

# **Chapter 14: The School Library Media Center & Technology: Professionals & Resources to Support Differentiation**

*By Patsy Richardson*

Many teachers do not think of the school library as a place to turn to when seeking support for differentiated instruction. The school library or media center is often overlooked when teachers are developing curriculum, writing unit plans and performance assessments or generally looking for ways to differentiate. However, it might be one of the most promising places to start.

Some might question: “Sure, there are more books in the library than teachers have in their classrooms, but how does that relate to differentiation?” The answer to that question is, like differentiation, multi-dimensional and multi-leveled. It involves a combination of the resources available in a library media center, including print, audio-visual and online materials, as well as the teaching and collaborative expertise of the professionals who work there. These professionals go by many names: school librarian, school media specialist, teacher-librarian, etc. Irrespective of what title they go by, these individuals can offer invaluable support to teachers who have embarked on the differentiation journey.

Unfortunately there are numerous misconceptions and misunderstandings about the role that the library and librarian can play in student learning.

What exactly do school librarians do? Ask most people and their first response is likely to be something related to shelving books. Then they get a puzzled

look as they try to figure out what else a librarian might do. Keep students quiet? Check out books? Read? Some may think of these as the primary tasks of librarians. A few others cling onto an even worse idea of librarians -- the stereotypical image of the shushing, stern, horn-rimmed-glasses-wearing librarian whose job it is to protect the books from students who might want to read them!

A degree of confusion is understandable, and it is also not entirely surprising that teachers and administrators would be unsure of what their librarian does all day. First of all, many teachers and administrators (and librarians too, for that matter) do not have positive memories, or any memories at all, of school librarians from their own childhoods. It's hard to imagine what a good school librarian or library program can be when there is little or no prior experience to base that on (Lindsay, 2005).

Teacher preparatory programs rarely address the potential uses of the library or the idea of collaboration with the librarian in planning or developing units of study (Lindsay, 2005). When there has been no such explicit expectation or modeling, it is no wonder that only a few teachers consider incorporating library resources or working with their school librarian. To make the situation even more confusing, school library media training programs *do* emphasize the need for librarians to work closely with teachers, and encourage school librarians to foster collaborative relationships with their colleagues. This responsibility puts the librarian in the unenviable and awkward situation of seeking collaborative partnerships with teachers who for the most part do not expect to have such relationships and may not perceive the value of them. Some teachers must think it is awfully strange that librarians keep offering to work with them. But our training also emphasizes persistence.

Finally, librarianship is a unique job and there is usually only one person in that position in a school. The solitary nature of the position can create a sense of

distance and isolation from others, making it difficult for teachers to understand and relate to the work that librarians do. All these factors conspire to leave teachers with an incomplete and not entirely accurate idea about the overall purpose and role of the library and librarian in a school, and specifically how they might support differentiation.

So what do librarians really do, then? And if the library can support differentiation, how?

The following proposal for a school library classroom begins to an answer to these questions. Perhaps surprisingly, it was written in 1915 by Mary E. Hall, the second appointed school librarian in the United States. While Mrs. Hall's audio-visual equipment is charmingly out-of-date, her vision of the library as an attractive and welcoming "home for learning" is as relevant today as it was when she wrote it.

*The library classroom adjoins the library reading room and should be fitted up to have as little of the regular classroom atmosphere as possible. It should be made quite as attractive as the reading room and have its interesting pictures on the walls, its growing plants and its library furniture. Chairs with tablet arms on which pupils can take notes, one or more tables around which a small class can gather with their teacher and look over beautiful illustrated editions or pass mounted pictures and postcards from one to another, should surely form a feature of this classroom... There should be cases for large mounted lithographs... for maps and charts, lantern slides, mounted pictures, and clippings. A radiopticon or lantern with the projectoscope in which a teacher can use not only lantern slides but postcards, pictures in books or magazines, etc... For the English work and, indeed for German and French, a Victrola with records which make it possible for students to hear the English and other songs by famous singers, will help them to realize what a lyric poem is... The room will be used by the librarian for all her classes in the use of reference books and library tools, it will constantly service teachers of history, Latin, German, French, and be a boon to the departments of physical and commercial geography (Hall, as cited in Woolls, 1999, p. 13).*

Not only does this challenge my own stereotype of school librarians from the past, it also demonstrates that at least some school librarians have always been passionate about working with students and teachers, and have always sought ways to help students connect with subject matter in meaningful ways. With her radiopticon, projectoscope, and Victrola, Mrs. Hall was ready to help teachers give students a multi-faceted experience of people, places, and poems. In essence, she was addressing *differentiation*.

Mrs. Hall's description is strikingly similar to this one, from Judith Anne Sykes' book, *Brain Friendly Libraries*, written in 2006:

*Think of this "learning laboratory" as a warm, inviting, welcoming place with stimulating work areas as well as reflective sites. Instead of a harsh, "hushed" environment, hear soft music, laughter, projects being worked on, students reading silently, orally, being read to, dialoguing. View multiple displays of student cognitive work such as poetry, art, sculpture, and Web pages that are altered every four to six weeks, as brains thrive on novelty. Have comfortable, functional furniture for working, reading, studying, and collaborating. Facilitate learning with warm, caring, qualified personnel so that students feel supported, challenged, and trusted (p. 39).*

In both descriptions, nearly 100 years apart, the school library is not portrayed as a static, text filled room where only the strong readers or the academically gifted (in the traditional sense) will feel welcome. It is a space that should be designed to be welcoming, stimulating, and inspiring to all, providing a wide array of resources and encouragement for a variety of individual student strengths, interests, and needs.

The goal of school librarians is much more than simply managing a warehouse of materials, checking them in and out, and maintaining a studious atmosphere. June Gross and Susan Kientz (1999), media specialists from the United States, articulated it quite clearly in an article about collaboration between media specialists and teachers: "Student learning is the reason school libraries exist." Librarians seek to create spaces, to collect materials, and to work with students and teachers for the main

purpose of helping students to grow and learn, and we want to do all we can to help and support teachers in this endeavor. We can do this in a variety of ways, from simply providing useful resources to teachers and students to assisting in the development of units of study.

**How school library media specialists can help teachers:**

- gathering resources (print, audio-visual, online) from the library collection for classes to use in their units
- cooperating with the technology specialists, in order to help teachers stay current with developments in educational uses of new technology and new information resources
- creating a variety of “pathfinders,” research guides, and webquests to address student and teacher needs
- helping students and teachers to wade through the mass of information available to them on the Internet by pre-selecting sources for units of study
- guiding classes through the research process
- teaching students and classes how to evaluate sources
- teaching students and classes about reliable resources on the Internet and in subscription magazine and newspaper databases
- helping students and teachers to locate and use a variety of primary and secondary sources
- providing professional resources to address teacher requests and needs
- working with individual students and teachers who come with questions about how to find or use information
- teaching students and classes about citation methods and how to avoid plagiarism
- teaching “mini-lessons” to classes on aspects of using library resources (print and online) or conducting research
- teaching more in-depth lessons on aspects of the research process
- team-teaching with teachers
- planning, implementing and assessing lessons or units with teachers

School libraries do not have to be antiquated rooms full of dusty books, nor do librarians have to be antiquated book-shufflers, either. Instead libraries can be, and in many schools are, vibrant and dynamic resource centers where teachers and librarians

work together to design, deliver, and assess effective, student-centered, resource and inquiry based learning experiences.

Sounds nice, but what does all that have to do with differentiation? How can the library help teachers with that? We already know that there are three main areas that can be differentiated: content, process, and product, and that these can be differentiated in terms of student readiness, learning preference, and interest. How better to differentiate content than by looking to see what range of resources the library has on a particular subject so that students who need easier materials, or students who are ready for more challenging materials can have access to information about similar topics or concepts? The librarian may know of excellent alternative sources and can save teachers the time and work of having to locate the sources themselves. In terms of process, why not consider brainstorming ideas for a new unit with the library media specialist, who might be able to bring a new perspective or new resources to the planning? Media specialists might also know new product ideas that can tap the various strengths of students.

The remainder of this chapter will focus specifically on how librarians (or media/technology specialists as I will refer them) can support differentiated learning.

### **How We Can Help: Differentiating for Content**

This may seem like the most obvious place for media and technology to support differentiation. Indeed, the general philosophy of libraries has always supported the basic idea of differentiation. It is a place that welcomes, accepts, and serves all. People of all strengths, needs, and learning styles should feel welcome (teachers included!) and should be able to find materials and assistance to meet their individual needs. In an international school setting, this means that media specialists

make sure that the materials (print, audio-visual, and online) address all of the curricular areas as well as professional needs. The resources should be of high quality, and be appropriate and accessible for the varied needs of all the students. These resources also represent the multiple cultures, countries, and perspectives present in the school community. In other words, library materials can help address the readiness, interest, and learning preference needs of students. Achieving this does not happen without frequent and open communication with teachers and students. Media specialists pay close attention to what is taught in their school, and at what level, in order to make sure that library materials support those subjects by offering materials for the basic and advanced needs of students.

We also pay close attention to student interests. We listen to the questions that students ask, and pay attention to the activities that students participate in at school, and in general try to glean a clear idea of who the students are and what matters to them. This helps us to better understand their personal interests so that we can make sure we are addressing those needs as well. There are no value judgments made about the interests and needs of the students; one subject is as important as another, as is any information need that a student has. The student interested in information about how to take care of their new pet turtle is given the same level of attention and care as the student who wants to study the fractal patterns present in nature. Students who feel welcome and accepted are more likely to feel comfortable asking for help when they need it.

The variety of student learning styles can also be supported with library resources, which can provide multiple access points to the content. The needs of the student who wants to study fractal patterns in nature but who struggles with more challenging text because he or she is learning English can be assisted to locate

resources written with simpler language. A verbal learner can be directed to audio-visual materials or educational podcasts (online audio programs) related to the subject they are studying. Another student who struggles with reading might benefit from an audio version of a book that they can listen to while they read along with the print version. And a visual learner who is studying history can have access to video materials on specific subjects, giving them a visual access point to the material. Encyclopedias, print or online, are excellent sources for “global” learners who do better when they understand the big picture first. Encyclopedia entries can help them to see that big picture so that they can organize the more detailed information in their mind. The very organization of information in a library is also an example of how information can be categorized and broken down into subsets of information. This can be used as a model to help students create their own mental categorization schemes for what they are learning. The table below suggests resources from a school library and/or technology department that can support students with specific learning needs and styles. It contains suggestions for a variety of content related resources with specific regard to student readiness, learning preference, and interest.

### **Support for Differentiation for Learning Preference**

<b>Aspect of Differentiation</b>	<b>Library or Technology Resource</b>
<b>Readiness</b>	<p>Library can provide a range of resources, from basic to advanced, on curricular subjects. These can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Print, such as non-fiction books or encyclopedias of varying levels, or</li> <li>• Online resources such as easy to advanced databases or online encyclopedias.</li> </ul> <p>Materials can be pre-selected by the teacher or media specialist and identified for specific students. The easy and more advanced materials can also be gathered together so that</p>

	students can look through them and select for themselves the ones that best meet their needs.
<b>Learning Preference/Multiple Intelligences</b>	
Verbal - Linguistic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Text-based materials – The library is full of these, as is the Internet.</li> <li>• Audio books (both fiction and non-fiction): These can be on CD-ROM or downloadable.</li> <li>• Educational Podcasts, which can be played on computers or downloaded onto handheld devices.</li> </ul>
Logical - Mathematic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Statistical or numeric information available in print and online sources on various subjects. Students can use this kind of information as an entry point to many topics.</li> <li>• Timelines, chronologies</li> </ul> <p><b>Examples:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elementary School: Students could begin a unit on life cycles by comparing the similarities and differences between the numbers of days that certain life cycles take to complete.</li> <li>• Middle School: Students studying ancient civilizations could plot all of the known major events of a civilization on a timeline.</li> <li>• High School: In a unit on war, students with strong logical or mathematic understanding could research and analyze the economic effects of a specific conflict.</li> </ul>
Musical - Rhythmic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Music collections: Some libraries include music collections, which can be useful to students in the arts.</li> <li>• Students might be asked to select music that represents a particular theme or concept in a novel, poem, or other subject area.</li> <li>• Several online databases offer historical music clips, which can be a good entry point to historical subjects for musically-minded students.</li> </ul> <p><b>Examples:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elementary School: Students can create a sound-scape for a story including any sounds, music or songs that “go with” the story, explaining their choices.</li> <li>• Middle School: Students can listen to the music of a</li> </ul>

	<p>particular time period and compare similarities and differences with time periods before and after.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High School: Students can research the development of music in the Harlem Renaissance in order to develop a deeper understanding of the time period.</li> </ul>
Visual - Spatial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Videos and DVDs</li> <li>• Online video sources such as Youtube.com (free) or Discovery Channel/United Streaming (subscription).</li> <li>• Posters on different subjects can serve to present information visually. Libraries often have posters in their collections.</li> <li>• Check library books for their visuals. Many, especially at the elementary and middle school level, will be full of graphics and illustrations related to concepts and subjects.</li> <li>• Many online databases now have image collections, which can also help provide accurate and reliable visuals for students.</li> <li>• Free online video and image sources on the Internet grow daily. Check these for accuracy and appropriateness before use.</li> </ul>
Bodily - Kinesthetic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Important scenes in stories or novels can acted out</li> <li>• Technology support: Online simulations can sometimes be found that can assist students.</li> </ul>
Interpersonal / Intrapersonal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal narrative accounts, from most any subject area, and either fictional or non-fictional may be helpful entry points to subjects.</li> <li>• Oral histories or interviews</li> </ul> <p><b>Examples:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fiction: Historical fiction is available about many subjects, from many different cultural perspectives, and for all grade levels from elementary to high school. These can be great jumping-off points for students who understand subjects better if they can see them through personal experiences. This can also allow for cross-disciplinary explorations between literature and social studies, math, science, art, etc.</li> <li>• Non-fiction: Personal narratives, diaries, oral histories,</li> </ul>

	and memoirs are also available for most all subjects and grade levels. Like fiction, they can create interest in subjects by illuminating the real people and relationships involved.
Whole-to-part (global) learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encyclopedia entries (print or online) can be excellent sources for students who do better when they understand the big picture first. Encyclopedias come in many forms, from general to subject-specific.</li> <li>• Table of contents: encourage students to look at the table of contents of a book. This can sometimes give them the overview they need.</li> </ul>
Part-to-whole (sequential) learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resources that contain detailed examinations of subject will be most helpful for these students. These are available for all levels with the difference being the level of detail and the complexity of the language.</li> </ul>
<b>Interest</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Branch-off” materials -- Materials on a range of topics related to curricular subjects. For research projects, these allow for students to select topics of interest to them that are still related to the unit of study.</li> <li>• Materials of general interest to students for their own personal exploration, to encourage individual curiosity.</li> <li>• Materials written about students’ countries and culture. Some students prefer materials written by an author from their own country.</li> </ul>

Of course all of these resources can be used with all students to encourage them to explore and develop multiple aspects of their own intelligence.

### **How to Find These Materials: Working With the Media/Technology Specialist**

In any school, the most important asset is the teaching faculty. The school library is no exception. A strong media/technology specialist can make an invaluable contribution to student learning. While the list of potential materials above is meant to encourage teachers, it can be overwhelming, especially when we are attempting to identify appropriate resources for very diverse groups of learners. This is where the

media/technology specialists can enormously help, assisting teachers to identify and find these kinds of resources.

Information about the subjects taught in schools has evolved greatly since the days when textbooks were first developed as the primary, and sometimes *only* tool to be used by students and teachers (Lindsay, 2005). There is little concern now that teachers or students will struggle to find *something* related to the subject being taught. However, finding *quality* and *reliable* information that is accessible to students can be more challenging. Identifying resources specific to the readiness, learning preference and interest needs of diverse students can also be challenging. The expansion of online sources such as magazine and newspaper databases and online versions of encyclopedias and books (or ebooks), many of which incorporate multimedia features, is a great “antidote” to the increased usage of the Internet (and oftentimes lower quality sources) by students. Learning which source to use, when, and how, takes time, however, not to mention learning the details of how to search these sources effectively. The media and technology specialists are there to help and support teachers by locating relevant resources and by teaching students and teachers how to use the resources effectively.

### **How We Can Help: Process and Product**

This leads us directly into differentiation in the process of learning. Providing a wide range of materials that meet the needs of diverse learners is just the beginning of how technology and library media centers can help teachers to differentiate instruction. Another effective way to make use of these materials, a way that encompasses content, process, and product, is to do so by teachers collaborating with the library media/technology specialist in the planning of units and lessons. Research conducted by Keith Curry Lance (2001; 2002) investigating the factors that affect

student achievement found that in addition to having a strong school library media center, student achievement is also positively impacted when teachers and media specialists plan together.

When two or more professionals are working together, they can draw upon a wider range of resources and ideas. Charlene Leaderhouse (2005) described her personal experience of the benefits of collaboration between media specialist and teacher. She found that the new perspective, resources, and ideas that the media specialist had to offer complemented the teacher's knowledge of what had worked (and not worked) in the past, as well as the teacher's in-depth knowledge of the students. The media/technology specialist can provide the sounding board to bounce ideas off in order to design effective and creative learning activities. The media/technology specialist also brings into the planning process knowledge of new resources that may address specific readiness, learning and interest needs. When teachers and media or technology specialists plan together, they may be more able to design lessons and units that can be modified based on the needs of the students. For example, a research project might allow for some students to use more complex resources while others use resources that contain basic information. Alternatively, lessons or units can be designed that ask students to rotate through a series of resources on the topic. These can be chosen based on the strengths and needs of the students, exposing all to a variety of learning styles. The media/technology specialist can help identify these resources and can work directly with students, either as guides or instructors, as they work with each source. Sharing planning and assessing tasks allows for each teacher to bring his and her particular strengths and expertise to the team (Hylan, 2004). Students can benefit from the sharing of instruction as well. Not only does this create more opportunity for individual attention, it also exposes

students to different *teaching* styles, which can in turn help students with different learning styles (Helen, 2004). Many articles and books exist that describe this kind of collaboration. Violet Harada and Joan Yoshina's (2004; 2005)<sup>1</sup> works are recommended as excellent resources for teachers and librarians who would like to explore in more detail the collaboration between teacher and media specialist.

An additional way that the media/technology specialist can support differentiation is by providing an alternative learning environment – particularly for students who learn differently. We know that students have specific preferences when it comes to how and where they can concentrate most effectively and efficiently. The library can provide an alternative space to the classroom for group or individual work, and while many school libraries are no longer the silent places they used to be, they can offer space for quieter, individual work. Online databases that can be accessed from home can also offer an alternative to having to use the library or classroom for research. Similarly, technology resources are no longer limited to computer labs. Schools with access to laptops and a wireless network can allow students the flexibility to find the places to work that are best for them.

The media/technology specialist can be of particular assistance when it comes to teaching students how to create a variety of technology products. In recent years it has become quite common for students, even at the elementary level, to design electronic presentations using software such as painting programs, Hyperstudio, and PowerPoint. Using these tools, students can synthesize their information with text, images, and sound. New technology tools make it possible for students to create websites, webquests, podcasts, desktop published documents, spreadsheets with

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<sup>1</sup> Harada, V. & Yoshina, J. (2004), *Inquiry learning through librarian-teacher partnerships*. Worthington, OH: Linworth Publishing; and (2005). *Assessing learning: Librarians and teachers as partners*. Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited.

visual representations of data in charts and graphs, as well as simple or complex databases.

Collaborative planning between the teacher and the media/technology specialist underscore the fact that information research and technology skills are important cross-disciplinary skills that are critical for students to acquire. These skills (locating and accessing information, analyzing, summarizing, paraphrasing, synthesizing information, presenting information, evaluating the research process and product) need to be taught in the context of a content-based unit of study. As such, it stands to reason that a collaborative partnership between the teacher and media/technology specialist will be particularly powerful. Students need a combination of direct instruction in how to use certain sources followed up with relevant and meaningful practice. Collaboration between media/technology specialists and teachers can integrate the teaching of information and technology skills into units of study.

This is not meant to suggest that teachers should completely change their practices and work with the media/technology specialist on everything that they do. That would be impossible, impractical, and unnecessary.

There are also times when all is needed is a short, mini-lesson from the media/technology specialist on the use of a particular kind of resource, software, or an introduction to a particular kind of literature. What will make these mini-lessons most effective is when the teacher and media/technology specialist communicate clearly about the overall project before any specific planning is undertaken. Even the timing of when students receive instruction about a new resource can impact how effectively they will use it. If the process of using a journal and magazine database is taught before the students have chosen a research topic, they will not get to practice

searching the database with a real need in mind. Accordingly the chances are small that they will remember this skill when it comes time to actually begin their research.

### **What It Looks Like: Examples of Differentiation With the Support of the Media Specialist**

#### *Elementary School: Collaboration between 3<sup>rd</sup> grade class, Art, and Library Media*

A third grade class is studying fairy tales from different cultures as a part of the social studies curriculum. Knowing that this is a part of the regular curriculum, the library maintains a large collection of fairy tales from around the world. The teacher and librarian meet to plan this year's exploration with the goal of helping students to see the similarities and differences between stories across different cultures. The class consists of children from about ten different countries. Several of the students have just arrived at the school, and some are also learning English for the first time. In their discussion the teacher notes that several students in this year's class are fond of art. As they begin to brainstorm the teacher and librarian develop a series of activities designed to meet their goal of students reading and understanding several fairy tales, comparing and contrasting them, and learning about the countries and cultures that the stories come from.

Elements of differentiation include:

- Fairy tales available in the library range from easy to more challenging reading levels for the students. Students who are just beginning to learn English or who are struggling with reading will be able to read stories written in simpler English while stories written with more challenging vocabulary and language will be available to students who are ready for more complex text.
- Some of the fairy tales are available in audio format as well so that the story can be listened to and read at the same time.

- Students can choose fairy tales from any country, including their own. This can be helpful for students who might be new to the school looking for ways to connect to home.
- As stories are read, they can be plotted on a map of the world so that students can see where the stories come from.
- Another part of the unit is to do basic research about the countries that the stories come from. Students can work in small groups to gather information.
- Taking into consideration the love of art of several of the students, the teacher and librarian decide to ask the art teacher, who also works with these students, if there is a way to incorporate some aspect of this unit into the work they are doing in their art classes. The art teacher is excited by the idea and after discussion with the teacher comes up with a project that involves the students creating abstract “landscapes” for the stories. They will use the information that they learn about the country to inform what their landscape will look like.
- As a culminating activity, a gallery display is set up in the library including the stories, the student created landscapes, their research about the countries, and their comparisons of the similarities and differences found. Students are dressed up as characters from their stories and explain the stories to the “gallery” visitors.

*Middle School: Social Studies and Library Media*

6th grade studies the origin of humans as a way of addressing the question, “Where do we come from?” One year there is a larger than usual number of beginning level ESL students who enter 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Teachers are concerned that the materials they have used in previous years will not be accessible for their ESL students. They believe that the students will be able to understand the concepts, but will need different kinds of resources. They ask the librarian for assistance. The librarian asks questions about the overall unit plan so that she understands what important learning outcomes the teachers have identified. With these in mind, she is able to find alternate resources for students to use. She presents these to the teachers and together

they develop activities that the students learning English will be able to learn from. Elements of differentiation include:

- Images that depict different brain and body sizes of early man to help students visualize the physical changes that occurred over time.
- A timeline completed by students allows them to follow the progression of early man. This is also helpful for the students with strong logical / mathematical skills.
- Print and online resources with simple content are found that explain other developments in prehistoric man such as development of tools and changes in eating. Student plot these on their timelines as well, and begin to make connections between physical changes in early man and the changes in their way of living.
- The final product is identified as their completed timeline with captions for each entry. Students are allowed to create this in using paper or using a computer. Often times students who are learning English will still have strong computer skills. This gives them a chance to demonstrate their strengths.

*High School: 10<sup>th</sup> grade Social Studies and Library*

A culminating research paper asks students to explore an issue related to any topic studied during the course of the year. Throughout the year students have engaged in “mini” research projects that have focused on certain aspects of the research process. The librarian has worked with the classes on each mini-project to teach a new resource, a new skill such as advanced search techniques, evaluation of sources, or correct citation of sources. A benefit of this ongoing work is that the librarian has gotten to know the students and has gained a better understanding of individual needs, preferences and interests. When the final project begins, the librarian, in collaboration with the teachers, is able to help guide students through this final project. The teachers allow students to choose their own topic to encourage students to choose something they are interested in, which also allows them to reflect back on all of the

subjects they have studied and explore one in more depth. Elements of differentiation include:

- The librarian deliberately collects a wide range of materials related to the subjects taught in World Studies so that students will be able to locate quality materials, in a variety of levels, on the topic of their choice.
- Students must develop a focused research question. This allows for students with different learning preferences to explore an aspect of their topic that they feel strongly about. For example, a student with a strong musical intelligence might choose to examine the songs that developed as a result of oppression in different settings. In this way, they are able to focus on their own area of strength and interest while still exploring important curricular subject matter.
- The librarian works as individual consultant for students in need of assistance. Rather than find the materials for the students, the librarian, drawing upon the lessons of the year, can help guide the students as they conduct their search.

The school library and library media and technology specialists can be valuable resources for teachers as they develop curriculum, write unit plans and performance assessments, and look for ways to differentiate. Media specialists seek to develop collections of materials that are as diverse as the communities they serve, meeting the needs of a variety of learners, and helping students connect with subject matter in ways that help them to grow and learn. This means providing a range of print, audio-visual, and high quality online resources that represent the students' readiness, learning preferences, and interests. Media specialists seek to support teachers as they explore options for differentiation. We can provide assistance in ways as simple as identifying a range of resources that meet the variety of needs in their classrooms, but also through more in-depth cooperation and collaboration with teachers, always with the goal of helping to improve *all* students' learning.