the table several times to gather materials from the collection. In fact, one of those books, *Will We Miss Them?* becomes the spark for the collaborative lesson as Brittany reads aloud from the text. My first contribution toward planning that lesson is to offer to pull books about the individual animals mentioned in the book.

Librarians in this storyline also may be gatekeepers responsible for cataloging and tracking the location of these items. A huge meaning promoted by me and clearly recognized by the teachers in this segment and throughout the planning transcripts and the interviews was as the person with "the stuff." In the interviews, teachers always mentioned providing physical access to resources as a valued contribution of the school librarian. Areyanna describes the librarian as someone who "goes through and pulls books for us and actually looks for materials that we can use in the classroom and brings them to us in a wagon. Tons of stuff - more than enough." The wagon refers to a red wagon used by the library to deliver materials to classrooms. As the person responsible for cataloging and tracking materials, one shade of this meaning is as the gatekeeper. While this was not a meaning promoted by me, it was still apparent in the following passage from September in the comment by Jean, the curriculum facilitator:

> **Sue**: Oh good the red wagon's back. We're going to need it. I checked these out by the way to Ms. Robertson.
>
> **Jean**: So don't lose them.

## Instructional Designer

While the teachers all recognized the value of the librarian in providing resources, they always qualified this as value-added. Brittany sums it up in a February 2009 interview:

> **Brittany**: Right well I feel like definitely you are a key part in our planning because you are able to get those resources for us, but also you always come with ideas as well. And helping us realize our objective - what needs to happen when we are teaching this objective and maybe some things that we can do and you can do with the kids or we can do in the classroom with kids, so you are very helpful with giving ideas and getting our resources together.

Helping teachers realize their objectives generally involves positing ideas and asking questions to provoke conversation about designing instruction. The Endangered Species passage represented 13 minutes from this planning meeting and consisted of 1,239 words. From these 1,239 words, 458 (37 percent) were questions or expressions of uncertainty; 337 (almost 75 percent) of those words were my questions, including:

- "Do you want me to pick the animals that are in that book?"
- "I mean, how much do you want them to know?"
- "Do we want a graphic organizer that they fill out?"
- "How are you thinking of them sharing it?"
- "Pairs, pairs or would you rather have small groups?"

These questions and others served to provoke further discussion of what we wanted students to know, how we would teach it, and how we would know they had learned it. These questions may have led Brittany to realize that she was not going to be able to accomplish the lesson in the time she had first envisioned, and they may have helped her realize the value of scheduling part of the lesson with the school librarian.

## Helper/Co-Teacher

Just as interesting as Dianna's opting out of the lesson is the way Brittany first plans to teach the lesson alone in her classroom. While she clearly recognizes the value of the school librarian in providing resources and advice on instructional design, she doesn't recognize the potential role of the school librarian as a co-teacher. This failure may be indicative of the prevailing discourse of librarianship as a service profession as well as the specialist identity prevalent in elementary schools. Again and again, the voluntary nature of the relationship is promoted in my talk as exemplified by the questions above—most are hedged, starting with "would you rather," "do you want," and "how are you thinking." Teachers valued this quality, as indicated in Areyanna's response to the question in her February 2009 interview about what the school librarian brought to planning:

> **Areyanna**: Focus, direction, resources, um, good advice, um, looking for a word…You don't necessarily push it on us… suggestions suggestions.

In the Endangered Species lesson I use the phrase "an extra pair of hands" when Areyanna says her students might need more guidance. I offer, "Well, I mean I could help with it," and throughout that interchange the pronouns we choose are more "you" and "me" than "we." I also must observe that my use of the verb "working" rather than "teaching," along with Areyanna's observation that she doesn't think she can do this lesson alone, suggested that while we were working side by side, we had not quite adopted a language of co-teaching. Librarianship is a service profession, but the language of "helper" or "extra pair of hands" dilutes our image as co-teacher or instructional partner.

## The "Shhhh" librarian reading stories

When Dianna chose to opt out of the lesson, I wondered about her meaning of "you got to consider with whom you are working." At the time, I took "with whom" to mean her students, but she may have been talking about herself. The next phrase is about her and her fussing rather than her student's behaviors. Dianna may be drawing on the library as a place where order and quiet are expected. Earlier in the year (September) there was this particular exchange between Areyanna and Dianna about reading aloud to students:

> **Areyanna:** You know everybody's going to have to have their little say about what they know. [laugh]

> **Dianna**: Put your hand down and listen. Just hush. That's what I say.
> Perhaps one of the meanings of school librarian that Dianna would recognize is the person with the finger on her lips shushing the children. While the image a of librarian with glasses and a bun demanding quiet is almost a laughable stereotype, it is one of the meanings widely available to us along with the children's librarian asking listeners to "just hush" while she reads aloud. While the "Shhhh" storytelling model was not apparent in my discourse with the teachers or in our planning together, Areyanna references this model in one of the interviews:

"I've never seen another school that has a librarian like you that gets involved and helps us with planning and actually teaches lessons with our classes and not just, you know, reads stories to them, but actually gets involved with the actual curriculum."

Areyanna's reference to this model emphasizes its prevalence in our discourse about school librarianship and thus how readily available it is as a reference for a "real school librarian."

# Conclusion

This discourse analysis foregrounds the ongoing struggle engaged in by school librarians to implement new roles and new standards. While the model of a school librarian who "gets involved and helps us with planning and actually teaches lessons with our classes… and actually gets involved with the actual curriculum" is one promoted in the discourse of *Empowering Learners* (AASL 2009), Areyanna's comments suggest that it is not one recognized by teachers as a "real school librarian." In fact, Areyanna suggests in the same interview that the library program is "your creation." These prevailing meanings of a school librarian as a helper, a story lady whispering "shhhh," and a specialist providing release time for teachers are held in place by our own everyday discursive practices. The work of gaining wide recognition for the identity and roles of a school librarian that are promoted in our professional standards remains an ongoing struggle played out moment-by-moment in the language of our interactions. Teachers like Dianna, who think of the library as a quiet place where they need to "fuss" at their students to be quiet; Brittany, who recognizes the librarian as helper but not quite co-teacher; and Areyanna, who says she has never "seen another school that has a librarian like you," remain among those "with whom you are working."

This discourse analysis uncovered how these identities continue to be exercised not only in the ways others see us but also in the ways we talk about and promote ourselves. While the provision of resources, a flexible schedule, and a service orientation are all highly valued and recognized aspects of our jobs, they are not sufficient and may even hinder the creation of new identities beyond gatekeepers, specialists, and helpers. We have much more work to do (and more noise to make) to gain recognition for "real school librarians" as defined in *Empowering Learners* as co-teachers who are leaders with a particular knowledge of curriculum and instructional design, not story ladies whispering "shhhhh" and covering classes to provide teachers release time.

This work will inevitably involve struggle as we work to overcome existing discourses of "real" school librarianship held by teachers, administrators, and others with whom we work, including other school librarians. Gee's (2000–2001) theory of a discursive identity—as one that must be negotiated in interactions with others—provides for the possibility of negotiating new identities. And, as Gee reminds us, we must bid for recognition of these identities in our own talk and actions. While Areyanna perceived the role of a school librarian as someone engaged with curriculum and instruction as my "creation," she also stated that it was one she looked for in other schools: "Yeah, how's your librarian involved? Is your librarian with you in planning? How does she work with your class?"

As Church (2008, 2010) and others have found, school principals base their ideas about the identity or roles of a school librarian on their personal experiences with school librarians. While we should certainly seek ways to reach pre-service teachers and principals through their coursework, and practitioners through their journals and conferences, we also should remember the work that is ongoing, moment-to-moment, and one-to-one in our daily interactions. We always should consider "with whom you are working" and the many discourses each person carries of "real school librarians." This particular study is limited by its very particular and subjective context and by the limited amount of text that can be subjected to a fine-grained

discourse analysis. Further study, and in particular further application of discourse analysis to the identity work of practicing school librarians, are needed to verify and refine these findings. While there exists research regarding the roles of school librarians delineated in *Information Power* (McCracken 2001; O'Neal 2004), a need exists for exploring the new focus in *Empowering Learners* on the role of leader and the shift toward the roles of instructional partner and information specialist. The discourse models or storylines uncovered here are a small part of the ongoing story of school librarianship, and they begin, but do not conclude, the need for more theoretical and empirical work regarding the identity of school librarian.

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