

**MAKING THE CONNECTION:
Communication + Curriculum = SMART Collaborations**

The Collaboration Continuum:

A collegial and congenial process that needs to develop naturally from

A pproachability:

B ridge-building:

C urrency considerations:

Before you can develop effective ***Dynamic duos***
who:

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Malcolm Gladwell's book, **The Tipping Point; how little things can make a big difference** (Boston, Little, Brown and Company, 2000), uses examples from history, medicine, fashion, TV, and business management to explain how ideas and products and messages and behaviors spread "just like viruses do." Gladwell identifies three Rules of Epidemics or change elements / agents:

1. the Law of the Few (Connectors, Mavens, and Salesmen),
2. the Stickiness Factor, and
3. the Power of Context.

We can put Gladwell's change elements to use in defining and promoting our programs and services. For example:

The Law of the Few: Connectors, Mavens, and Salesmen, or WHO is the messenger?

- Connectors not only know lots of people, they know different kinds of people in a wide variety of contexts. As SLs, we interact with everyone in our buildings, not just the smaller community of a single grade level or subject area. With a holistic view of the curriculum, we are the ones who can most easily promote interdisciplinary connections across subject areas, classroom content, student interests, etc. We purchase materials because they can be used for a wide variety of needs – e.g., cookbooks for home ec, but also for foreign language, world history, and even science classes. Think of connectors as the "6 degrees of Kevin Bacon" of the school society.
- Mavens are the information people, the experts on a subject. While we are more information Generalists than Specialists, we are still the info-mavens – the resourcerers for our in-house communities. As in the classic statement, we may not know WHAT the answer is, but we certainly know where (or how) to find the answer. According to Gladwell, however, the important point is not just that mavens know stuff, but that "mavens are really information brokers, sharing and trading what they know." For us, that means not just stocking our shelves, but also spreading the word, which brings us to:
- Salesmen – the persuaders and promoters. A successful Salesmen can convince you that you WANT his product, no matter whether you really NEED it or not. When we do booktalks, we're salesmen. When we get a teacher to try a new resource or project, we're salesmen. When we get others to advocate for us, we are (creating more) salesmen.

The Stickiness Factor; or WHAT makes the message memorable?

Think of all those commercial jingles that we remember, whether we want to or not. What made them stick in our heads – constant repetition, a catchy tune, a clever picture? What made them sticky was that, in some way, they made an irresistible impression on us, one that attached itself (stuck, in other words) in our semi-consciousness.

As SLs, we need to find ways to showcase our resources in ways that sneak – and stick – into everyone's frame of reference by irresistibly catching their attention. A simple (and insidious) example: many faculty and community meetings were held in my LMC. It's hard, while in the room, to ignore the bank of 16 computer monitors along one wall. So I set the screensaver on all those monitors to scroll the words "Info to go @ the HMS library." No matter what else was going on in that room, that subliminal message snuck into the subconscious of everyone who spent more than ten minutes in the room.

The Power of Context; or WHERE / WHEN the message is communicated influences HOW it is heard and used.

We've all heard (ad infinitum) that information skills are best taught in context rather than in isolation. That's true, but WE can still make even isolated skills relevant, if we put them into a framework that makes the student want or need to use them on a regular basis. Standing up at faculty meeting to announce the availability of a new subscription database is out of context; OTOH, going to a department meeting, with handouts showing how that database correlates with specific classroom curriculum means that you're promoting the database to the people most likely to want and then see a need to use it with their students, because now they're getting that message within a context that is of value to them.

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WHAT we do:

S how

H elp

A ccept

R each out

E ngage others --

How / where we do it:

L inking

I deas

B etween

R eaders

A nd

R esources --

I nforming,

E nriching,

S haring !

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CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS TO CONSIDER:

Information Skills

Literature Appreciation

Technology Integration

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COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES:

Personal:

Publishing:

Presenting:

Praising:

What's REALLY at Stake:

Processes:

Products:

Partnerships:

P O W E R !