What is the impact of Teacher-Librarian Additional Qualification programs and Teacher-Librarian Certificate courses on Canadian-based, university-level research on school librarianship? How might teacher-librarians ensure Canadian university scholarship on school librarianship grows and thrives?

By Diana Maliszewski and Joanie Proske

We are course writers and instructors for the Queen's University Continuing Teacher Education Department's Teacher-Librarian Certificate / Additional Qualification (TLAQ) programs. We have experience working with beginning and practicing teacher librarians and shepherding the development of their understanding of the essential nature of this role in promoting knowledge building in our school communities. Our concerns about the future of teacher-librarianship are always foremost in our minds as we have a unique perspective on the evolving landscape of this key role and the transformative realities of the current education system in our home provinces of Ontario and British Columbia, respectively.

As graduates of the University of Alberta (U.A.) Teacher Librarianship by Distance Learning (TL-DL) Master's of Education program in 2010 (Branch-Muller, J., n.d.), we recognize how fortunate we were to be part of this guality educational opportunity. We first met each other through shared online classes with well-gualified instructors such as Dianne Oberg, Jennifer Branch-Mueller, Diane Galloway-Solowan, and Gail de Vos. As colleagues, we have remained in touch over the years, and had the chance to meet again in the summer of 2024 in Toronto. That is when discussions about our postgraduate teaching experiences led to shared mutual concerns as we learned that the U.A.TL-DL program was in danger of closing (J. Branch, personal communication, September 17, 2024). We were dismayed to learn that the only Masters of Education level program focused on teacher-librarianship in Canada might no longer be available to recommend to our teacher-librarian candidates and colleagues who wish to enhance their understanding of this role and pursue specific individual inquiries. However, another disturbing realization centered around the important contributions that this program's qualified instructors have made to the body of school library research in Canada. Without the continued existence of the U.A. TL-DL program, how can teacher librarians ensure that ongoing research on K-12 school libraries, essential to the continued transformation of our profession, will still be produced by qualified researchers and made available for consultation?

This concern was already voiced by the Canadian school library community in 2010 when the very first Treasure Mountain Canada Research Retreat school library symposium and think tank took place. As Canadian School Libraries founding member

Liz Kerr wrote in her preface to the published contributions of the inaugural TMC: "The last thirty years have see [sic] the decline in undergraduate and graduate programs examining the role of teacher-librarianship and school library programs in K-12 education. Thus the time is right to develop a national movement to aggregate existing research, encourage new research, and to foster school library programs as an integral part of student achievement" (Kerr, 2010).

One of the expectations of teacher-librarian preparation programs is that teacherlibrarian candidates do not rely solely on the plethora of information available on the internet and social media platforms, but demonstrate that they are discerning and capable users of information by consulting scholarly articles often housed on academic databases. The high academic standards of published papers set the expectations that such studies be peer-reviewed, well-edited, and that data and results can be replicated and supported both in carefully monitored studies and in applied practice. We encourage our teacher librarian candidates to become facile at locating and perusing the existing literature on school librarianship, not only from Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, but to also reference those studies directly related to Canadian librarianship. We expect them to consider this body of research with a critical eye to its application and creative extension.

In school librarianship, we currently promote the importance of diversity in the collections we build to support student learning. As program administrators, teacher-librarians carefully evaluate each purchased resource, using sound selection guidelines to determine the basic elements of validity, educational significance, and contributions to curriculum objectives. Should we not apply these same expectations to the guiding documents which support the investigative needs of those who are passionate about the teacher-librarianship profession and demand rigor to guide their informed decision making? The resources and findings of international investigations set the stage, establishing grounding to our inquiries. However, they are incomplete in their application and relevance without the inclusion of local findings. The importance of Canadian-based librarianship studies to enhance our existing knowledge and fill this gap in understanding cannot be understated.

Sound library decision-making should be based on foundational library research; therefore, we ask: What is the impact of TLAQ and TL Certificate courses on Canadianbased, university-level research on school librarianship? How might teacher-librarians ensure Canadian university scholarship on school librarianship grows and thrives?

British Columbia

What are the implications for the Canadian school library community in British Columbia on the reduction of post-graduate programs at the university level focused on school librarianship?

The British Columbia Teacher Librarian Association (BCTLA) website posts information on options for educators pursuing teacher librarian training. It describes the two separate programs offered by the University of British Columbia (UBC), the Queen's Certificate program, and the University of Alberta Masters of Education program.

The Queen's Continuing Education Teacher-Librarian Certificate Program offered in British Columbia is highly subscribed: CONT997 Teacher-Librarian 1 (Queen's University, 2025a), and CONT998 Teacher-Librarian 2 (Queen's University, 2025), are introductory courses with CONT999 Teacher-Librarian Specialist (Queen's University. 2025c), rounding off the trilogy. Candidates select from two other elective courses to complete their Certificate program. The courses are offered online throughout Queen's academic year, and usually there are several sections offered per course. Candidates are primarily teachers from British Columbia, although international applicants are welcome to complete coursework.

The University of British Columbia (UBC) courses (The University of British Columbia, n.d.), have also been well-subscribed, offering both a Certification and a Diploma program to candidates not only from British Columbia but from Canada, including the Yukon, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland (R. Beaudry, personal communication, October 23, 2024).

After personally interviewing eight attendees at the BC Teacher-Librarian Annual Conference in Victoria, BC, on October 25, 2024, the overall response was that the UBC and Queen's teacher librarian coursework filled a much-needed gap, providing for Teacher Qualification Service (TQS) upgrades and salary boosts as well as instructional preparation for those interested in assuming the role of teacher-librarian. It allows applicants to more easily enter the teacher-librarian field, offering a short timecommitment and manageable cost outlay. When asked about their consideration of the Masters of Education program offered through the University of Alberta, none of the interviewees indicated that their school districts hiring guidelines required Masters of Education coursework for teacher-librarian applicants at either the elementary or secondary level. Indeed, a perusal of web-accessible BC teacher-librarian job descriptions collected from various school districts and posted by candidates during Queen's CONT997 tasks, supports this observation, as Masters of Education level qualifications were not listed as a requirement. One interviewee mentioned a personal interest in taking Masters level coursework through the University of Alberta, but declined to follow this passion because she perceived there would be considerable pressure from her small Northern BC district to pull her into an undesired administration role. Another interviewee was dissuaded by the costs and time commitment of a Masters level program.

From these interviews and the candidates' comments during the Queen's coursework, it emerged that there is considerable variation in expectations for teacher-librarian qualifications across the province. Some school districts require official completion of either a teacher-librarian certificate or diploma program before a candidate can even apply for a vacant position. Other districts will accept teachers with no formal training as teacher-librarians, with the promise that the applicant completes coursework by a specified date. Due to the pressures caused by the current teacher shortage in BC, hiring practices may acknowledge grandfathered experience by the applicant, perhaps gained from once fulfilling a temporary contract in this role. Perhaps the results from the BCTLA's Working and Learning Conditions Survey for 2024 (British Columbia Teacher-Librarians' Association (BCTLA), 2024), can present a more definitive portrait of the current qualifications for practicing teacher-librarians and provide additional insights.

When the BC Liberal government stripped the existing collective teaching agreement in 2002, this severely impacted specialist teacher ratios with the loss of one-third of teacher-librarian positions across the province (Beaudry, 2017). A Canadian Supreme Court Ruling in 2016 reinstated ratios for teacher-librarians as recognized special teachers (Beaudry, 2017). The online teacher librarian coursework provided by UBC and Queen's has greatly served to inject a number of qualified candidates into the re-emerging teacher-librarian positions in British Columbia.

While the volume of enrolling teacher-librarian candidates in these programs remains steady, it is interesting to note that acquiring a full-time position, especially in the BC's ILower Mainland, presents a considerable challenge. Numerous Queen's candidates report that they are only able to acquire part-time positions. Many of these job opportunities reflect a growing trend by some school districts to shift teacher-librarian responsibilities to cover the mandated preparation times for enrolling teachers which are part of the collective teaching agreement. In addition, teacher-librarians report that they are regularly pulled from their roles to cover classroom instruction for "failure to fill" situations resulting from a lack of teachers-on-call. These concerns are referenced as they have considerable implication upon both continued teacher-librarian job satisfaction and the delivery of quality of school library programs in British Columbia.

Ontario

What are the implications for the Canadian school library community in Ontario on the reduction of post-graduate programs at the university level focused on school librarianship?

How might universities in Ontario advocate for stronger and more effective school library programs in Canada?

Ontario's universities in the past have contributed important research studies to further the field of school librarianship. According to Judy Ameline (personal communication, December 2, 2024), some of the most influential Canadian researchers of school library issues include Ken Haycock (British Columbia), Liz Austrom (British Columbia), Carol Koechlin (Ontario), Anita Brooks-Kirkland (Ontario), Jo-Anne Naslund (British Columbia), Jeanne Buckley (Ontario), Joanne de Groot (Alberta), Ray Doiron (Prince Edward Island), Pia Russell (British Columbia), Richard Beaudry (British Columbia), Stephen Abram (Ontario), Don Klinger (Ontario), and Elizabeth Lee (Ontario). Don Klinger and Elizabeth Lee, in particular, authored two widely-cited studies that proved useful to establishing the importance of having school libraries: School Libraries and Student Achievement in Ontario (Klinger & Lee, 2006), and Exemplary School Libraries in Ontario (Klinger, Lee, & Luu, 2009). Klinger and Lee originally were associated with Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario. Stephen Abram used to work for the University of Toronto. Jeanne Buckley, like the authors of this paper, is a graduate of the UA Teacher-Librarianship via Distance Learning Masters of Education program and is a secondary school teacher in the York Region District School Board.

It is important to differentiate between the Masters of Education and Masters of Library and Information Science degrees. According to an admittedly-dated Canadian Library Association page, there were at least eight library schools in Canada (Canadian Library Association, n.d.). This more recent reference from Librarianship.ca (Librarianship.ca., 2024), mentions 45 institutions that offer MLIS or equivalent degree programs. Eighteen of these are located in Ontario. Generally, the MLIS pathway leads to work in public or academic libraries, rather than school libraries. As also noted by Dianne Oberg (personal communication, December 19, 2024), "many of the 45 institutions offering library/information studies do not have graduate level programs and they are not likely to want to serve the TL market".

In Ontario, there are many different kinds of school library professionals. *Foundations for school library learning commons in Canada: A framework for success* mentions several roles within the school library learning commons, such as teacher-librarians,

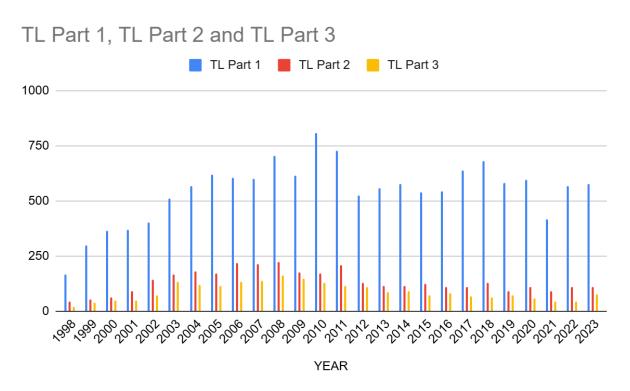
learning commons teachers, professional librarians, library technicians and library clerks (Canadian School Libraries, 2023, p. 25). Teacher-librarians are teachers, first and foremost; "a teacher-librarian is a qualified, licensed teacher who has additional qualifications in teacher-librarianship" (Canadian School Libraries, p. 25). Their numbers in Ontario have been reduced significantly. According to the infographic based on statistics from 2019 gathered by People for Education, published in OSLA's *The Teaching Librarian* (Ontario School Library Association, 2019, p.22), only 13% of schools in Northern Ontario are run by teacher-librarians, and 12% of schools in Eastern Ontario are run by teacher-librarians. In Ontario, school boards that still have Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) qualified school library professionals, require individuals to possess Part 1 of the Teacher- Librarianship Additional Qualification course. Additional Qualification (AQ) courses are "designed by teachers, for teachers [and] reflect the experience and pedagogy of the teaching profession" (Ontario College of Teachers, 2025a).

In contrast to the reduction of Masters of Education (MEd) programs that focus on school librarianship, the number of institutions offering Teacher-Librarianship Additional Qualification programs has grown. Four institutions responded to Koechlin and Kirkland's initial investigation about teacher-librarian training in Canada (Koechlin & Brooks Kirkland, 2018). In British Columbia, the number remains unchanged with two post-secondary options offering training: UBC and Queen's. However, according to the Ontario College of Teachers, in 2024 there were ten accredited providers of the Teacher-Librarianship Part 1 program (Ontario College of Teachers, 2025c).

- Brock University
- Durham District School Board
- Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario *
- Niagara University
- Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association *
- Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto *
- Peel District School Board
- Queen's University *
- Western University *
- York University *

Six of these institutions provide a Part 2 and Specialist TL AQ; these are denoted by the stars. Of all the Teacher-Librarian Part 1 course providers, 60% of these are universities, 20% are school boards, and 20% are unions. There are a large number of course provider options, and a single course can be financially more appealing than a full Masters of Education program. The number of educators who have enrolled in a

teacher-librarian AQ course in Ontario are actually quite surprisingly large, considering how the role itself has been in decline in many school boards / districts.



One of my mentors, Dr. Dianne Oberg, asked me (personal correspondence, December 19, 2024) to consider three questions related to this data:

- 1) What kind of equivalence could you make between AQ1, 2, 3 and grad level courses in the master's program you took?
- 2) What is the impact of the AQ courses on teachers' salaries, on job opportunities, and/or career paths?
- 3) Why do you think so many teachers take AQ1 and do not go on to complete AQ2 and AQ3?

These are my (Diana's) personal responses to these questions:

 I earned my Librarianship Part 1 AQ credit in 1998, my Part 2 in 1999 and my Specialist in 2000. I enrolled in the Teacher-Librarianship via Distance Learning Masters of Education program in 2004 (and completed it in 2010) because I believed that I had not yet learned all that I could learn about school librarianship. I had completed all the available official courses in Ontario but I was hungry for more. Although I cannot recall all of the courses that I took as part of my training, Jennifer Branch-Muller's website (Branch-Muller, J. (n.d.), mentions courses in

subject areas such as inquiry, contemporary literacies, emerging technologies, resource selection and evaluation, and educational research. The Part 1, Part 2, and Specialist AQ courses all have sections that deal with inquiry, technology and collection management (including purchasing / weeding), but not to the depth or extent that entire courses devoted exclusively to the topic can provide. My course on Comics and Graphic Novels in School and Public Libraries, taught by Gail de Vos, transformed my teaching and propelled me into work and projects I would never have considered without the influence of the course. Joanie agrees with this sentiment and adds that, "Before Gail's influence, [she] had never recognized the educational benefits of promoting the graphic novel format" (personal correspondence, n.d.). My Educational Research course was one of the hardest courses I ever took in university (another opinion which Joanie shares with me!) but captured my interest in research enough to continue both action research and more academic research projects, eventually leading to the publication of my first peer-reviewed, academic journal publication (Maliszewski & Soleas, 2018).

- 2) In Ontario, according to QECO (QECOCOEQ, n.d.), to achieve the highest level of standing (and pay), which is an A4, a teacher needs to have a university degree in addition to some combination of two Specialist additional qualifications or a Masters degree. A specialist qualification involves three courses (Part 1, 2 and the Specialist). Teachers can earn the same benefits as a M.Ed. degree with fewer courses, at a cheaper cost, at a faster rate.
- 3) In my opinion, many people take the Part 1 AQ because they think it is an "easy course". Many AQ participants begin the course by stating that they wanted to enroll because they love reading. Often, they are surprised to discover how much work being a teacher-librarian involves. Also, many future teacher-librarians are dismayed and dissuaded from continuing because the role in Ontario is often combined with many other responsibilities, such as a prep coverage teacher, ESL / FSL teacher, or special education teacher. As Joanie mentioned earlier, the lack of occasional teacher availability has led to teacher-librarians being pulled to perform as emergency supply teachers, which discourages both existing and potential teacher-librarians, who see this as a devaluing of the role.

My (Diana's) father used to say "if you aren't part of the solution, you are part of the problem". I worried that, indirectly, the AQ courses I developed for Queen's University and York University might be contributing to the lack of university researchers interested in school librarianship issues, as it is more likely that Masters of Education degree holders may continue on to earn their Doctorates, and then pursue university careers. I

knew that there were still many organizations and institutions eager to fund research on school library learning commons in Canada, but there were fewer individuals at universities available to conduct this necessary research. I consulted with some of those organizations (J. Saunders, personal communication, November 7, 2024; W. Burch Jones, personal communication, September 20, 2024) and I am in the process of requesting a meeting with Queen's University and other Ontario universities to seek out interest in filling the gap in Canadian research on the impact of school libraries.

Canada

What specific actions can be taken at the different levels to continue our legacy of Canadian library research?

We (Diana and Joanie) intend that this list is the beginning of some essential conversations that need to occur to ensure that Canadian, university-level scholarship on school librarianship grows and thrives.

How might the following associations help to encourage and support research on school libraries?

- Local teacher-librarian associations
- Provincial teacher-librarian and library associations (BCTLA, OSLA, etc.)
- National school library and library associations (CSL, CFLA)
- International school library and library associations (ISLA, IFLA, etc.)
- Canadian universities those with and without specific teacher-librarian training programs

What steps can be taken to ensure that Canadian-led library research is encouraged?

These are some questions we can ask ourselves and our colleagues:

 Can university librarian colleagues become active partners in furthering school library research? Might we encourage academic librarians to consider an approach described by Lankes in his book *New Librarianship Field Guide* where there is a "shift from being curators to being activists" and to "actively seek grants" to support their work" (Lankes, 2016, p. 132) in order to address existing research knowledge gaps. Lankes model suggests that "academic libraries should become the places to watch on matters of scholarly metrics, knowledge dissemination platforms, and the use of digital networks for scholarly collaboration" (Lankes, 2016, p. 132) with attention given to encouraging cross-disciplinary research connections (Lankes, 2016, p. 133).

- 2) There are organizations that have the money and interest to fund Canadian-led research. How do we connect these grant providers with the researchers willing to do this kind of work?
- 3) Are there enough currently active Canadian researchers? If not, how do we develop more? For example, might partnerships with the MLIS pathway programs encourage research that would also hold relevance to school library knowledge?
- 4) Is it possible to develop potential mentorship pairings with experienced library academic researchers in other countries? What would the benefits and drawbacks be of joining forces with school libraries from other countries?
- 5) Treasure Mountain Canada (Canadian School Libraries, 2025a), and the Canadian School Libraries Research Archive (Canadian School Libraries, 2025b) are important resources sharing open-access action research by practicing school library professionals. How can we maintain, encourage, promote, or elevate this research?
- 6) Would purposefully incorporating an introductory level of educational research knowledge into existing teacher-librarian course requirements be useful at inspiring future research and identifying gaps in the knowledge? For example, one BC CONT997 candidate, after completing a self-directed investigation and annotated bibliography into the promotion of social emotional learning in the library learning commons, was inspired to conduct her own action-based research into the topic. Her observations could be valuable contributions when shared with others.

As course writers and instructors for the Queen's University Continuing Teacher Education Department's Teacher Librarian Certificate programs, our initial concerns were the impact of the oversubscription of these programs on the landscape of other post-secondary programs in Canada. We recognized that the University of Alberta's Teacher Librarianship by Distance Learning (TL-DL) Master's program has served to inspire many of the key research articles which have contributed to our knowledge of exemplary school library practice in Canada. It should also be noted that this program uniquely provides coursework in Educational Research - establishing a key foundation for those who may wish to critically challenge or pursue original research avenues.

We are concerned that the closing of the UA program could create a potential gap for empirical knowledge studies in Canada. We welcome a discussion of how the Canadian school library community can work collaboratively to ensure that exemplary knowledge about school libraries and best practices for teacher-librarianship continues to be addressed and thrive.

In conclusion, our investigations acknowledge that the number of successfully educated teacher-librarian candidates from the existing certificate programs far outweighs the vacant positions which are available. We choose to view this as a tremendous serendipitous opportunity for grassroots advocacy of our profession. The certificate program graduates are offered a lens into what it means to become an exemplary teacher-librarian. They learn that the job is far more than being a teacher with a passion for books and reading. They gain a perspective into the varied aspects of the teacherlibrarian role which we adroitly manage on any given day. They begin to appreciate the important leadership aspect which we bring to educational reform as we transform school library learning commons into engaging learning spaces. Although they may still be employed as practicing classroom teachers, our "teacher-librarians-in-waiting" are already inspired to work with their own school's teacher-librarian to develop the collaborative lessons which they have learned are essential to student knowledgebuilding. The insights they have acquired from their coursework will surely empower them to ask direct questions of their administrators about the state of library services in their school communities. We have confidence that our graduates will become key advocates and strong supporters in our quest to transform school library services in Canada.

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