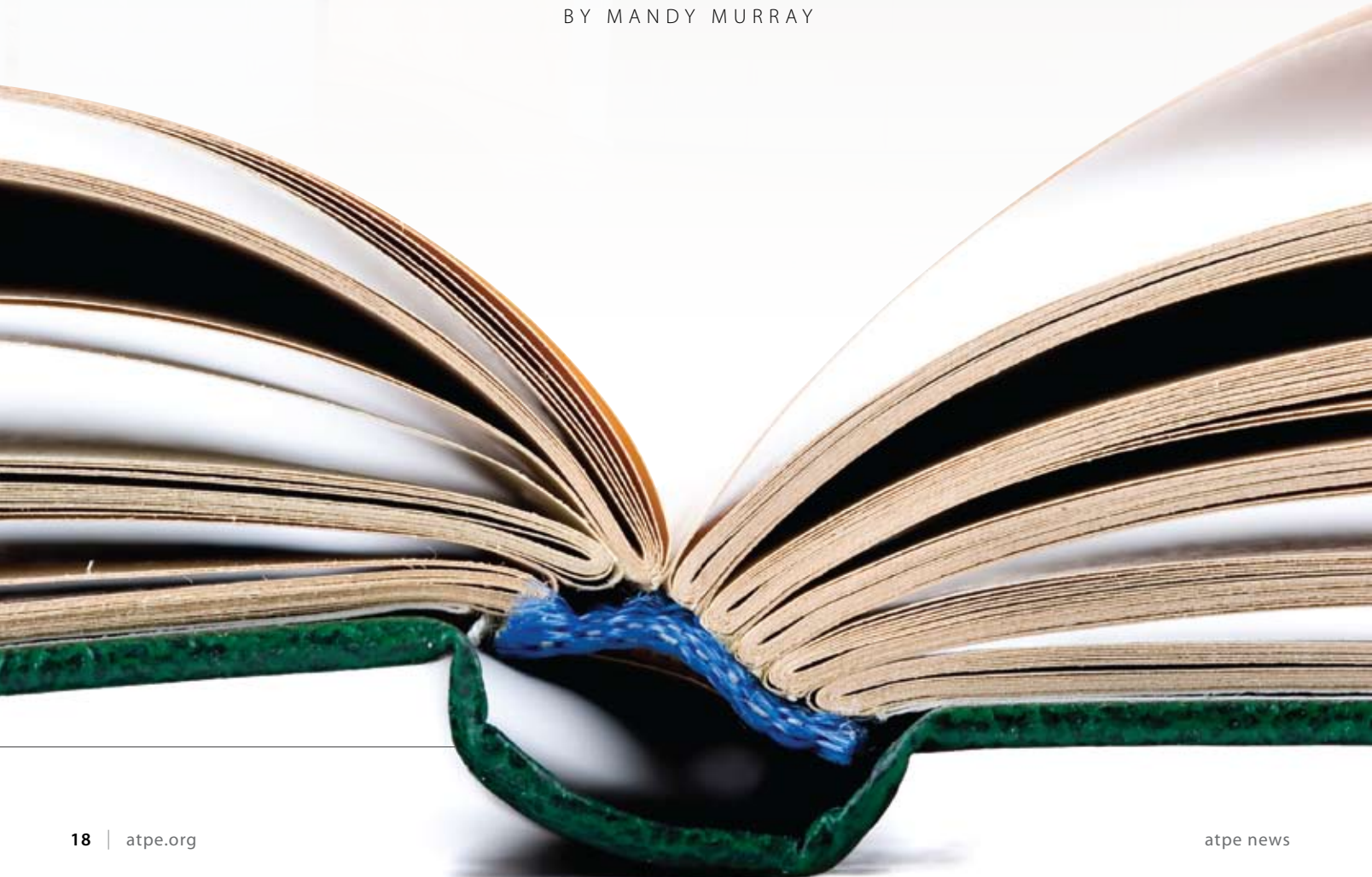


the LIBRARIAN



The past meets the future in a school library, where the sound of turning book pages competes with the clicking of computer keyboards. The educators in charge of these spaces have the daunting task of keeping students interested in reading books while preparing them for life in the technological fast lane.

BY MANDY MURRAY





According to the Texas Education Agency (TEA), school libraries and librarians have a two-part mission. The first is “to build the capacity of Texas school library programs to support learning, especially in the core curriculum areas.” The second is “to enable students to achieve their potential and fully participate now and in the future in the social, economic and educational opportunities of our state, nation and world.”

Thanks in part to this mission, the responsibilities of the school librarian now extend past the covers of a book; these educators play an integral role in the advancement of students through the acquisition of both literacy and technological skills. They must be familiar with and educate on the use of library books, reference materials, databases, computers, the Internet, multimedia, and other electronic and print information sources. In many school districts, librarians are now called “library media specialists” to reflect this expansion of duties.

Librarians are also tasked with integrating Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) standards into the programs they present and using available resources to help students with English/language arts/reading, social studies, math, science and technology applications skills.

The 80th Texas Legislature took an interest in the future of public school libraries and directed TEA to work with the Texas State Library and Archives Commission (TSLAC) to study the condition of Texas school libraries. The study was based upon *School Library Programs: Standards and Guidelines for Texas*, a document that suggests that libraries and librarians focus on creating learner-centered teaching strategies, environments, technology and information access, and connections to community. (Find the complete *School Library Programs* document at www.tsl.state.tx.us/ld/schoollibs.) In late 2008, the agencies released their findings, which showed that “adequate funding, resources and recognition of the vital role the school library program and school librarian play in student success are needed.” The findings also recommend how to best meet the needs of libraries, including better collaboration among librarians and teachers in order to support student success as well as more online resources and access to databases such as the K–12 Databases. (Learn more about the K–12 Databases—a partnership of TEA, TSLAC and the Region 20 Education Service Center—at <http://esc20.net/k12databases>.)

ATPE spoke with three librarian members—one a second-career educator, one a veteran educator and one at the end of a 40-year career—to discuss what it’s like to be a modern public school librarian.



“Don’t be afraid to go into your library and read every book.”

—Dwight D. Eisenhower, 34th President of the United States (1890–1969)

ATPE: WHAT’S THE BEST PART OF BEING A LIBRARIAN?

Doug Valentine: “My favorite part of being a librarian is that I get to see all of the kids in the school on a weekly basis. It’s nice to work with a variety of ages and levels.”

Linda James: “I love it when their eyes light up as they discuss a book and how they’ll defend their opinion of a book until the very end.”

Marsha Dry: “When a book comes in, the kids get excited. They tell me, ‘It’s the one I’ve been waiting for!’”

ATPE: HOW DO YOU SPREAD THE LOVE OF READING TO YOUR STUDENTS?

Valentine: “Matching the reader to the book is important. I believe if a student gets a book he is interested in, it will prompt him to work harder to read it.”

James: “I read the books students are reading, and I tell students about the books I read. That may seem like a small thing, but I have found it is very important. Teachers grade papers at home; I read books.”

ATPE: HOW DO YOU INCORPORATE THE TEKS AND TAKS INTO YOUR LIBRARY?

Dry: “We talk about elements of the TEKS, parts of stories and literature.”

Valentine: “I collaborate with grade level [educators] to find out what Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS)-related themes they are working on to determine what sort of lesson I should teach that week.”

James: “I work with the teachers to make sure what I present is relevant to what they are doing in class. Much of what I do reinforces skills needed for the TAKS test.”

ATPE: WHAT KIND OF TECHNOLOGIES DO YOU USE IN YOUR LIBRARY?

Dry: “A Smart Board, a document camera and online storybooks. I’ve also taught students how to create PowerPoint presentations, type documents in Word and make movies.”

Valentine: “I use whatever technology is most effective to teach the lesson I want to teach. ... I use a lot of video in my projects, so we have a high-definition camera, Flip video cameras,

Our featured librarians



Doug Valentine is an elementary librarian at McKillop Elementary School in Melissa ISD. He’s been a librarian for six years, a path he

chose to take 10 years ago when he made a career change. “When growing up, my little neighborhood library was my summer hangout,” he says. “I was one of those kids you see pestering the librarian to help shelve and check out books.” (Valentine is also ATPE’s 2010 Special Services Educator of the Year. Read more about him on page 31.)



Linda James is the River Road High School library media specialist. She has been a librarian for six years, but the River Road ISD

educator has spent more than 20 in the education profession. She was working on an administration degree when she realized that avenue wasn’t for her. “I thought that being a librarian would allow me to have more contact with the students and still move into a different part of the educational system,” she says. “I also love to read.”



Marsha Dry has been a public school librarian for 40 years; she spent the past 34 at John Ireland Magnet Elementary School in Ector

County ISD. She enjoyed reading when she was younger but struggled with it. “I loved the idea of being able to help someone become a better reader,” she says. Dry will retire in June of this year.

lighting, software and a green room. Sometimes I like to use old technology. I have a set of lessons in which I use a 1958 Predicta television to broadcast historic figures in a ‘teleconference’ speaking directly to me.” (Watch videos created by Valentine and his students at <http://mckilloplibrary.edu.glogster.com/mckillop-home>.)

James: “I have a digital projector that I use often. ... I designed and maintain a library website (www.rrisd.net/library_resources). ... I also have a blog called Road Readers (<http://roadreaders.edublogs.org>).

ATPE: DO YOU HAVE GOALS FOR YOUR LIBRARY?

James: “My goal this year was to try and get more students reading and finishing books. High school students get so busy that sometimes reading is pushed to the side. I try to find books that keep them coming back.”

Dry: “I think an important goal is keeping a certified librarian in libraries.”

Valentine: “The goal of my library is basically the same as our district vision statement [with *library* replacing *district* in the goal]: ‘The McKillop library will be the library that all others in Texas and beyond will emulate.’ I want to collaborate with the students and the teachers to the best of my ability. ... I have a goal to instill in the students a love of reading and to provide guidance in information literacy.”

ATPE: WHERE DO YOU THINK LIBRARIES ARE HEADED IN THE NEXT 10 YEARS? IS THERE A PUSH TOWARD MORE ONLINE AND ELECTRONIC MEDIA?

Valentine: “I think that today’s Digital Natives will push for more online and collaborative learning opportunities, and it is important for us, as teachers, to supply that to them. Librarians should be on the front line of this digital revolution. We need to guide the students by teaching them how to evaluate and use information. Just because students can locate information does not mean they know how to use it.”

Dry: “Things like the Apple iPad are the future, but kids will still need lessons on Web pages and searching.”

James: “Technology constantly changes our learning environments. Twenty years ago, when we first started using the Internet, it was said that books would no longer be used by the year 2000. And we are still hearing some version of the same story. I believe books will always be around, but how they are used will change.” ☺

Weeding a collection

The Texas Education Agency suggests schools use a process outlined by Jo Anne Moore in *Guidelines for Collection Evaluation and Weeding* when they’re thinking of culling their collections. Moore suggests library media specialists “weed” each year in order to maintain the library’s collection, make it more appealing to both students and teachers, save precious shelf space, present a better case for more funding, and make browsing for titles quicker and more efficient.

Moore suggests there are both “thoughtful weeds” and “obvious weeds.” The thoughtful weeds include books and materials that are:

- **Outdated or factually incorrect.** Be mindful of oft-changing subjects, such as computers and other technology, science and geography.
- **Poorly organized or hard to search.** If a book has no table of contents or index, it might not be useful to students for research purposes.
- **Dated.** Encyclopedias that are more than 5 years old and atlases and dictionaries that are more than 10 years old likely contain inaccurate information.
- **Potentially harmful.** Anything with information on drugs could cause issues.
- **Poorly written.** Mediocre-quality books or those from more than a generation past serve little purpose.
- **Filled with stereotypes, outdated interpretations or trivial subject matter.**

Other thoughtful weeds are those books that are unpopular, duplicates, filled with material that no longer fits the curriculum or inappropriate for the age of the students.

Obvious weeds are those materials that are damaged, have dirty covers, have been written in by students, and have loose or missing pages and poor-quality pictures.

Moore also suggests getting rid of any audio-visual materials that are in formats no longer used by educators at the school as well as anything that’s damaged or too worn to be of use.



THE BETH ANN ROGERS LITERACY INITIATIVE

How \$1,000 each helped five Texas public school libraries

Through the Beth Ann Rogers Literacy Initiative, the ATPE Foundation provides \$1,000 grants to Texas public school libraries for the purchase of literacy materials and the modernization of literacy resources. The grant is named in memory of Beth Ann Rogers, who was the ATPE state president during the 1993-94 school year. Rogers taught kindergarten, special education and P.E. and also served as a principal and librarian in her 36-year education career. During the 2008-09 school year, the following five school libraries were awarded \$1,000 each: Carroll Elementary School in Corsicana ISD, McCollum High School in Harlandale ISD, Jackson Middle School in Houston ISD, Humble Elementary School in Humble ISD and Hirschi High School in Wichita Falls ISD.

Corsicana ISD district librarian and ATPE member Carolyne Moore used the grant to buy nearly 70 new books for Carroll Elementary School's more than 700 students. (Carroll school counselor Debbie Powers had applied for the grant.) These books helped update the library's collection. "Students at Carroll continue to enjoy reading these books," Moore says. "Each one has a bookplate identifying it as having been purchased through a Beth Ann Rogers grant from ATPE."

Harlandale ISD's McCollum High School librarian and ATPE member Terrie Sharp also used the funds to update her school's collection. "All 30 books and six DVDs purchased were published in the last three years and cover subjects specifically requested by teachers and students," Sharp says.



The subjects include San Antonio history, science and famous artists. "This grant has genuinely repaired that broken relationship between library and community, and as a result, the library is more valued by the administration," Sharp says.

Students at Jackson Middle School in Houston ISD are enjoying a new collection of graphic novels thanks to the ATPE Foundation grant and Kathy McMillan, the school's literacy coach. Cynthia Ramos, who was the full-time librarian at Jackson during the 2008-09 school year, put the books on display facing the entrance of the library. The students are "very excited about these new additions to the library collection," Ramos says. "This money was the only funding we received for the library for this school year," she adds. "Please know that it was put to good use for our students."

Jackie Ameluxen, ATPE member and librarian at Hirschi High School in Wichita Falls ISD, wrote the grant request with her school's dyslexic and reading-impaired students in mind. Prior to the grant, the library collection held nothing for these students. Part of the \$1,000 was put toward a subscription to Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic, a collection of audio books and learning materials, and accompanying Daisy Technology players. "It is our wish to continue to add to this collection and also build an audio book collection in a variety of formats, which would include literature in Playaways and downloadables," Ameluxen says. The remaining grant money went toward an update of the library's young adult titles and the purchase of several books from a student wish list. ♻️

More funds for school libraries

The 2009-10 recipients of the Beth Ann Rogers Literacy Initiative grants were chosen in March 2010. They are:

- **Dogan Middle School**, Tyler ISD
- **Eastside Memorial High School**, Austin ISD
- **Jackie Carden Elementary School**, Crowley ISD
- **Santa Anna ISD Library**, Santa Anna ISD
- **Santa Fe Elementary School**, Cleburne ISD
- **Springtown Elementary School**, Springtown ISD

For more information on this and other ATPE Foundation programs, please visit www.atpefoundation.org.

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