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School Librarians Build Relationships Through Their Role As Technology Leaders

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Many years ago, I watched a 1957 movie starring Katherine Hepburn and Spencer Tracy called *Desk Set*. In the movie Tracy's character is a computer expert who is trying to automate some of the work of Hepburn's reference librarian staff. While this massive machine that took up an entire wall did computations not actually possible at the time, the movie does highlight a common misconception — technological advances will someday replace librarians.

The truth is that school librarians and libraries are often on the cutting edge of technology, introducing learners to and educating them about new devices, tools, applications, and programs.

We've transitioned from paper to digital card catalogs. We've seen the progression from manual typewriters to electronic word processors to desktop, then laptop computers. Our learners once relied solely on paper encyclopedias and nonfiction texts before we integrated online databases into their information toolboxes.

The most recent advancement that has been on the minds of people both in and outside of education is AI. Not only are we concerning ourselves with how AI can be leveraged to ethically support educational goals, but

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we are also paying attention to how it will change the possibilities open to our students post-graduation.

Just as we have embraced technological advancements in the past (remember life before the internet?), we will continue to do so with anything new that comes our way. School librarians are often at the forefront of change and are early adopters. We work to understand new technology as it is introduced, and sometimes before, into our districts and schools so we can then share what we learned with others.

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We do this for a variety of reasons. I think partially because we love to learn and want to find the best resources available for our learners. But I think it is also because people rely on our technology knowledge and seek our help and guidance. We are the first person they contact when something isn't working correctly and a person they trust to give good advice on which digital tools and resources will best support classroom goals. And, we are the ones who provide professional development on how to use available resources. We are also the person who advocates on behalf of learners to have access to what will best aid their needs.

Technology leader is just one of the many roles school librarians take on in our buildings, whether it is an official title or not. We might have folks on staff who focus on the physical maintenance of the technology, but we are often the people who make the connections between the technology and teaching and learning.

For many of you, this isn't news. You know the many tech roles you take on in your schools. Raise your hand if you are the person who does the basic troubleshooting and handles help desk tickets for your building's devices. If you're anything like me, sometimes I forget about the benefits of being a tech leader when I feel a bit worn out from *being* a tech leader.

One of the biggest benefits is that we are able to build relationships with everyone in our school community through our technology leadership. Because we are the go-to tech helper in our buildings, we are in a better position to connect with folks we may not get the chance to directly work with in any other capacity.

Through the lessons we teach to both students and staff, we can also showcase our knowledge of information and

digital literacy in addition to our skill with using new and established digital devices, tools, and resources. By delivering this instruction we not only provide learning opportunities but we also grow advocates and allies who can speak to the important educational services we provide that go beyond print literacy and readers' advisory.

One of the best benefits is that we get to be technology superheroes on occasion. There are few things better than helping a classroom teacher get their technology back on track so they can complete their lesson as planned or helping a learner through a difficult digital issue so they can access a resource or complete something they have been working on. And, those folks we help will spread the word that the school librarian is the person to seek out if they are ever in need of help.

As with any of the many hats school librarians don throughout the day, wear your technology fedora, beret, or beanie with the knowledge that your leadership in this area is invaluable to all your learners.

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