

Library Spaces: From MEH to Yay!



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his is the true story of a rather small elementary school library in a rather small town in a rather small school district. Names have been omitted, but not necessarily to protect the innocent (and not-so-innocent, in the case of yours truly, the author); it will likely be quite easy for the reader to guess which school it is, and where it is.

Upon first setting foot in said library, the initial impression one received was one of a certain degree of neglect and, well...*MEH*. The space was poorly organized, lacked vibrancy, and did not particularly resemble anywhere that a well-meaning newbie librarian would want to take up shop, let alone a place that children would enjoy visiting.

There were--and alas, still are--several reasons that this was and is the case. Since the aim here is to present and compare what was, what is, and what (hopefully) could be, descriptions of these reasons are in order. Hence, here they are, as we travel from "MEH" to "yay"...

The Past = The *MEH*.

CLICK
HERE



1. THE COLLECTION

The collection had some really interesting and wonderful texts (many of which can still be found on the shelves today). That said, it had clearly been a long time since that garden of books had been weeded. For example, in fiction, there were titles that clearly had water damage, or smelled of mildew (or both) in nonfiction, science-related materials were sorely outdated. In addition, an analysis of the collection in its entirety showed that it needed to be diversified further. Finally, the arrangement of various book categories and types was confusing, making it difficult for students to locate the books they were looking for and wanted to check out.

2. CIRCULATION AREA

The circulation area was dominated by a very large executive-style desk, paired with another of similar style (these formed a right angle); the ensemble was completed by an equally big wooden file drawer. This meant that the librarian was effectively “walled off” from students when sitting there.

3. FLOORING

The flooring in the library was half carpet, half tile, both of a dullish blue-green. Due to occurrences of roof leaks and (on one occasion) related flooding, a musty scent has begun to emanate from various areas of the carpet. It was also quite worn and/or stained in a number of areas.

4. FLOORPLAN

Though a decent-sized room (particularly considering the size of the school), the floorplan/layout did not lend itself to accessibility of materials (there was no “flow” or logical progression to the order of book categories on the shelves), collaborative work, dynamic instruction, research, creative activities, or “lounging” about and enjoying the reading experience.

5. LIGHTING

In a nutshell, the light was all fluorescent all the time. Needless to say, this didn't make the space feel very inviting; rather, institutional.

6. OFFICE

There was an office, or a “subspace,” if you will, within the bounds of the library. The office belongs to the guidance counselor, who is a lovely and helpful person, but who is only on site two days a week.

7. SEATING

Most of the seating was either standard plastic and aluminum school fare (in some cases), or standard generic wood fare (in others). Nothing is inherently wrong with standard fare--UNLESS it is MANY years old, cracked, and capable of pinching students' fingers and/or catching students' hair (or “biting,” as one student commented).

8. SHELVING

The only shelving was bolted to the walls, except in two instances, wherein the units were clearly cobbled together. In both cases, the shelving was, like the seating, quite old (and it looks it).

9. STORAGE

There was a small room, which was stuffed to the gills with technological equipment of various sorts, e.g., Chromebooks, old servers and desktop computer units, headphones, cords, and more. Clearly, the library has been utilized as a catch-all space.

10. TABLES

Three of the seven tables present were solid and sturdy (as were the chairs that surrounded them). The remaining tables (and their accompanying seating, which was described above) were rickety, wobbly, and from another era.

11. WINDOWS

One bright spot (literally and figuratively) in the library was the windows. There are several, and they are large, making up at least half of one of the longer walls in the space. (The equally long wall on the other side is broken up by two doors only, which tends to make the space seem less visible and/or more blocked off/walled up than it should.)

12. WORKROOM

There was another small room (slightly larger than the aforementioned office or storage room). This was ostensibly a workroom, but was scarcely used as such. Instead, this served as a spot in which to place extra supplies, uncataloged books, and the like.

The Present=Somewhere in Between

Recent reports tell us that the space is, literally and figuratively, a work in progress. In other words, some (okay, a few, such as were heretofore possible) of the desired changes imagined and designed have actually been implemented, at least to some degree. Others remain twinkles in a certain librarian's eye.



The Future = The Yay!

**CLICK
HERE**



1. The Collection

The collection would be weeded accordingly, and new purchases would be made, in order to ensure that texts and materials were current/up-to-date, that a wide variety of information was available in each section, and that the stories and viewpoints represented therein were diverse.

Furthermore, both nonfiction and fiction would be reorganized to make it easier for students to locate desired items. Genreification of fiction would be considered and possibly implemented, and a “combo” section--which would be cross-curricular and feature items related to subjects being discussed in classrooms during particular time periods--would be added.

(AASL Standards addressed: I.B.1, I.C.2, II.A.1, II.A.2, II.A.3, II.B.1, II.B.3, II.C.2, II.C.3, II.D.1, III.D.1, IV.A.2, IV.B.3, IV.B.4, IV.C.1, IV.C.3, IV.D.1, IV.D.2, V.A.1,)

2. Circulation Area

A new desk/table configuration would be purchased, because as the collection should be more accessible, so, too, should the librarian be. Desktop computers would be set up so that students could more readily access the online catalog, and the online catalog would be updated (with TitlePeek) so that students could use it with their Chromebooks.

(AASL Standards addressed: I.B.1, I.B.2, II.C.1, III.D.2, IV.B.5)

3. Flooring

All flooring and rugs would be replaced throughout the library. New flooring would be heavy-duty vinyl, which would be waterproof (and therefore not fall prey to damage or nasty mold issues), be easy to clean and maintain, yet still have a more aesthetically-pleasing appearance. (For examples, see [here](#) for main space, [here](#) for Hygge Hub, [here](#) for Meeting Room, and [here](#) for Makerspace.)

(AASL Standards addressed: I.C.1, I.C.2, IV.B.5, V.B.3)

4. Floorplan

The current plan would be opened up significantly, i.e., a large, long “installed” table would be removed to allow for greater circulation (pun certainly intended), collaboration, and comfort.

(AASL Standards addressed: I.C.1, I.C.2, II.B.2, IV.B.5, V.B.2, V.B.3)

5. Lighting

Additional lighting of either an incandescent and/or warm LED variety--in various forms, including table lamps, fairy lights, lanterns, and more--would be acquired and strategically placed throughout the space, in order to offset the aesthetically and mentally jarring effects of the overhead fluorescent bulbs.

(AASL Standards addressed: I.C.1, I.C.2, IV.B.5, V.B.3)

6. Office

The space that is currently an office would be repurposed, and would become a designated makerspace. Various materials and supplies would be stored within this area. The “model” for the makerspace would be in line with that created by Islip High School’s Gina Seymour, information about which can be found [here](#).

(AASL Standards addressed: I.A.1, I.B.1, I.C.1, I.C.2, 1.D.1, 1.D.2, II.A.1, II.C.3, III.D.1, IV.B.5, IV.C.1, V.A.1, V.A.2, V.B.3, V.D.3, VI.D.2)

7. Seating

Current seating would be replaced with a myriad of styles, in order to meet and address the needs and learning styles of learners, and also for aesthetic purposes and safety reasons.

(AASL Standards addressed: 1.C.1, 1.C.2, I.D.1, II.B.2, II.C.1, II.C.3, II.D.2, III.D.1, IV.A.1, V.B.3, V.D.2)

8. Shelving

Existing shelving would be replaced with new, lighter-colored shelving along the walls, with two-sided displays at various locations throughout the library, and with mobile displays, so as to brighten the space, enhance visibility, allow for more display options, and to increase flexibility for/of spatial configurations.

(AASL Standards addressed: I.C.1, I.C.2, II.A.3, II.B.1, II.B.2, II.C.1, II.D.1, IV.B.5, IV.C.1, IV.D.1, V.B.3, VI.D.1, VI.D.2)

9. Storage

New/additional storage--either "fixed" or mobile, depending on location within the library space--would be put in place in order to accommodate ongoing and upcoming/new library programming (materials, supplies, etc.).

(AASL Standards addressed: I.C.1, II.A. 2, II.A.3, II.B.1, II.B.2, IV.C.1, V.D.2)

10. Tables

Current tables would be replaced with new, sturdier, and safer models that are designed to encourage collaboration via the capability to movement and repositioning (form/lines of tabletops, casters/wheels at bottom of legs, etc.).

(AASL Standards addressed: 1.C.1, 1.C.2, I.D.1, II.B.2, II.C.1, II.C.3, II.D.2, III.D.1, IV.A.1, V.B.3, V.D.2)

11. Windows

Existing windows would be supplemented by two round windows that would be cut out of and installed into the main interior wall of the library, which would lead to a more "open" and inviting appearance, heighten the visibility of the space, and reinforce its status as the heart of the school.

(AASL Standards addressed: I.C.1, 1.C.2, I.D.2, III.D.1, III.D.2, VI.D.1)

12. Workroom*

The space formerly known as the workroom would be transformed into a calming space; specifically, a "Hygge Hub." (Note: the inspiration for this came--once again!--from the above-mentioned Gina Seymour. For additional information, see [here](#).)

(AASL Standards addressed: I.C.1, II.D.2, III.C.1, III.D.1, IV.B.5, V.D.2)

*This particular item has already and actually been addressed!

BEFORE/MEH:



AFTER/YAY!:

