

EDITOR'S notes



Wallflowers Once Again

The Educational Testing Service (ETS) announced last fall that the overwhelming majority of students who took the new ICT test offered by ETS did not demonstrate information and communication technology competency. Only 13 percent of the ICT test takers demonstrated information literacy at a minimum level. Of the various sub-groups taking the test, high school seniors in college prep programs fared the worst. According to the ETS press release: "ETS unveiled the study at an information-literacy conference in Washington aimed at drumming up nationwide support for information-literacy standards and a curriculum in schools and colleges."

The first thing that came to my mind when I read that is, "Why don't they know that national standards for information literacy already exist?" Where are librarians and their organizations failing to inform the general public and the greater education establishment of the existence of these standards? Is it because when the new math or science standards are announced, for example, they are widely promulgated to educational stakeholders, and the IP2 standards were not? Did we not do a good job in spreading the word? Certainly the national and state organizations have a significant role in notifying other educational stakeholders that information literacy standards have been developed, and are in place in every school with a library. Perhaps in the light of this widely reported announcement, our organizations should be shouting to the rooftops that there is a curriculum ready, willing, and able to remedy this significant deficiency if only the schools will empower their librarians to implement it fully.

On the other hand, it may be the IP2 standards themselves. Are our standards too general? The reading and math standards have very specific objectives, whereas information literacy standards are more goal-like in their scope. The IP standards are currently under revision. Let those who are working on that project know that our standards must follow other national standards in scope and depth, or they will be set aside as insignificant.

Is it because we, as librarians, have talked the issue to death among ourselves? Are we so intimately familiar with these standards that we assume all other stakeholders know about them? When you talk to your faculty, your administration, your Board of Education, your community, do you position your library program as an answer to this national need? Or is your focus only on local book circulation numbers? We may be our own worst enemy in that regard. Many speak only of "making kids lovers of books," whereas this shining opportunity to impact the future of the nation is a plum for the taking. But it must be plucked at each and every local school. Librarians can't wait for the state and national organizations to do it for us. As Pogo said, "We have met the enemy, and he is us!" We can't be wallflowers in this fight. Speak out to your administrators, teachers, boards, and communities. Make sure that they know there already are information literacy standards and professionals capable of teaching them, if they are only given the tools to do so. Then step up to the plate. You may need to give a few free samples of your prowess.

This is an invaluable opportunity for the profession. If we don't snatch this chance, the technology folks will, and we will have sealed the fate of librarians as dinosaurs who refused to move with the times.

Carol

Carol Simpson

Linworth Publishing, Inc. and ALISE Youth Services SIG invite the submission of papers related to youth services in libraries for the 2008 Youth Services Paper Award. An award of \$1000 may be made to recognize an outstanding paper reporting innovative research in youth services. Papers are invited on topics related to youth services in public libraries or school library media centers. For complete submission requirements, e-mail linworth@linworthpublishing.com.

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