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The “Heart of the Institution”

Referring to the school or college library, teachers and administrators alike often call it “the heart of the institution.” This suggests a vibrant place pulsating with energy and ideas where students and teachers love to meet and work.

What does it mean for the library to be the heart of an institution? The biological heart continuously sends life-giving blood to all parts of the body. In the same way, the library should actively revitalize the school’s learning processes by providing appropriate and timely resources. It should continually renew its information sources, provide regular, extended access to a variety of resources, and actively seek to reach everyone within the organization.

Does this describe your school’s library? If not, why not? The human heart beats in a predictable way about 100,000 times a day, pumping some 2,000 gallons of blood in 24 hours. It does so in a regular and organized fashion. Its design makes it well suited to perform its job for many decades if it gets proper care. Does your school or college library have adequate resources to be able to do its job well? Has the library been designed for the functions it must perform? Do its staff members have the necessary skills and vision to provide consistent, organized service? Does the library receive regular financial support that enables it to offer up-to-date services?

A number of library professionals have contributed their knowledge and expertise to this special issue of the JOURNAL. However, the articles are not meant only for librarians! In planning the issue, the authors sought to help educators and administrators gain new insights about the value of a vibrant library in their own institutions.

We invite you to explore with us the role of the school library and its influence on student achievement. Read about our experiences and what the literature says about ways the school library can be integrated into many aspects of school life. Explore with us the library’s role in disseminating Christian values and supporting the philosophy and mission of the school.

We have also sought to provide information about key skills that are needed to operate a library. Because technology is such an intimidating topic for many, we offer specifics on how to automate a library, how to create a professional library Web page, and how to deliver information to distance learners. Finally, we describe current cooperative efforts between Adventist schools and colleges to enhance the use of scarce resources.

The library can indeed be “the heart of the institution.” When the heart is healthy, the school experiences better academic achievement, and students are helped to explore knowledge and faith so that they can achieve personal and spiritual goals. The library, as a healthy, active entity within the school, can contribute greatly to its vibrancy. We invite you to explore this heart. Learn how to keep it healthy and enhance its function. ✍



Annette Melgosa is Associate Library Director at Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies in Silang, Cavite, Philippines, and Coordinator for this special theme issue on Libraries. The JOURNAL staff express their appreciation for her assistance and enthusiasm in the planning and production of the issue.