

## **No More Lone Ranger: C.A.R.**

By Ann Perham, MSLMA President

Let's think about it: what school librarians do best is to share. We are stereotypically known for lending out books, and we also devote our time and talent in collaborating with colleagues. If your library is like mine, it's booked with classes, meetings, and workshops – we share space. Yes, we school librarians are known as the heart of the school because we touch every curriculum area, every teacher, every student.

Yet, why is it that the school librarian often feels “alone”? We are integrated within every department, every grade, every activity, but we are Lone Rangers. We are a department of one; we go it alone when it comes to developing our programs in our schools.

Bear with me for a bit as I flash back to the late nineteenth century, and the reform movement – many of whom were women. As a collective force, they devoted their energies to helping the homeless and destitute, fighting for the abolition of slavery, and crusading for the cause of temperance. It seemed almost an afterthought that they considered their own right to vote. This is not an intellectual thesis, but I have always thought that women were so busy righting the wrongs of society, that they neglected their own basic need for suffrage. Wouldn't the whole reform movement have progressed more easily if first they had built the foundation of women's right to vote?

This is not a stretch. Here we school librarians are, a century later. We are devoting ourselves to working with the whole educational community, selflessly making their requests our priorities. Consciously or not, we have not made the time to develop a strong foundation of library resources and connectedness.

**Goal: Development of a sharing resource for our profession with two major components – Advocacy resources and Curriculum resources.** The MSLMA listserv is already a vehicle for sharing. Our members solicit and receive help from each other; this active listserv is an indicator of not only the supporting nature of our profession, but of the need for a resource that solicits best practices and organizes them as a “ready reference”. Let's go beyond answering individual calls for assistance; let's develop a top-notch resource for advocacy and curriculum that is at the ready for our use. We will all grow by sharing.

### **Sharing Advocacy - SHOUTing together**

“Don't whine, SHOUT!” has been my refrain for the past year. Each of us is SHOUTing in a variety of ways in our own schools. Those SHOUTs would become ROARs if we would join together. Let's SHARE our best practices that put our programs in the best light:

- Webpages
- Brochures
- Bookmarks
- Newsletters
- News articles
- Presentations for parent groups, school committee, faculty

We are all advocating for the same basic goal: student achievement through quality school library programs. So, let's grow by sharing.

### **SHARING curriculum - Why should we each be re-inventing the wheel?**

Imagine the curriculum resource that we can develop if we join forces, rather than acting as Lone Rangers. Since the conference, how many of us have taken tips that we got from Lynnell Burmark or Nancy Polette and put them to use? How have you “exterminated the bird unit” at your school, as David Loertscher suggested? We all have our tried and true units, but why don't we share them?

I just finished a very busy fall, in which I worked collaboratively with the social studies department to teach the election within the freshman orientation. I have also developed a webquest with the Spanish teachers that centers on the music of Latin America, “The Latin Music Hall of Fame.” I need to SHARE these units with my colleagues across the state; let my hard work benefit someone else. In return, I will be looking for materials that I can use for a unit on China. I would be very interested in a way to jazz up the freshman research paper that we teach in the spring. We give...and we receive... that's the logic of sharing.

We all know how to find resources on the web; one of the first things we do when we consider developing a unit is to look at Blue Web'n, Gateway to Educational Materials or do a Google search for “Webquest AND [topic]”. I

propose to develop a directory of curriculum resources that will be a go-to resource for our community of school libraries. We are all dealing with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and we have matched our teaching efforts to satisfy their demands – again, let's share because we grow by sharing.

Online Inquiry Units MSLMA has taken a leadership position in a major curriculum initiative to develop online inquiry units. During the summer of 2004, six of our members journeyed to Baltimore to learn from Della Curtis and her school librarians. Watch for announcements of summer workshops in which school librarians will partner with classroom teachers to collaborate on curriculum projects. MSLMA and its members have a huge debt of gratitude to the energies and talents of this team: Anne Croak (chairperson), Donna Cantarella, Cheryl Caskie Chase, Nancy Anthony, Rita Fontinha and Susan Farr. They will be the nucleus of knowledge that leads us forward in this exciting chapter. The resources developed through this program will be shared through the MSLMA webpage and CAR.

### **C.A.R.**

This Curriculum and Advocacy Resource (C.A.R) is a joint project of MSLMA Curriculum, Advocacy, and Webpage committees. Nancy Anthony, Sandy Kelly and I are the chairpeople of these committees and we can see the importance of the development of CAR. I am excited and proud to look ahead and envision this resource. Nancy will be welcoming curriculum contributions which will be organized and posted on the MSLMA webpage. Similarly, Sandy will be soliciting advocacy tools to be shared via the MSLMA webpage. Watch for future announcements in January.

BUT – it won't happen unless we as professionals do two important things:

First of all, we have to GIVE of our resources. Take the TIME to sift back through your files, send the units in, channel those ideas to the MSLMA CAR. This is what we as school library teachers do best – SHARE.

That may all be a nice thought, but what stands in the way is our own basic nature.....that is, we tend to put our own needs second to the needs of those around us. "Oh you need to have those bookmarks when? And when have you scheduled my booktalk with your class? Yes, of course, let's schedule a meeting to talk about that webquest. I guess I can do [my personal project] some other time." NO MORE! This is the second thing that needs to happen: We need to put OUR NEEDS FIRST!!! Make the time to direct these resources to CAR – no excuses!

This Curriculum and Advocacy Resource (CAR) will be "on the road" when we all:

- Change our approach.....put OUR needs FIRST
- Take the TIME to give our resources...to ourselves. Remember, we grow by sharing
- Make the time to serve our profession. We all serve our students, but by serving our profession and building a foundation of resources, we will help our students.

A HAPPY, NEW Year

Within our state, we will develop a sharing resource so that it is truly a Happy, New Year. The MSLMA CAR is headed in the right direction and we need to hop aboard.

The MSLMA CAR will be the perfect companion to John Keenan's VRROOM (Virtual Reference Room) which is linked from our homepage. In collaboration with UMass, WGBY and MetroWest, VRROOM provides links to resources for teaching the Massachusetts Frameworks. When used with the CAR, we will get great mileage from our collective energies.

MSLMA will take on a role that districts in the country such as Bellingham Washington and Baltimore County Maryland have done because they are centrally organized. MSLMA becomes that "centralized place to obtain quality instructional resources."

We do NOT need to be a Lone Ranger, crusading for student achievement as a force of one. Help is on the way – from ourselves - if we will help ourselves by putting the needs of our collective program first. Let's build the foundation of a sharing network – CAR - so that we can construct the educational framework for student achievement.