

Joyce Riddell

Teacher-Librarian

St. John's Ravenscourt

Independent



Through my association with MSLA, AIMSL, MYRCA, and other committees, I've had the pleasure to meet and work with many dedicated library professionals. Through these associations I have been challenged, inspired, and have been taught many life lessons. I have been intrigued as the maker movement began to take root in our libraries and I have chewed on the concept of learning commons and the idea of transformative flexible spaces. Throughout all that time, I have known one person to walk calmly through the chaos and challenges that come when one is trying to run an exemplary program with one foot firmly in the future while working diligently in the present.

Joyce Riddell has been a strong supporter of libraries for decades. But, because she quietly and efficiently goes about her work, I feel her abilities may be undervalued. She doesn't look for accolades. She is comfortable leading beside or even behind those she mentors and teaches. Her work allows others to shine. She simply runs a quality program for hundreds of students every year; touching lives and building life-long learners. She also continues to build a strong volunteer program in her school library which has allowed her library to thrive even when her program was downsized and she lost her library technician several years ago. Joyce has helped students lead from the library as library pages. Finally, she is always willing to mentor a teacher considering transitioning into libraries or open her doors to Red River students to ensure new library technicians receive training in exemplary school libraries.

Joyce began her career in education as a high school English teacher in Alberta in 1986. She moved quickly into the role of consultant reporting on test reliability and running attitudinal surveys of parents and students on disciplinary standards and attendance standards before taking a leave from teaching to start her family. In 1995, her family moved to Winnipeg.

Volunteerism and community involvement are an integral part of Joyce. As her children began school, Joyce also returned to school through volunteering in the school library. As a library volunteer, she ran book exchanges and created imaginative bulletin boards. This time helped her develop her own concept of what a library volunteer program could be. Today, Rosenberg Library is blessed by a robust and active volunteer program with many volunteers who have served with Joyce for many years. Her dedication to libraries resulted in her joining the school library as a library technician at Dieppe school in 2001. Her time at Dieppe strengthened Joyce's dedication to libraries. In this position, she was challenged not only to master cataloguing rules and standards, but to do so in French. This opportunity taught Joyce the importance of having a library team of teacher-librarian and a qualified library technician.

In 2003, she accepted library technician positions at St. Avila and Crane schools where she worked with Marilyn Ouimet and Trish Steadman respectively. These two mentors encouraged Joyce to continue her education while providing her greater opportunities to learn what an effective library program can accomplish. While at St. Avila, she was able to participate in the library's renovation. She again learned new skills so she could create digital mock-ups for the new library space.

Joyce was very excited when the University of Alberta announced in 2003 that they would be implementing a Teacher Librarian Distance Learning Diploma. In 2004, she was admitted into the Teacher Librarian Distance Learning program. That same year she accepted a position at St. John's-Ravenscourt School as the teacher-librarian in the Rosenberg Library. Bob Piper, the teacher-librarian retiring from the program, wrote the following about Joyce:

Joyce stood out as an exemplary candidate for the position, and the three of us on the selection committee agreed whole-heartedly that she should be offered the position. Joyce was knowledgeable about the "operations" end of the library, and she spoke well of experiences she had as a "co-operative learning" teacher who shared a lot of her talents with the teaching staff.

Joyce has been a real strong asset in the school, using her co-operative skills to assist classroom teachers with their work on basic research skills, reading enhancement programs, and other programs which have enhanced the learning experience of the students.

Bob has continued to volunteer in the Rosenberg library for the past 16 years; a testament to his work ethic and love of the school but also of Joyce's collegiality and willingness to collaborate and share the library with others who love it as much as she does.

The Rosenberg Library has a very active library program, which has been the result of hard work and teacher-library collaboration over many years. Joyce has library classes with all grades from K-5 once a cycle. As well, each class has a library exchange time once per cycle. Joyce has aligned her library program with the curriculum in each grade. With Joyce, students focus on building skills in locating and interpreting information in various forms. They also develop a love of reading and books through interacting with Joyce and books during storytime sessions.

This program is so integral to the classrooms that it is continuing online into our current virtual school model. Joyce created a Google Classroom to allow her students to continue to “visit” the library and has planned virtual storytelling activities. It should be noted that Joyce came back early from a medical leave to support her teachers and students with their move to online learning. Again, Joyce works to acquire the skills she now needs to maintain her level of excellence.

Joyce is a consummate professional but she is also an enthusiastic cheerleader for her students. She is always looking for opportunities to allow her students to try new things. Rosenberg’s library page program encourages her students to be leaders in and through the library. Library pages present book talks to their peers in the classes and during assemblies. They also create and perform skits for the book fair and other library programs. Of course, they also help with various tasks in the library. Joyce also runs a MYRCA Club, a Spelling Bee Club, and an Outdoor Adventures Club. In 2015, Joyce was part of a committee that established an outdoor garden for junior school and was instrumental in ensuring the school received a grant for the plantings for the garden.

Because of her long tenure at the school, and the strong relationships she develops with her students, she has had the pleasure of watching hundreds of students graduate who she introduced to the library in kindergarten. It is a testament to her library program and her love of her students and that library that she has regular visitors to the Rosenberg Library including high school students and school alumni. Of course, Joyce always has time to visit and welcomes them by name.

Joyce understands the importance of developing a program and a library space based on community needs. Over the past 16 years, Joyce has continually changed and tweaked her space to make it work for her students. Early in the library’s evolution, she restructured the space to create particular “zones”. She carved out a classroom space and created a cozy reading area in front of the bay window. To ensure students could access the library catalogue, she enlisted her husband to build a standing counter and research pod close to the collection. Currently, to support a more flexible learning space, she has plans to bring in moveable shelving to allow the space to be reconfigured to meet the needs of her students.

Although Joyce loves Rosenberg Library, over the years she has had several roadblocks. These challenges have shown Joyce’s tenacity and resiliency. Several years ago, for example, Joyce lost her Library Technician due to decreased funding to the libraries. Although a blow to her program and a massive increase of work for herself, Joyce continued to strive for excellence as she quietly advocated for returning the Library Technician position to the school. In 2019-2020 school year, St. John's-Ravenscourt School once again hired a Library Technician.

Joyce is a backbone of the library community in Manitoba. Joyce has been on the executive of the Manitoba School Library Association for the past 10 years as President-Elect (2011-12), President (2012-13), Past-President (2013-14), Treasurer (2015-19), SAGE Co-Chair (2018-19) as well as various

committees. Anyone who has attended an MSLA event in the last ten years has been greeted by Joyce sitting at the MSLA registration table at the door, quietly taking care of various tasks to ensure the event operates smoothly and efficiently.

I am proud to nominate Joyce Riddell for the MSLA Distinguished Service Award. With over 30 years of teaching experience, her professionalism, work ethic, creativity, and constant advocacy for her library and all libraries are simply part of who she is. Joyce is a problem solver who strives to make things better for her students through cooperative communication with her peers and administration. She is an example of a teacher-librarian who leads quietly by inviting others to join her to accomplish worthwhile objectives.