

Open Research Online

The Open University's repository of research publications and other research outputs

How well do you know your teachers as readers?

Other

How to cite:

Cremin, Teresa (2018). How well do you know your teachers as readers? School Library Association.

For guidance on citations see [FAQs](#).

© [not recorded]



<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

Version: Accepted Manuscript

Link(s) to article on publisher's website:

<https://www.sla.org.uk/blg-DandD%203—how-well-do-you-know-your-teachers-as-readers.php>

Copyright and Moral Rights for the articles on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. For more information on Open Research Online's data [policy](#) on reuse of materials please consult the policies page.

oro.open.ac.uk

While policymakers are guided by PISA and PIRLS data, librarians recognise that these large scale international surveys frame reading more as a measurable result than a lived experience and a social as well as a solitary process. Librarians and teachers understand that motivation and engagement matter. Their views are more in line with the OECD's '*expanded definition of reading literacy which recognises motivational and behavioural characteristics alongside cognitive characteristics*' (OECD, 2016).

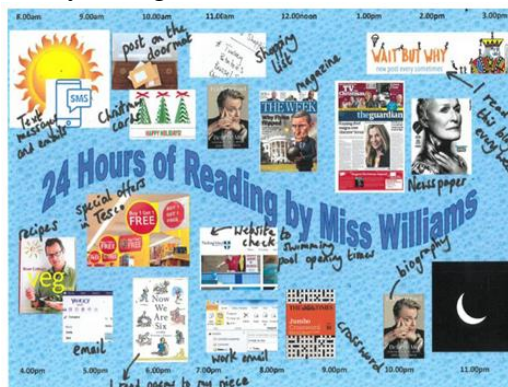
School librarians often know young people well as readers – they know far more about them than their current reading level or assigned targets, and are aware of individual readers' interests and inclinations, the frequency with which they read and their sense of self as readers. Through countless conversations in extracurricular reading groups, in lessons, in corridors and while book borrowing, librarians find out about their readers which enables them to make tailored text recommendations and reader to reader connections. Research indicates that close relationships between students and school librarians are common, as Joan Swann and I also found in our study of the Carnegie Kate Greenaway Award Shadowing Scheme . In the multiple case studies in schools across the country, the young people (KS2-4) we met were clear: they felt connected to their librarians, liked them, respected them and saw this as reciprocal.

But, I wonder, how well do librarians know the teaching staff as readers? *Their* teachers as readers?

In order to build vibrant communities of readers within and beyond their library, I'd like to suggest librarians get to know their teachers better - their preferences and practices as readers, *both* as pedagogues and as adults. Such knowledge is invaluable for making personalised recommendations for subject disciplines (offering a new text on geology or the refugee crisis for instance), and for encouraging staff to request new orders of books they've come across. This kind of dialogue is surely the hallmark of a healthy library, where interaction and reciprocity is in evidence between all involved. It's important too for building relationships with the staff as adults, since they, like librarians, are readers in the world outside school.

But what are the teachers reading I wonder? How might you find out? Well, you could:

- Do a *24 Hour Read* and create a display of all the texts you engaged in over 24 hours. Then invite one or two staff members to do one too, displaying this prominently in the library or preferably a corridor. This will highlight text diversity and outface the unique interest and practices of particular teachers (see this one by Lizzie Williams head teacher at Palm Bay, Margate).



- Invite staff to share a book they're reading- briefly in a conversation perhaps- in order to create a display *Our Staff are Readers!* With photos of staff and their current reading books.
- Lead an assembly on *Our Reading Histories*, in partnership with two staff perhaps, sharing PowerPoints of texts recalled from your childhoods and anecdotes about why you remember these.
- Try *Reading Rivers* and develop a visual collage to share what you've read over the half term or Christmas holidays, with the new NQT's collage alongside that of the longest serving member of staff.
- *Interview Staff* from across the school offering short vignettes about different readers on the library website and linking this to their subject specialisms.
- Invite targeted folk to contribute *Mr/s X Recommends* for the termly library newsletter- so parents and children get to read teachers' top texts too.

It is never easy to involve everyone, but you could start with those you think are most interested (not just the English department!) and seize every opportunity for informal book chat. You'll want them to develop their knowledge of texts too no doubt, so they can support students' reading journeys and make recommendations during tutor time. To help widen teachers' repertoires you might set up a staffroom Book Box or a Mini Library of texts for young people or invite reviews of award winning texts, ensuring that these get into teachers' hands. Do check out the OU reading for pleasure website for more ideas. One school I know offered all staff three books (tailored to each member by the librarian) to read over the summer holidays. This simple step appeared to transform interest which was built upon in a whole school staff meeting that involved sharing views and swapping texts. Creating that invitational supportive culture so staff are tempted to read and share is vital.

By getting to know and nurturing your teachers as readers, you'll unquestionably be developing a stronger reading culture and widening the knowledge, passion and enthusiasm with which staff talk about texts to students. In the process, your reading for pleasure practices will become more porous, stretching into other spaces in the school.

As the Great School Libraries campaign gains in the momentum it will surely be important for libraries to be showcased as a resource for the whole community- for staff as well as students. As you travel if you wish to share your practice with others, do consider placing it on the OU RfP website, that way thousands of others can hear about your work and borrow ideas to develop their teachers as readers. Or join one of our 80 OU/UKLA Reading Groups - all are welcome and your expertise would be invaluable.

Teresa Cremin
The Open University