

2018-19 ACRL-Oregon School/Academic Librarian Collaboration Scholarship

Sherry Loennig / Sally Jo Mielke

The 2018-2022 Oregon LSTA five-year plan highlights the challenges of school libraries in the state of Oregon. Budget shortfalls have affected K-12 students and teachers across the state, as many school libraries are not staffed with a librarian qualified to provide direct instruction in information literacy.¹ This situation is especially evident in the counties of Eastern Oregon, where school districts are generally unable to fund professional librarians, and additionally cannot afford to subscribe to quality online resources. As faculty of the four-year institution serving the eastern region, Eastern Oregon University librarians include outreach to area schools in their information literacy instruction efforts.² EOU librarians work with several high schools to provide information literacy instruction onsite at the schools and to arrange visits for students to the campus library. In addition to these efforts, EOU librarians have been considering how to improve student preparation and college readiness in the Eastern Oregon region. In addition to direct student instruction, librarians at EOU also are aware of the value of increasing K-12 teacher information literacy instruction within the classroom content without the benefit of a certified librarian at the school. They considered ways in which they could expand collaborative work with other high schools, within the limitations of a small instructional library staff. The collaboration between Sherry Loennig and Sally Mielke is a result of this increased focus on finding ways to improve information literacy instruction in our region.

After seven years with volunteer library staff, North Powder Charter School hired Sherry Loennig to work part time in the school library. Sherry is a certified teacher, but does not have a library endorsement. She sees the need for students to be able to access library resources, becoming independently able to locate a book as well as finding information online to complete a research project.

Having been asked by North Powder School District superintendent to meet with teachers regarding school library standards and information literacy instruction, Sally Mielke already had working relationships with staff at North Powder. After Sherry's hire, Sally began working with her individually, providing advice and instruction on using library system software, updating the library catalog, and managing and updating collections.

In recent years, students at North Powder have not been provided with library supported information literacy instruction. Additionally, there was no computer station for student use in the library itself; student access to online research resources was only available in the school computer lab, away from any library resources and personnel.

¹ State Library of Oregon (2018) State Library of Oregon's Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) Five-Year Plan 2018-2022. Retrieved from <https://www.oregon.gov/Library/libraries/Documents/LSTA/2018-2022LSTAFiveYearPlanFinal.pdf>

² Eastern Oregon University (2018) Pierce Library 2017-18 annual report. Retrieved from <https://library.eou.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Pierce-Library-2017-18-Annual-Report.pdf>

Sherry and Sally sought ACRL Scholarship funding to address some of the access and instructional issues at North Powder School. Their project goal was to increase student access to online resources and assistance in the library, and to increase students' information literacy skills in using search tools. To do this Sherry and Sally wanted to work with North Powder School teachers to provide information literacy instructional ideas that could be incorporated and used within existing classroom content. Following are project components completed as result of ACRL Oregon Scholarship funding:

- 1) North Powder Charter School purchased hardware to provide a computer station in the library to enable students' use of the library computer and catalog to search the library collection and freely available online resources with the benefit of a librarian close by to assist them.
- 2) Sally presented a half-day workshop for Sherry and three high school teachers in June 2019. Sally met with Sherry and the teachers prior to the actual workshop to determine which particular information literacy skills were of the most importance at that time. The teachers indicated that choosing a research question or topic, identifying types of sources online and evaluating them, and working with research strategies in state provided databases were skills on which we would focus.
- 3) Sally/Sherry/teachers created a template for classroom research guides/pathfinders for specific subject areas.

Workshop Summary:

The time at the workshop proved valuable for both teachers, Sherry, and Sally. Having time to focus on those skills that teachers could use in their particular subject instruction, and ask questions about specific ideas to improve students skills in a small group setting was a rewarding opportunity.

Following the event teacher feedback from the workshop was very positive. Teachers were unsure at the beginning about what information would be available to help them in the classroom. Teachers reported that the workshop session was informative, provided resources they did not currently know existed, and felt the web guides would provide excellent resources for the students. One staff member commented that, "I had a great time at the workshop. Even though some of it was review it was effective to brush up on those skills and create new web pages for the school." Another commented that they thought that many other staff members, including elementary teachers (particularly the 4th and 5th grade) would benefit from this; and that "any class that has a research project could greatly benefit from the streamlined content and places for students to start researching." Teachers also felt that some classes could benefit from taking a field trip to EOU for research, or having Sally Jo come and discuss different research/writing topics with students before and during their projects. The teachers felt that time at the workshop was well spent.

Sherry was very excited about the many ways information could be gained for North Powder students. Sherry said, "I felt a little behind the times when it came to building the web page templates, but found a staff member who was willing to collaborate with me and get me up to speed with the building of the templates so that I can in turn help other teachers create research templates tailored to their needs. Sally was able to strengthen contacts and relationships with North Powder teachers and discuss ways to

support student research efforts, and explore opportunities to provide additional instruction to students at the school and at EOU.

Following the workshop, Sally and Sherry plan to follow up with teachers who attended the workshop. As school begins in the Fall, Sherry will have the opportunity to report to all staff and to expand collaboration efforts to other teachers who have expressed interest.

Sally and Sherry are grateful for ACRL-Oregon funding and the opportunity to continue to collaborate on ways to improve student information literacy skills, especially their ability to locate, navigate and evaluate online resources for school research and in preparation for future college attendance, or for use in daily information seeking situations.