

# **Bridging the Literal Gap to Develop New Research Partnerships**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The School Library Media Special Interest Group session offered multiple opportunities to “bridge the gap” between passive listening to the research of others and active engagement in the research of others through collaborations. Developing research collaborations informs future practice through teaching and learning, as well as in practice. As one example of a research project, Dr. Tara Zimmerman presented her study “Awareness and Critical Thinking (ACT) Program: How School Librarians Can Teach Children to Detect and Avoid Misinformation”. Dr. Zimmerman’s project is funded by a three-year early career grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

The spread of misinformation is a recognized threat to democratic societies, and children are particularly susceptible due to increased use of digital technology, particularly in education. The Awareness and Critical Thinking (ACT) Program is a proposed research project to investigate and strengthen school librarians’ role in educating students about the dangers of misinformation, how to detect it, and avoid it. Based on a survey of school librarians, curriculum will be developed and piloted in several states. Finally, the fully scaffolded, flexible curriculum will be made available to all schools, supplemented with teaching tips and examples gained from the program.

This research on teaching children to identify misinformation segued smoothly into more active participation in “Speed Dating a Researcher.” Opportunities to confer one-to-one with other researchers in the field of school librarianship are rare. By “thin-slicing” or using limited information from a narrow period of experience, we can draw conclusions which may be as good as, or even better than, carefully planned and considered ones (Gladwell, 2007). One example of thin slicing is speed dating. Through this matchmaking process, eligible research partners had the opportunity to meet new potential partners in a very short period. Rows of chairs were arranged to seat participants knee-to-knee so that attendees literally needed to “bridge the gap” between to chat

about their research. Participants rotated to meet each other over a series of short "dates" lasting five minutes. Participants were encouraged to discuss their own research, research that they have read about and found interesting, or a possible future research project. At the end of each interval, the conveners rang a bell to signal the participants to move on to the next date. At the end of the event participants submitted to the conveners a list of who they would like to provide their contact information to. When matches were made, contact information was forwarded to both parties. Contact information was not traded during the initial meeting to reduce pressure to accept or reject a researcher in person.

Participants were informed of these activities prior to the conference at the SIG business meeting and through the SIG listserv. They were encouraged to bring their ideas and business cards with them to prepare for making new research partnerships. Nametags and forms to request matches were supplied at the event to actively engage participants in this collaborative process.

## **ALISE RESEARCH TAXONOMY TOPICS**

Education; Scholarly communications; School libraries.

## **AUTHOR KEYWORDS**

school library research; critical thinking; misinformation; research collaborations; research partnerships.

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