

LIBE 465  
Assignment #2  
Build and describe a mini-digital library

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**Description:**

For this assignment I chose to create my digital library on the Jewish Holocaust of 1939-1945. When I became the teacher-librarian at my school this past September, one of my goals was to really observe how, or if, the non-fiction section was being used. I was fairly confident that it was not being used at all and that most students and staff exclusively used the Internet for their reference materials. My assumption was correct with the exception of one area; WWII. I credit most of the interest in this period of history to our amazing Social Studies 11 and History 12 teacher. She is exceptionally enthusiastic about her teaching area and uses creative teaching methods to spark interest in her students. After some discussion with her about how I might be able to contribute to the learning in her classroom, we decided that a digital library focusing on the Holocaust would be a worthwhile exercise.

One of the things my colleague commented on about students researching WWII and specific topics like the Holocaust, is that there is just too much information out there. Students often feel overwhelmed and don't necessarily know how to narrow their search. The Holocaust specifically, can also lead to information that is inaccurate, disrespectful, and without authority. (While searching for a link to the movie trailer for *The Last Days* I found a disturbing YouTube video titled *The Last Days of the Big Lie*, which included some frightening comments and an edited version of the movie trailer.) With this in mind, I set

out to create a resource that would help our students find good information, and would also lead them to information sources they may not normally consider.

As I have tried to make all of the assignments I have done for my diploma as “real” as possible, I chose to put my digital library on to my library web site where it can be easily accessed and used. My hope is to complete similar collections for other subject areas (perhaps without the MARC records) so that the web site will become even more useful than I think it already is. Right now I have placed the Holocaust Digital Library under the “Reference Tools” tab, but I foresee creating a “Digital Libraries” tab where I can house all of the various digital libraries I intend to create.

I used a lot of my previous learning in creating the digital library. I was constantly thinking about the authority of a resource or web site and evaluating the accuracy of the content. (Dorian & Asselin, 2005) I also recalled Bishop’s (2007) comments that the “media center’s Web site can be one way that users learn of links to selected sites related to their needs and interests.” (p. 103)

Selecting the materials for the digital library was not easy. I struggled with selecting material that was high-interest, authoritative and relatively current. I also discussed the selections with the social studies/history teacher so that I could be sure I was meeting her curriculum needs. (Riedling, 2005) With a topic like the Holocaust, I also had to consider how graphic I wanted the materials in my digital library to be. There are so many powerful images from this dark period in our history but I was not sure I wanted to create a photo gallery that may be disturbing to some of our students. Instead, I chose to offer virtual exhibition and museum links where students could view as much, or as little, as they wanted.

For the book selections in my digital library I had hoped to use resources that we currently had in our library. This did not turn out to be the case. All of the fiction and biography resources we do have on our shelves, but all of the other print materials are not available in my library. At first I felt that I should rush out to purchase newer resources for this section of my library, but after some thought, I am not so sure. Perhaps creating a digital library with links to the reference material would be satisfactory. I am still struggling with the print vs. electronic debate. In some respects, high-interest non-fiction is still valuable in print form, but for how long? Would that money be better spent on databases or e-books (neither of which are available in my library)?

I am very pleased with the final result of my digital library. I think it is visually appealing and easy to navigate. I tried to provide links whenever necessary but keep to the “three click” rule suggested by many web site designers. I believe the content of my digital library will provide students with good information. I wish I had been able to provide access to articles on a database but since our school district has chosen not to purchase any database access for our schools, I was not able to do this. I plan to continue to research for my Holocaust digital library and perhaps add other resources in time.

### **Final Reflections:**

While creating this digital library was definitely a big task, the result was very rewarding. I feel I have created something useful for my staff and students, and have made accessing my library web site even more valuable. I also became more knowledgeable on the topic I was researching which was an unexpected plus to this assignment.

The one area I struggled with in the creation of the digital library was the MARC records. It is not that I don't appreciate their value, quite the contrary. Before doing this assignment and the course lessons I had no idea what a MARC record was. I now know, and understand how they work, and more importantly, why providing as much information to my library catalogue system as I can is of the utmost importance. What I am still struggling with is why I had to create the records myself. My library system creates the MARC record when I complete the required fields while cataloguing my resources. As for things like web sites, YouTube videos, or virtual museums I am still wondering why I would need a MARC record. If there comes a time when we are cataloguing these Internet resources won't we also have library systems that will continue to create the necessary MARC record?

## References

Bishop, K. (2007). *The collection program in schools: concepts, practices, and information sources*. Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited.

Doiron, R., & Asselin, M. (Eds.). (2005) *Literacy, libraries and learning: using books to promote reading, writing, and research*. Markham. ON: Pembroke Publishers.

Riedling, A. (2005). *Reference skills for the school library media specialist: tools and tips*. Worthington, OH: Linworth Publishing.