

Be the Center! The School Library: Collaborating from the Center of the School Universe

by Mirah Dow, SLIM Professor, Emporia State University (ESU)

School librarians from Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, and La Paz, Bolivia, turned out on June 11-12 for the annual Kansas Summer Institute for School Librarians held at ESU's Jones Institute for Educational Excellence, Visser Hall.

Research conducted in the U.S. and Canada during the past five years demonstrates that reading enjoyment is strongly and positively linked to student achievement. The school library, long regarded as the cornerstone of school community, is critical to the learning experience and student academic achievement. Research reveals a positive relationship between professionally staffed school libraries and student achievement.



Teacher-librarians from Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, and La Paz, Bolivia, gather to learn about best practices in collaboration from the center of the school universe: The School Library.



Toni Buzzeo taught how to make terrific connections between students and books by holding successful author visits.

Toni Buzzeo, author, school librarian from Buxton, Maine, and winner of the 2000 Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators Award for her book, *The Sea Chest*, was a guest instructor. She insisted that "literacy is center stage in American schools, American media, and American homes." Buzzeo added, "Collaboration and information literacy have remained central to the instructional work of school librarianship." Buzzeo presented standards-based reading, writing, social studies, and science connections to her children's books.



Jane Kurtz, author of books for young adult, unlocked the mystery of how authors come up with interesting ideas by

Jane Kurtz, author of twenty-five books for young readers, grew up in Maji, Ethiopia. Kurtz's book *Saba: Under the Hyena's Foot* won the 2004 Children's African Book Award and *River Friendly, River Wild* received the 2001 Golden Kite Award in the picture book text category. Kurtz's presentation on the second day of the Institute unlocked the mystery of how authors come up with interesting ideas, hunt for vivid details, use words with sparkle and pizzazz, craft sentences and paragraphs that have pleasing rhythms, organize in clear and compelling ways, find their writing personality and revise for big and little changes. *sharing her experiences growing up in Africa.*

Integrating technology into instruction was also taught by Kansas school librarians Linda Culver, Prairie Trail Middle School, Olathe; Lori Franklin, Olathe East High School; Jessica Karns, Holton Elementary School; and Abby Neiburger, Blue Valley North High School, Overland Park.

Carmaine Ternes, School Librarian, Emporia High School, hosted an evening session called "electronic gaming and information literacy skills."

"The attendees were there to learn," said Mirah Dow, Institute Coordinator and Assistant Professor in the School of Library and Information Management. "Kansas is one of a few States with tough licensure requirements that mandate a teaching license, classroom teaching experience, and a master's degree for school librarians. In addition, Kansas school library Media Specialists complete a two-year, supervised post-graduate internship in which they provide evidence that they meet state standards for school librarians. Why? Because we want to ensure that potential school librarians are equipped with specific knowledge, skills, and dispositions. They need a lot more than just a transcript with a list of required courses."



The Institute began with learning to integrate technology into instruction. (Linda Culver pictured)

The Summer Institute for School Library Media Specialists is an annual event sponsored by the Kansas State Department of Education, School of Library and Information Management, State Library of Kansas, and the Kansas Association of School Librarians. The purpose of the Institute is to provide current, best practice information related to school libraries, resources and information literacy instruction.

For more information about the 2008 Institute and the dates and plans for 2009, visit <http://slim.emporia.edu/programs/summerinst.htm>.