

# Sharing a vision

## Information literacy partnerships (K-16)

by Janet W. Nichols

Picture an active school library media center. Mike and Eric sit side by side at a computer preparing a PowerPoint presentation. Sue works with her team to capture a visual image using a digital camera while another team searches a specialized encyclopedia for information on specific topics related to the reading of Richard Wright's *Black Boy*. Paul and Fred share favorite science Web sites with Kevin and Brian while Deborah and Beverly search the online catalog for books related to the exploration of the moon.

What do all of these actively engaged researchers have in common? They are all professional educators and participants in a two-year pilot project between Wayne State University's (WSU) David Adamany Undergraduate Library and suburban Ferndale High School and Detroit's Northwestern High School.

Funded by a \$20,000 grant from the Herrick Foundation and first reported in the March 1999 *NASSP Bulletin*, the project has recently been completed. Summative evaluations by administrators, library media specialists, and teachers provide clear indications of both the success of the partnership and suggestions for future partnering. Following is information regarding the project, including the planning process, staff development workshops, and implications for others looking for partnership opportunities with K-12 educators.

### The vision

Even prior to the opening of the David Adamany Undergraduate Library in September 1997, plans were under way to investigate opportunities for information literacy partnerships between area high school educators and academic librarians. Library media specialists from the Detroit urban area were invited to attend focus groups to discuss ways in which librarians from the undergraduate library might work with them in developing programs within the schools.

From these initial meetings and based on a vision of providing staff development for information literacy to local schools, administrators from the undergraduate library moved forward to identify schools and individuals who might be interested in investigating the practicality of developing such a partnership and, more important, in testing its impact.

Soon after the opening of the undergraduate library, four schools were identified and administrators, library media specialists, and teachers contacted and invited to attend an initial planning meeting. At this point, the only clear goal was to discuss the concept of information literacy and to determine whether the schools would be interested in working with university librarians to develop an information literacy program.

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### About the author

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**"Anytime organizations can work collaboratively, positive things happen."**

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### **The planning process**

From the initial meetings, it was clear that there was administrative interest in moving forward to establish a partnership with the university. School administrators identified key teacher leaders within their school and included them with the school librarians in the planning process. The university included administrators as well as faculty and librarians on the planning team. Throughout the year, monthly meetings focused on developing a theoretical understanding of information literacy and looking at practical applications for working with the schools. A subcommittee composed of representatives from each school and the undergraduate library developed a plan and presented it to the whole committee.

The outline of the plan included a daylong information literacy workshop for the committee representatives and school leaders followed by on-site workshops for staff from targeted departments. All committee members emphasized the importance of conducting workshops on-site using existing materials and technology rather than working in the university environment using resources that might not be readily available in the schools.

Based on the subcommittee's recommendations, a daylong information literacy workshop was planned, hosted, and conducted by WSU librarians and faculty. Participants included librarians and teachers from three of the identified high schools, with the fourth school having withdrawn due to staff changes and a major reorganization. Attendees were given a theoretical introduction to the con-

cept of information literacy, which was followed by practical applications. Time was provided throughout the day for school teams to collaborate on ways to integrate information literacy into their curriculum and to begin to develop possibilities for staff development at their schools. By the end of the day, teams had begun to develop plans for summer- or after-school workshops and expressed a commitment to continue with the partnership.

### **A vision becomes reality**

Over the summer, plans moved forward to provide staff development for English teachers and department chairs at Ferndale High School on a day before the beginning of the academic year. Members from Detroit's Northwestern High School opted for two after-school workshops for the science department during fall semester. The third remaining high school withdrew from the project over the summer due to staff and curricular changes.

Although the delivery and activities within the workshops varied based on the targeted academic department, the content at both schools included a discussion of informa-

tion literacy and its place within the existing curriculum and ample time for teachers to explore their media center's print and electronic resources. All workshops were held on-site with the school's librarian, teacher leader, and a librarian from the undergraduate library as facilitators.

After the first on-site workshop, teachers from Ferndale requested two additional half-day planning sessions during the year. Because two schools had withdrawn from the project, not only was this possible within the budget, but the initial one-year project was extended to two years. During that time, teachers from Ferndale developed a team research project for ninth-grade English stu-



**Northwestern High School science teachers actively engaged in research**

dents. Focusing on the reading of Richard Wright's *Black Boy*, teachers brainstormed topics, researched those topics and revised the initial list based on their own research, developed graphic organizers for student use, and completed a rubric for evaluation of student work. During the second year, teachers prepared a PowerPoint presentation to introduce the assignment to their students. In addition, English teachers revised an I-Search assignment to include teaching the Big6 model for the research process.

During the first year at Northwestern, two after-school workshops were presented to the science department. Based on feedback from the science teachers, the science librarian developed four student modules for student instruction in the science library. Two after-school workshops were planned and presented for the English Department during the second year, and teachers from both the English and science departments requested a PowerPoint workshop, which was held at their request in the undergraduate library and presented by the university's Office for Teaching and Learning. Because of the success of the Northwestern workshops, the science librarian and a science teacher are working with the district library supervisor to develop an information literacy in-service program for the Detroit Public Schools.

### **Assessing the impact**

Now at the end of the funding cycle, it is time to look back and ask: "Did this project have any long-term impact on the schools involved?" and "Should the undergraduate library staff continue to pursue opportunities to partner in this way with other K-12 educators?"

Based on the results of the participants' evaluation of the project, the answer to both questions is a resounding yes. Following are sample comments from administrators, library media specialists, and teachers who participated in the partnering project. Their words will serve as encouragement for those planning similar in-service training and for librarians looking for opportunities to develop K-16 partnerships.

### **Administrators' perspective**

- "Our teachers were very excited about the process, which fosters teaching and learn-

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**"Using information literacy enabled me to instruct students on how to define the problem and understand the process of gathering information."**

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ing far different from the traditional approach."

- "Anytime organizations can work collaboratively, positive things happen."

- "I have had several opportunities to share this success with our board of education."

- "Every teacher I talked with felt the activities and support from Wayne State were outstanding."

### **Library media specialists' perspective**

- "Teachers are more comfortable in talking with us about their research projects."

- "From our perspective, we would like more discussion on involving teachers in collaborating with librarians."

- "I would like to see this as a district-wide effort and am working with the district librarian to move toward this goal."

### **Teachers' perspective**

- "The research process seems more orderly and less frustrating."

- "Using information literacy enabled me to instruct students on how to define the problem and understand the process of gathering information."

- "If staff [are] not informed, they will continue to operate in 1960s styles of teaching."

- "I think my instruction relating to the research paper was more effective."


- "I would like more time to develop what I learned."

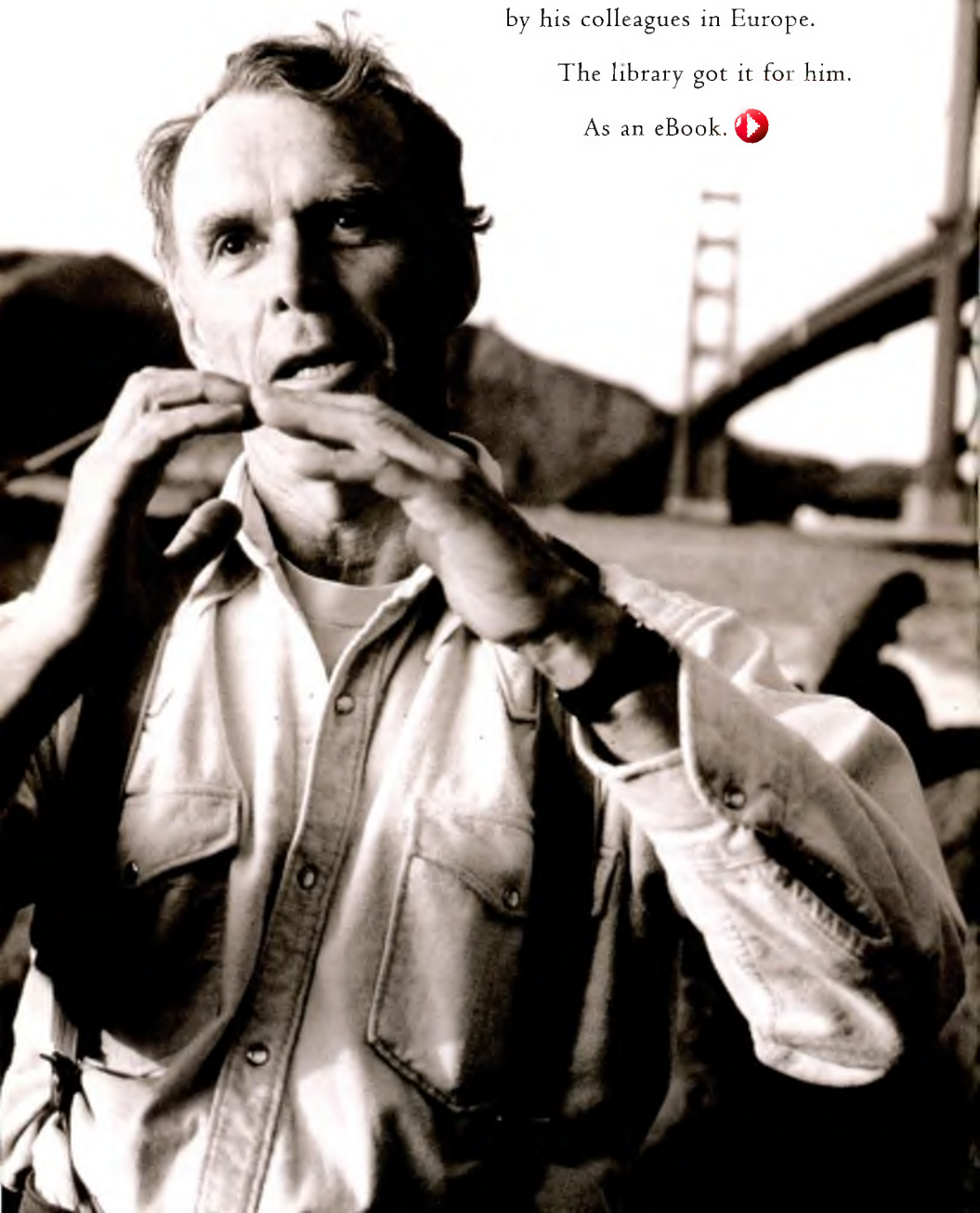
- "The 'tools' to implement must be available in addition to the training of teachers."

- "From my experience, the project empowers teachers."

- "Anytime teachers are provided with adequate time for professional development that is relevant to their own curriculum, it is valuable."

*(continued on page 285)*

Professor Maxwell altered his  
earthquake lecture based on  
a new tectonic plate theory.  
He found it in the latest book authored  
by his colleagues in Europe.  
The library got it for him.  
As an eBook. 



Of all the ways to bring eBooks to the world, we've chosen to do it through libraries. Why? Because even the simplest advantages of eBooks, such as searchability, support how libraries serve users. But, we didn't stop there. Our complete approach encompasses MARC records, integration with OPAC systems, eBook check-out capability, content from top scholarly and reference publishers, and more. Visit us at [academic.netLibrary.com](http://academic.netLibrary.com) or call 800-413-4557.



## Level 2: Basic plus—digital equipment

• **Camera:** Many excellent, relatively inexpensive (under \$1,000) digital video cameras are available. The UT Libraries is using a Sony DCR-TRV 103. It not only has excellent digital image quality but, important for our planned usage, also a zoom lens for close-ups. The camera also has an IEEE 1394 (also known as FireWire or i.LINK) port to transfer digital images directly to a computer for editing.

• **Digitizing equipment:** The iMac-DV is an obvious choice. This computer has revo-

lutionized the process of creating digitized video. It includes everything needed to produce iMovies, plus lots of bells and whistles to produce very professional-looking videos. The iMovie format, although not Web compatible, may be exported to QuickTime for use on the Web.

### Note

1. The videos may be viewed at <http://www.lib.utk.edu/refs/business/biztour.html>. The QuickTime viewer plug-in is available from <http://www.quicktime.com>. ■

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*(“Sharing a vision” continued from page 277)*

• “I used and appreciated the PowerPoint presentation we developed as a group.”

• “The partnership has helped me teach research to my students more as a series of steps rather than just saying, ‘Go research your topic.’”

• “I found out that the computer does not increase or decrease critical thinking skills. It is worth mentioning that all but two of my ninth graders completed a research paper; whereas formerly only 60–75 percent would have.

• “This made me more capable of instructing my students and guiding them through their own research.”

### Implications for partnering

Here at the undergraduate library, plans are under way to develop additional information literacy partnerships with educators at those high schools that send a significant number of their students to WSU.

Our experience has developed lasting educational relationships with local educators. As a result, we can see long-term benefits in expanding those relationships to benefit teachers and students in the Detroit area and, ultimately, the education of those students continuing their education at WSU.

From the experience over the past three years in planning, facilitating, and evaluating the information literacy partnership, the following points have become evident:

• Administrative support is critical to the success of such a partnership.

• Library media specialists and key teacher leaders should be included in the initial planning, development, and presentation of the workshops.

• Taking the time to plan meaningful activities and listening to educators’ needs is critical to success.

• Those involved in the planning process appreciate the fresh perspectives of the university participants and the university connection.

• Planning workshops using the schools’ facilities and resources provides a comfort level for the participants in knowing what they will have access to in their own classrooms and in becoming more familiar with the technology and other resources they can use in their teaching. This was emphasized during the planning process as extremely important for the success of the project.

• School administrators immediately see the benefits of developing partnering opportunities with local universities for staff development opportunities.

• K–12 educators are dedicated to preparing their students to be lifelong learners and are very interested in the improved articulation with higher-education professionals that such a partnership allows.

### Note

1. Janet Nichols, “Building Bridges: High School and University Partnerships for Information Literacy,” *NASSP Bulletin* (March 1999). ■