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Create an Online Presence for Your School Library!

<http://hms.seekonk.sharpschool.com/For%20Students/library>

Having an online presence is a crucial element to my school library program. It is a place where students and teachers can access my library handouts, databases, reading suggestions, research tips, and more! My website has allowed me to extend library services to the school community on a 24/7 basis. If you are thinking about creating your own library website, here are some things to consider.

Where to host? You may find that your district's site is not flexible enough for your needs. If so, ask for permission to host your site on an external website (such as Teacher Web, EduBlogs, or Weebly for Education). Make sure that you link to this site from the district web page and check any advertising on your chosen website for appropriate content for your students.

Plan your site. Your website is a reflection of you and your school library program, so it is important that your site is organized in a way that best serves your patrons. If it isn't user friendly, your visitors will not return! For example, I listed the subpages that run along the left side of my homepage in descending order of frequency used. I placed the "About My Library" subpage at the top, since it serves as an introduction.

Showcase the tools you use! I use many web 2.0 tools and have incorporated them within my pages. Visitors are greeted with a Yahoo! avatar, my career day presentation is a Prezi, some of my page headings are Wordles and my library orientation video is done via Go! Animate. My National Library Week page includes a stop motion video of a typical day in the school library as well as a video I created showing some of my statistics regarding my library usage. Videos created by my tech club are included on their project page and a photo slideshow of the library interior is included on the About the Library page. By including these items, you are giving those outside your school community (parents, other SLMS) a better idea of what you are all about! Don't be shy as this is a great chance for you to brag a little!

Reign yourself in. I made the mistake of trying to categorize and link to every great website I encountered from my website. As you can imagine, this became very overwhelming! I decided that

keeping it simple was best and now my recommended websites are limited to online databases and e-books only. For current research projects, I do create an electronic pathfinder which contains subject-specific website links. This is manageable for me and has worked out very well for the students!

Keep it current. Your website will require diligence to keep it up to date. It's a good idea to check your links every so often to ensure that they are not broken. Also, be sure that any document uploaded to your site is the most current version. It is frustrating to your visitors if your site is outdated.

I spent a lot of time getting my site to where it is today, but it was time well spent. My website has become an outreach of my library. It is a place that students can go when they realize that they don't have the necessary library handouts that will help them with their research. It is also a place where teachers can access the resources that I give out in the library so that, even if I am not physically in their classroom, the library presence will be. I hope that these tips will help you get started creating a website for your library.



Jennifer St. Michel (left) receives the MSLA Web Seal of Excellence from MSLA President, Valerie Diggs.

PICTURE CREDIT: RICHARD CURRAN

MSLA Web Seal of Excellence

A school library's web presence is an important tool for teaching, learning, communication, advocacy, and public relations. This award will recognize excellence in a school library's use of web tools: webpage, ning, wiki, blog, etc. The School Library webpage is maintained by the Library Teacher who has been a member of MSLA for at least 2 years and must hold a professional library degree or be a state certified library teacher.

Nominations will be evaluated using a rubric with specific criteria for judging the web devices. Application for this award can be made by the Library Teacher or other member of MSLA. Judging panel may involve non-Massachusetts school librarians, using the rubric with specific criteria for school library web devices.

See the MSLA website for forms.