



Join the Coalition that's put **SCHOOL LIBRARY REFORM** on the Political Map

WHO WE ARE

In March, 2002, a group of individuals and organizations founded the Canadian Coalition for School Libraries, an alliance of parents, writers, academics, literacy advocates, public librarians, teacher-librarians, publishers, wholesalers and children's specialists. The honorary chair is Roch Carrier, National Librarian of Canada. The CCSL advocates well-funded, professionally-staffed school libraries as a means of improving student achievement.

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM

School library programs are being drastically reduced across the country as school boards confront funding shortfalls. But cuts are occurring when researchers abroad have determined that well-stocked, professionally-staffed school libraries which remain open during the day are linked to student achievement, reading, information literacy skills and success at the post-secondary level. In the U.S., Europe and South America, policy-makers are increasing school library funding. "The Crisis in Canada's School Libraries: The Case for Reform and Reinvestment," the first Canadian study examining the links between school libraries and student achievement, was published this spring. Electronic copies are available at www.peopleforeducation.com/librarycoalition.

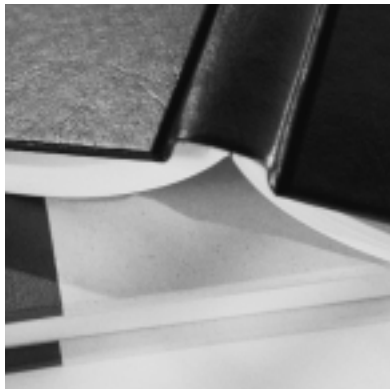
WHAT WE'RE DOING

The CCSL is establishing provincial school library coalitions, composed of groups dedicated to promoting improved school library policies and funding. We are seeking funds to establish a national office to support provincial coalitions and promote re-investment in Canadian school libraries to the public, policy-makers and the media.



HOW TO GET INVOLVED?

The coalition is open to any individual or organization. To join a provincial school library coalition or find out how to start one, contact [Name TK] at [Phone Number TK]. Further information is available at cla.ca/slip/, the School Library Information Portal.



FAQ

DO SCHOOL LIBRARIES IMPROVE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT?

Yes. Studies have shown that schools with well-stocked libraries, managed by qualified teacher-librarians working with teaching staff, achieve standardized test scores that tend to be 15-20% higher than in schools without a library and library teaching programme. Such schools have avid readers, students with stronger research skills, and teachers who collaborate with teacher-librarians. “If you were setting out a balanced meal for a learner,” one U.S. study concluded, “the school library media program would be part of the main course, not the butter on the bread.”

WHAT DO TEACHER-LIBRARIANS DO?

Teacher-librarians manage the school library, but they also work closely with classroom teachers, selecting learning materials for the school, as well as providing instruction on research skills, note-taking, organizing data, footnotes/endnotes, etc. These information literacy skills provide students with the tools to succeed in post-secondary institutions and prepare them for today’s knowledge-based economy. Teacher-librarians, moreover, ensure their collections contain the latest and best Canadian resources, as well as coordinate author visits and other literacy-oriented activities designed to familiarize children with Canadian books.

DO TEACHER LIBRARIANS HAVE SPECIAL TRAINING?

Yes. Typically, after several years in the classroom, teachers may obtain a teacher-librarian designation, the training for which includes skills such as library organization, as well as curriculum coordination with teaching staff to ensure that the research portions of all learning units are well planned and properly taught.

WHY DO WE NEED SCHOOL LIBRARIES WHEN WE HAVE PUBLIC LIBRARIES?

The first reason is access. A child in an elementary school may be taken to the school library every week, whereas outings to the local public branch tend to be few and far between. The second reason is staffing: school library programmes, particularly in the later grades, are delivered by qualified teacher-librarians. The third reason is the collection: public libraries have a broad mandate to serve the general public, whereas the collections in school libraries are tailored to the specific curriculum needs of the students.

WHY DO WE NEED SCHOOL LIBRARIES WHEN THE INTERNET IS SO READILY AVAILABLE?

Studies have demonstrated that children and young people feel comfortable surfing the Internet, but become frustrated when using it as a research tool for assignments. School library programmes provide students with guidance on how to use online resources effectively and critically, and in combination with other sources of information such as encyclopedias, periodicals, subscription databases, etc.

DON'T MOST CANADIAN SCHOOLS HAVE LIBRARIES AND TEACHER-LIBRARIANS?

Most Canadian schools have a library. But funding cuts have led to reductions in school library programmes and fewer teacher-librarians. In 1998, Alberta had 252 teacher-librarians assigned half time or more; by 2000, there were only 100 — or one for every 3,000 students. Ontario has seen a 28% drop since 1997, with many school libraries closed at least some of the time. In Nova Scotia, there were 103 teacher-librarians in 1990; last year, there were just 9. “The state of our school libraries,” says National Librarian and renowned children’s author Roch Carrier, “can only be described as desperate in almost every province.”

WHY ARE CANADIAN PUBLISHERS PART OF THE COALITION?

Many children first encounter Canadian authors and Canadian stories in their school libraries. Domestic publishers are celebrated at home and abroad for the quality of their children’s books, as well as their commitment to bringing this country’s rich culture to the attention of young Canadians. Unfortunately, fewer teacher-librarians and restricted collections budgets have meant a reduction in the number of Canadian books going into school libraries.