Turn up the Volume in the Library through Personalization

"What we hope to model and grow in our students can be thoughtfully reimagined *with* our students and staff instead of on their behalf."

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Personalized learning continues to intrigue school and community leaders because of its potential to grow a learner's capacity to become more sophisticated and skillful in identified competencies.

These competencies or outcomes can be subject or area specific (e.g., science, library) and cross-disciplinary (e.g., critical thinking, collaboration) in nature. But personalized learning is richer than a set of individualized plans targeted to move students through a series of topics to demonstrate mastery.

The heart of personalized learning is that it is *personal*—rich learning experiences where students deeply engage in meaningful, authentic, and rigorous challenges to demonstrate desired outcomes (Kallick & Zmuda, 2017b; Zmuda, Curtis, & Ullman, 2015). The design of such experiences comes from cultivating partnerships with students based on trust, increased autonomy, shared responsibility, and thoughtful actions. The library program is optimally suited to support personalized instruction, because it provides the resources, learning space, and opportunity for students to explore their intellectual passions. The heart of the library is the connection between librarian and students borne out of the inquiries, imaginations, and actions that thrive there. These physical and virtual spaces can provide powerful opportunities for students and staff to pursue deep inquiries, generate ideas, and develop creations (Future Ready Librarians, n.d.).

THE LIBRARY ECOSYSTEM

Kallick and Zmuda (2017a) began using the metaphor of an audio sounding board to illustrate choices the librarian makes in service to growing learner ownership and skill development. As we play this metaphor out in the library ecosystem,
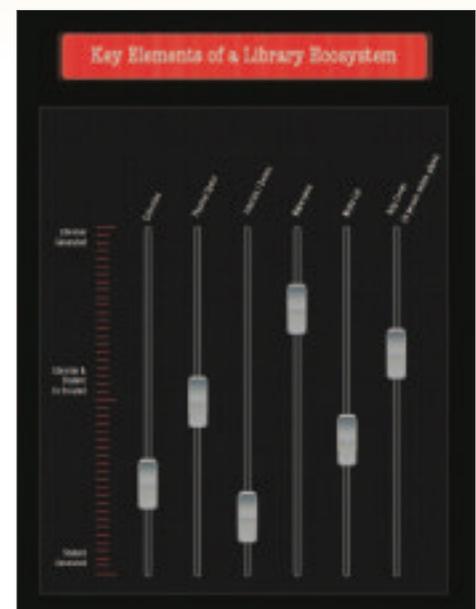

Figure 1. Library ecosystem elements

we offer the following elements for consideration to guide reimagination: collection, physical space, tutorials/demos, makerspace, media lab, and help center (see Figure 1).

Librarian generated denotes a purposeful set of expectations, which the librarian has full control of and the students and staff work within. Sliding toward *cocreated*, students and staff offer suggestions and ideas to make the physical and virtual learning spaces more effective. In continuing to move toward *student generated*, students have

greater opportunity for increased leadership, ownership, and self-direction.

For each element, the librarian can turn the volume up or down, amplifying or reducing the amount of student agency as the librarian and students begin to feel more comfortable with student self-direction. The descriptions and illustrative examples of the elements below, along with the following questions, may help guide reflection:

How do I know if my students are ready to take more ownership of learning?

What evidence should I see that they are really learning?

When I begin to shift control to the students, how does my role also change?

CONTROL OF COLLECTION

The collection addresses the learning community's needs, reflects trends in publishing, and evolves with changing needs of learners. At the librarian-generated end of the collection spectrum, the librarian curates a comprehensive collection with input from staff and students to address the learning community's needs. This is the more traditional approach. Following a collection development policy, the librarian consults professional literature and other acquisition guides to select materials he/she feels align well with the curriculum and learner needs. While moving toward cocreation, the librarian regularly invites feedback from staff and students about accessibility, formats, and ideas for new resources. Librarians commonly feature materials request forms on their library's website or social media page(s). They can

Figure 2. New Canaan High School students select books for their library at Barnes and Noble in 2012.

send emails to the learning community asking for input, visit department meetings and professional learning committees, and ask students for input either face-to-face or virtually. At the student-generated end, students have input and voice in library collection development based on a transparent set of criteria (that they also may have had a hand in developing). Following this model, librarians will encourage students to participate in developing or revising materials selection policy or take charge of acquisitions in specific areas of collection development. A growing number of school librarians are giving students book budgets and/or taking students on book shopping field trips to local bookstores (Plemmons, 2017). Social cataloging tools such as LibraryThing and GoodReads can facilitate this model by giving students voice in genrefying, cataloging, and adding ratings and reviews to student-generated virtual bookshelves (Fleming, 2017).

CONTROL OF PHYSICAL SPACE

Physical space represents the organization of sections of the library to address the many ways members of the learning community learn. At the librarian-generated end of the physical space, the librarian upholds purpose and placement of students in learning zones. When building a learning space from the ground up, the librarian will seek the advice of an architect, designer, and/or consultant when possible. If planning for the layout of an existing space, the librarian will factor in practical considerations, such as instructional use, visual control, and student needs to set up the library and/or make changes.

As we move toward cocreation, the librarian works with faculty and students to design and maintain purpose in learning zones. At this level, the librarian includes members of the learning community in planning the layout or rearrangement of the library.

There is some flexibility in changing zones based on student needs. At the student-generated end, the librarian is responsive to student needs based on accessibility, changing zones, and limited guidelines. Students use physical space(s) to suit their learning needs. At this end of the spectrum, students make decisions about learning zones and move freely from one zone to another as their learning needs change.

CONTROL OF TUTORIALS AND DEMOS

The purpose of tutorials and demos is to design a set of instructions to guide students through something new or that which needs reinforcement. At the librarian-generated end, the librarian develops or curates tutorials/demos based on perception of student need and/or teacher assignment. Here a librarian might create instructional tutorials in anticipation of student need while developing a lesson plan that will be cotaught with a classroom teacher. Moving toward cocreation, the librarian generates or curates tutorials/demos and continues to improve them based on input from staff/students. Rather than preemptively create the instructional content alone, the librarian might do so in response to an instructional challenge voiced by the coteacher or students themselves.

At the student-generated end, the librarian encourages students to make or curate tutorials/demos based on what they need in a style and format that is accessible and relevant. Students here decide what needs to be created, script it, and produce media for their colearners. In the example of the YouTube video "We Trust You," a ninth-grade introduction to the library

Figure 3. QR Code to New Canaan (CT) High School's 2013 version of the "We Trust You" video.

program (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WHSPXqsfKzM), students conceived the idea when asked what librarians should present to incoming freshmen on the first day of school. Students collaborated to write the video script, created the cue cards for their classmates to read, and recorded the footage with the librarian.

CONTROL OF MAKERSPACE

The makerspace is set up for students and/or staff to innovate and create. At the librarian-generated end, the librarian determines resources and tools, as well as how students think and work. This is where makerspaces face challenges. Introducing a new learning zone into a library, particularly one that is often misunderstood within the student, parent, faculty, and administrative communities, demands that those communities be educated on the value of what may seem like an unorthodox use of library space. When librarians plan, design, and equip makerspaces without consulting and informing the learning community, makerspaces tend to suffer.

As we move toward cocreation, the librarian regularly collaborates with staff about project ideas, approaches, and/or new resources for and with students. Providing innovative learning spaces for faculty to bring or send students to create projects for coursework

often buys administrative and collegial support for makerspaces. At the student-generated end, the librarian regularly invites students to develop design challenges and leverage existing and new resources to innovate and create. Taking cues from students and letting makerspaces evolve organically engenders ownership within the learning community (Schwartz, 2016).

CONTROL OF MEDIA LAB

Media lab is designed for students/staff to create and publish. At the librarian-generated end, the librarian determines recording equipment and editing tools available, as well as access and rules for the space. Access is key here. Do students have to sign up to use the space or check out equipment? As we move toward cocreation, the librarian regularly collaborates with staff about authentic and relevant media assignments, accessibility, and navigation of tools with students. A teacher planning a multimedia project may consult with the librarians on scheduling, equipment, and instructional needs and propose some options for making the space accessible to learners.

At the student-generated end, librarian and staff support students to grow independence in planning, designing, and producing media projects that uphold the guidelines of responsible use. Student experts might support this learning by designing the space, managing the equipment, creating instructional materials, coordinating scheduling, and supporting professional development for faculty. At Springfield Township High School, Joyce Valenza (2012) described student involvement in the design of the library's Creative Commons media pro-

Table 1. Physical and virtual learning happening in the library ecosystem.

Library Ecosystem	Description	Librarian Generated	Cocreated	Student Generated
Collection	Collection addresses the learning community's needs, reflects trends in publishing, and evolves with changing needs of learners.	Librarian curates a comprehensive collection with input from staff and students to address the learning community's needs.	Librarian regularly invites feedback from staff and students about accessibility, formats, and ideas for new resources.	Students have input and voice in library collection development based on a transparent set of criteria (that they also may have had a hand in developing).
Physical Space	Sections of library address the many ways in which members of the learning community learn.	Librarian upholds purpose and placement of students in learning zones.	Librarian works with faculty and students to design and maintain purpose in learning zones. Some flexibility in changing zones based on student needs.	Librarian is responsive to student needs based on accessibility, changing zones, and limited guidelines. Students use physical space(s) to suit their learning needs.
Tutorials/ Demos	A set of instructions to guide students through something new/needs reinforcement.	Librarian generates or curates tutorials/ demos based on perception of student need/teacher assignment.	Librarian generates or curates tutorials/ demos and continues to improve them based on input from staff/ students.	Librarian encourages students to make or curate tutorials/demos based on what they need in style and format that is accessible and relevant.
Makerspace	Space designed for students/staff to innovate and create.	Librarian determines resources and tools as well as how students think and work.	Librarian regularly collaborates with staff about project ideas, approaches accessibility, and/or new resources for and with students.	Librarian regularly invites students to develop design challenges and leverage existing and new resources to innovate and create.
Media Lab	Space designed for students/staff to create and publish.	Librarian determines recording equipment and editing tools available, as well as access and rules for the space.	Librarian regularly collaborates with staff about authentic and relevant media assignments, accessibility, and navigation of tools with students.	Librarian/staff support students to grow independence in planning, designing, and producing media projects that uphold the guidelines of responsible use.
Help Center (in person, online, phone)	Support center that students can access to help with their learning needs.	Librarian is as accessible as possible during the day to address student needs. Flexibility even with a fixed schedule or a full class load.	Librarian is accessible 24/7 both physically and virtually to address learner needs.	Library is accessible 24/7 with a physical and/or virtual help center that is staffed by librarian, faculty, and students.

duction lab: "The kids helped along the way as we chose the furniture, the colors, the hardware and software, and the name."

CONTROL OF HELP CENTER

The help center is designed to support student needs through on-demand access to assist with their learning

needs. At the librarian-generated end, the librarian is as accessible as possible during the day to address student needs. When a student requires support, he/she comes to find the librarian

and asks for help. As we move toward cocreation, the librarian is accessible 24/7 both physically and virtually to address learner needs. This may come in the form of librarian support via email, social media, texting services, and access to online instruction via a learning management system (LMS) or some alternative portal. At the student-generated end, the library is accessible 24/7 with a physical and/or virtual help center that is staffed by librarian, faculty, and students. Here the librarian shares the LMS or portal posting and email, social media, texting response work with a support corps that includes colleagues, students, and even parents.

CONCLUSION

Personalized learning is a means to a desired end: the capacity for students and staff to generate and pursue substantive inquiries; engage in deep reading and analysis; and develop ideas, solutions, and actions. Yes, the collaborations are unique, given the people, organizational structure, and existing resources. The moral of the story: *there is no one way to "do" personalized learning in the library*. Students can pursue their interests, at the most, through the library's resources and instructional program. Librarianship can be personalized too, thus the visual metaphor referenced here can easily be applied to other elements as warranted by learner and librarian needs, interests, and resources. What we hope to model and grow in our students can be thoughtfully reimagined *with* our students and staff instead of on their behalf. See Table 1 for further consideration of this concept.

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