

Kathleen Atkin

Coordinator of Library Services

Louis Riel School Division



Before becoming a teacher-librarian, Kathy was a passionate, creative, French Teacher, at Hastings School. She also taught Art and Music with equal talent and enthusiasm. In 1992, she transferred this passion and creativity to her role as the first teacher-librarian at the newly built dual-track École Highbury, where together with her library assistant, Mette La Porte, she established a model school library program and a model for the importance of a seamless partnership between teacher- librarians and library assistants.

The library at Highbury quickly became the heart and the hub of the school. Kathy's inspiring work here - collaborating with classroom teachers to plan and execute quality projects and to promote school wide love of reading - was deservedly recognized by her Highbury colleagues, who successfully nominated her for the highly coveted Dr. D. Penner Award for "exceptional service to education in St. Vital".

In 2007, Kathy was appointed the first Coordinator of Library Services for Louis Riel School Division. It was a wise move for LRSD, and for its school libraries - Kathy continued and continues her "exceptional service to education", this time, for the larger Louis Riel School Division. She set to work on all fronts of her new position as administrator of forty school libraries. Her primary work is supporting teacher-librarians, library assistants and library technicians, and apprising school principals about the educational and prospective professional development roles of the teacher librarian in their schools.

Soon after she settled into her new responsibility, Kathy enrolled and completed (2012), a Master of Education –Teacher Librarianship, from the University of Alberta, where she was recognized and valued for her dedication and insight into the valuable contribution of school libraries to children’s education at all grade levels. In typical Kathy fashion, she eagerly and generously shared the new learning which she was rapidly acquiring.

Her new knowledge about the powerful resources and capabilities for expanding student learning and creativity directly linking to the real world of Web2.0, led her to communicating school libraries’ needs and their intersecting educational goals to our IT department. This resulted in ongoing PD opportunities for library personnel and the acquisition of online resources for all LRSD schools

Kathy values the individual and collaborative role of the library assistants. She initiated a PD committee for library assistants and together they have planned relevant professional development for these partners in school libraries in the areas of library management, technology, materials selection and curriculum initiatives as they relate to libraries. She was instrumental in changing our library catalogue system to an online platform which gives us access to a union catalogue – so important to functioning smoothly and equitably especially when some school populations warrant much larger collections than others and when budgets are tight. We share resources on a very regular basis.

When LRSD introduced its policy of Respect for Human Diversity: Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, Kathy immediately formed committees of elementary, middle school and high school librarians to review and recommend resources to support this important initiative. As a result, all LRSD schools have collections which reflect the children who attend them.

Divisional administrators’ respect for Kathy’s work and her unflagging advocacy for school libraries has resulted in teacher- librarians being recruited as members of divisionally initiated committees such as the Literacy, Numeracy and New Pedagogies for Deep Learning where their contributions are solicited and valued.

Kathy Atkin’s vision, expertise, advocacy and hard work on behalf of and together with has indeed improved the role of the school library in enhancing the learning and engaging the minds of LRSD students.