



# PRACTICAL ADVOCACY

## The Collection

By David Loertscher

*Third in a series of ongoing articles by guest authors*

In a school learning commons where the world of information is a giant collaborative rather than a one-way stream of information, everything that the former school library did turns to become client side. This means that everyone in the school feels ownership in the learning commons and participates in its construction and push to enhance teaching and learning.

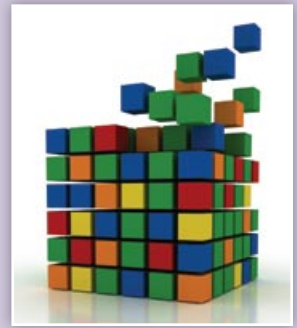
This basic shift in thinking challenges previous ideas often taught in library schools. The idea of ownership is now replaced with “access to.” Static collections are replaced with elastic collections. Librarian-selected is replaced by everybody-built and selected. Dominant print materials are replaced with the idea of whatever format the user prefers on whatever device they prefer to use.

As professionals, we turn from collection dictators to collection-building coaches. Since the trend across the world is toward more and more digital information support, let us take a tour of the virtual learning commons to examine strategies that guide our construction of collections designed to be targeted at teaching and learning.

Rather than trying to build the “collection” as a whole, in the virtual learning commons, courses, units, or lessons are jointly constructed by teachers, students, and specialists under the coaching eye of the teacher librarian and in what we might term a knowledge construction center of the virtual learning commons. Imagine a virtual room where a “make our school green” project is underway. Our objectives and assignments are being discussed here, but also, everyone is building the “elastic” collection needed to support what we are trying to accomplish both as a group and as individuals. Yes, resources from the OPAC are included but everyone is contributing websites, access to collections from other libraries and institutions,

**GUIDELINE:** The school library media program includes a well-developed collection of books, periodicals, and non-print material in a variety of formats that support curricular topics and are suited to inquiry learning and users’ needs and interests.

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materials in any media, format, and level targeted just at this learning experience. We call it a knowledge construction center because everyone is busy helping everyone else construct whatever we are trying to build either individually or collectively. This is true whether the class is a face-to-face class or a virtual class in a total online environment.

What we are doing is collection mapping where the collection is viewed as information chunks that come and go, expand or contract, and include both commercially produced materials and materials produced locally by teachers and the students themselves. For units of instruction that happen over and over, the knowledge building center can be very sophisticated. For quickie or experimental units, a small, yet very convenient set of information sources suffice. The important idea is that the knowledge space is a collaborative construction space—a place where we are all working. There is little need to Google around it because everyone working on the same project is in the room learning together. And it is not just an information center. It is a project center, a production center, and a museum of student creations.

Using collection mapping to chunk our collections and building knowledge construction centers, teacher librarians move directly into the center of teaching and learning. No more looking in from the outside where students and teachers are just Googleing around us. 🌈

### REFERENCES:

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2. Loertscher, David V., Carol Koechlin and Sandi Zwaan. *The New School Learning Commons Where Learners Win*. Hi Willow Research & Publishing, 2008. (both publications available at <http://lmcsource.com>)

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