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## Back from the future or how to create a 21<sup>st</sup> century library

Mr David McFadden, former principal, wanted CBC Fremantle to be a place of futuristic innovation. In May 2003, he asked the College Librarian to visit the new libraries in London called 'Idea Stores', which are re-inventing traditional libraries into dynamic, exciting places of inspiration and vision to make them relevant to 21<sup>st</sup> century clientele. In today's electronic environment where people can live their fantasies via computer games and simulated worlds, it is vital that the library become a place to stimulate curiosity and empowerment. The focus is on lifelong, ongoing learning by encouraging ideas, researching them, and making them more possible to achieve.

These exciting innovations in library thinking were developed by the Tower Hamlets Borough Council for their municipal libraries and the four reinvented so far have been hugely successful. Convinced that libraries should be a means of encouraging lifelong learning, the Borough came up with a concept of "Idea Stores" as places where people could find inspiration and the means to make their ideas reality. They created a stimulating environment by using bright colours, unusual combinations of materials and design, and innovative light features, and rethought the comfort aspect of the space which resulted in more lenient rules, air conditioning, relaxed seating, and a cafe. They provided a wide range of software and the programs needed to skill people to use it, incorporating all the latest technological ideas. An extensive range of useful courses were offered: in a high Middle Eastern migrant area, mother and daughter courses in English, western household skills, and internet were offered. Today Tower Hamlet's Idea Stores offers about 900 courses.

Library staff were encouraged to promote the philosophy, collection, and activities in creative and unusual ways.

The College Librarian returned to Australia inspired and armed with lots of photographs and ideas. Aware that no finance for buildings or furnishings was yet available, she considered how we could at least change the philosophy of service in our small, two-staff school library and keep in mind the demands of an educational institution. It was important to be seen by our young clients as trendy, offering the latest and best in software, DVDs, journals, and books but we also needed to provide a good research collection.

### Where to Start

We evaluated our two-person staff, looking at our strengths and weaknesses. Pooling our mutual talents, we realised that between us we could cover several computer program bases. The librarian was better at Publisher and Photoshop, and was prepared to learn more of Cuebase, the professional sound recording program, and Flash and BTV Pro animation. The library assistant's forte was Word and Final Cut Pro, the professional film-making program. He was also a keen movie buff, wanting to develop an up-to-the-minute DVD collection, and as a professional musician, was

keen to run song-writing workshops. At least this gave us some exciting starting points.

Next we empowered the clients by introducing a system where they could choose fiction books, DVDs, popular journals, and workshops, and tell us about their exciting ideas which we could then research and help implement. We run unusual challenges like the Codebreaker which someone suggested after reading *The Da Vinci Code*, now a popular yearly event.

We use anything to lure our clients – latest movie trailers, unpublished Matthew Reilly and J.K. Rowling stories, latest Horowitz and Paolino news, posters of items in our secret book box, living books, stuffed animals, working models of the universe, a Tardis complete with light and sound, etc, so that they realise our library is an exciting place and keep coming back. When they make film clips or animations we play them on the library large screen television so all can watch. When asked how to write their own murder mystery game we work it out publicly so everyone can see how it's done. Every idea is valued and considered.



*The Idea Shop*



*The computer area has a spacecraft feel with backlit acrylic walls and a star constellation on the ceiling that changes with the season. Cube seating gives a funky touch.*

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## At last

2009 is a most exciting year for us as we finally got the long-awaited refurbishment which included many of the ideas collected in London: the red floor featured in all the Idea Stores, a computer section with a spacecraft feel, a purpose-built film and sound room, brightly coloured furnishings, a chameleon desk finish, a cafe, the latest funky wallpaper, and best of all, "The Idea Shop" sign right next to the entrance. We have officially arrived!

## Where to next?

We are already attracting a very large clientele, with barely any breathing room each morning. Our challenge is to keep them coming and stay abreast of new client interests, technological developments, and the latest of everything, without neglecting the important development of a good research collection and the skills they need to access information.

Students come into our Idea Shop to do all the usual things that students need to do, but they also walk into a world where there are always new and exciting ideas to encourage their imagination and fire them to try something different.

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## Diversity and multiculturalism through fiction

When it comes to teaching diversity and the power of literacy, literature can prove a powerful medium. A conceptual paper focusing on Khaled Hosseini's best-selling novels *The kite runner* and *A thousand splendid suns*, illustrates literature's ability to expand and enhance education with multicultural themes stemming from the novels.

Looking at Hosseini's geographical and cultural depiction of his homeland, Afghanistan, the authors, Mary F. Agnello, Reese H. Todd, Bolanle Olaniran, and Thomas A. Lucey, consider how Afghanistan has now become more accessible to the outside world, particularly in international classrooms, and explore the notion of censorship and education in our global environment.

Globalisation has changed how individuals perceive their national identity and culture, which presents a challenge to current education practice. Agnello et al. argue that "Political and cultural borders that once separated nation and states, along with people who reside in them, are increasingly blurred. Hence managing difference along with the friction created, is becoming one of the central functions of modern nations that call for new educational agendas..."

"From education and learning perspectives, individuals and students who are intellectually curious, cognitively inclined, socially responsible, democratically engaged, productive, and globally conscious members of the 21st century should not be educated in the 20th century model of education."

Citing a "pandemic of boredom" and "the redundancy in today's schooling", the authors stress that "students may have to engage in collaborative learning that circumvents traditional classrooms ... to deepen their understanding of issues affecting their world and existence, especially when local laws or teachers are prevented from exposing them to such information." The conflicts that arise between different value systems sometimes lead to censorship, which has been the case for Hosseini's novels, banned in some classes both in Afghanistan and the USA.

The study discusses further the concepts of global citizenship education and diversity pedagogy and how today's emerging technologies provide more opportunities for international exchange. Diversity pedagogy is a concept that links culture and cognition (Hernandez-Sheets, 2005). Within teaching, the importance culture plays in learning must be recognised.

Hernandez-Sheets (2005) identifies a framework of eight recommendations to

educate young people about diversity, which is adapted below:

1. Develop diversity consciousness
2. Promote ethnic identity development
3. Promote opportunities for social Interaction
4. Create a safe classroom context
5. Encourage language learning
6. Select culturally inclusive resources
7. Experiment with instructional strategies
8. Use multiple ways to access competency

Diversity pedagogy allows students to question their identity, take pride in their ethnicity and express themselves openly. Novels like those written by Khaled Hosseini provide opportunities for students to interact across geographic borders through the internet, on fan sites or forums.

These students are able to understand and comprehend the information in this literature, express ideas and opinions, and make decisions and solve problems, all important aspects of literacy and education.

Educators today are more responsive to other cultures and can provide educational opportunities, through virtual technologies, to create international cultural bonds.



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