

Susan Cooper

Georgetown High School Librarian

Final Presentation



**Sustainable
Libraries
Initiative**

Socially Equitable

I spent much time during the '24-'25 school year dealing with a book ban initiated by the district. This is a huge social equity issue. I've asked my students, "Why do you want Colleen Hoover here?" and one student said, "Everybody's reading her, but not all of us can afford to buy books."

A district administrator who was coordinating the removal of the books said, "They can go to the public library to get that book." Many of our students ride the bus to and from school and can't easily get to our public library.

Also involving equity: we need to consider our high school students who love Colleen Hoover or Sarah Maas' *Court of Thorns and Roses*, just as much as we need to consider our students who love Stephen King. Both need access to the books they want to read. I doubt our district would ever ban Stephen King.

Over 100 books were removed from my online catalog in January 2025, at the district level. These include many popular, award-winning books and even titles that our Curriculum Department has purchased for our Lit Library. So far, with the help of the local paper and the community, including a student petition that garnered over 1,200 signatures, I've managed to re-catalog the books and keep my job. However, I now sit on a committee to review the books, so there is still a danger that some will be removed.



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The Social Issues cart is front and center at the library entrance. It contains a rotating selection focusing on racial, economic, environmental, immigration, mental health, gender, LGBTQ+, disabilities, illness, justice system, politics, human rights and other social issues.

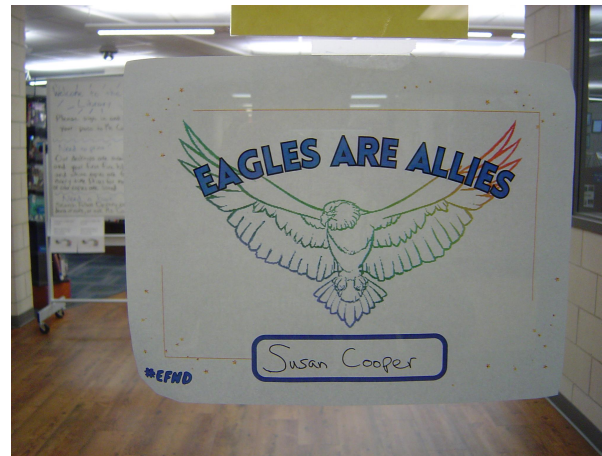


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Students may eat lunch in the library. This is a popular option, as some students dislike the noise and activity in the cafeteria. I have many students who come for lunch, regularly. Other students may just need some quiet time on certain days.

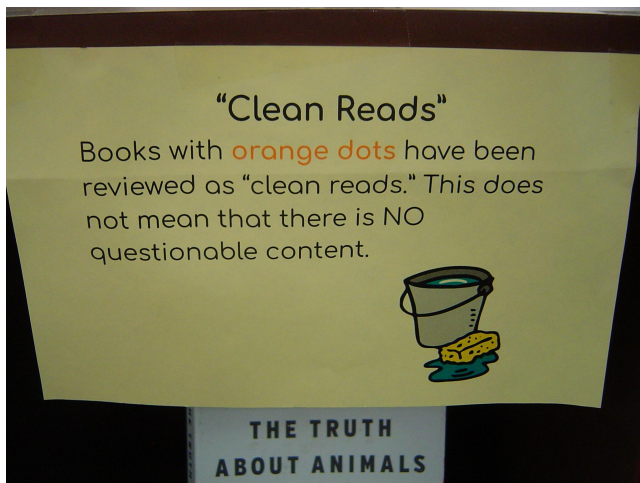


Teachers were invited to post this at their doors to advertise an inclusive environment.



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For students and parents who are concerned about content, I have placed an orange dot on titles that have been designated as "clean reads," with the disclaimer that there may still be questionable content.



With the blessing of our Gay Straight Alliance students, I have lavender dots for LGBTQ+-themed books. I have "Multicultural" labels for books where another culture is a major theme. Some books have both!



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Over the last couple of years, I've made a conscious effort to improve our Spanish and Spanish/English bilingual section by purchasing more popular titles and authors.



Our SPED students and reluctant readers appreciate the Quick Reads non-fiction and fiction shelves. However, any book that is 200 pages or fewer could be in this section, so there are many award-winning novels, as well.



You're never too old for a picture book. These are most heavily used by our SPED students.



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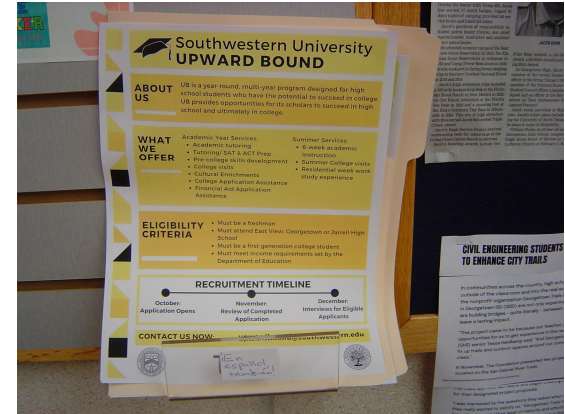
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Posted prominently by the front door is a sign advertising The Locker, a local organization that provides immediate, on-campus access to school supplies, clothing, personal hygiene and more for any student who asks.



This year, I used \$1,000 of my library activity fund and donated popular, diverse paperbacks to The Locker.

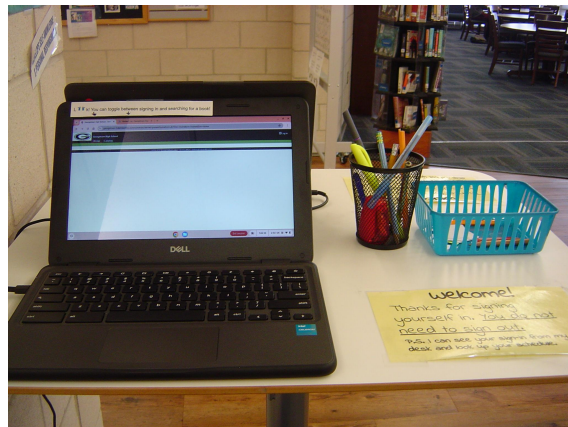
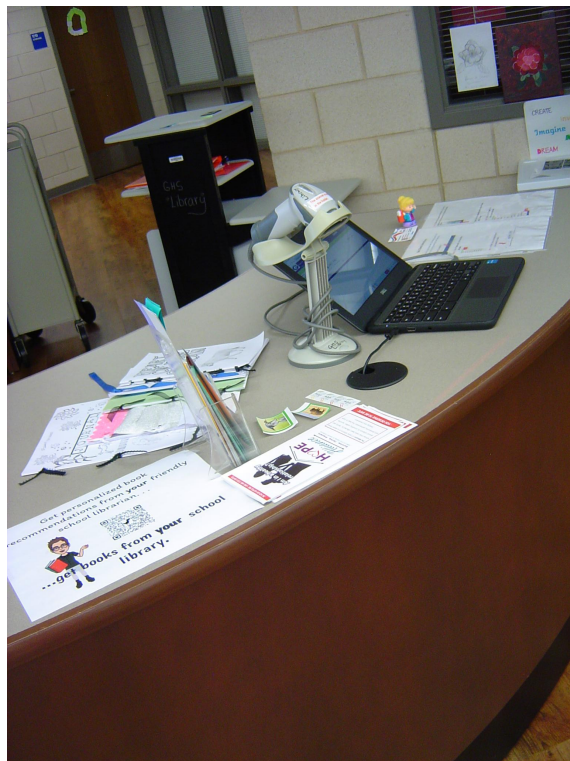


Upward Bound, a first-generation college student mentoring program, is also prominently advertised in the library, and the mentors and mentees regularly meet here.



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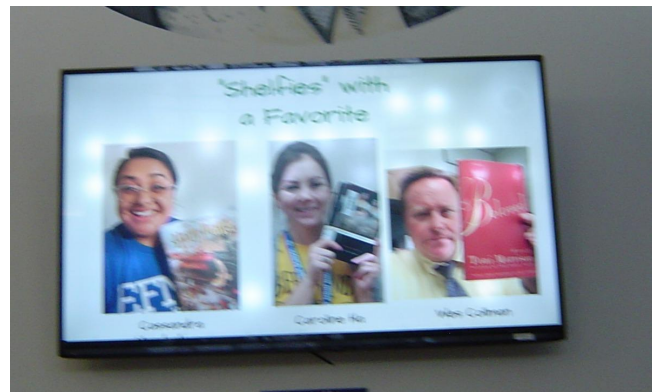


In a continuing effort to ensure all graduates feel comfortable using libraries in the “real world,” I have a self-check station; three computers for searching for books; and information on the monitors around campus about accessing resources anytime and anywhere.



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To encourage a lifelong habit of reading, I have a series of campus monitor signs that encourage students to "...read a book, instead" and "...get books from your school library." Many staffers have also shared shelfies with a favorite book. These are just a few examples.

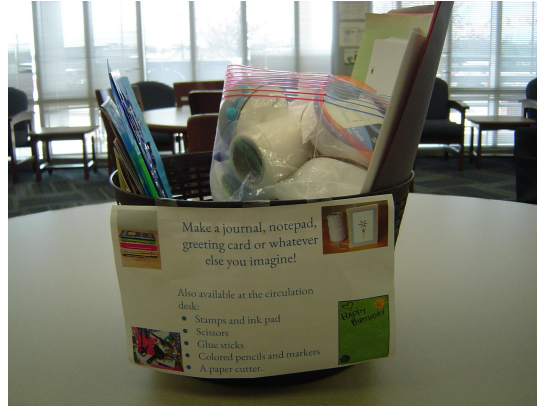


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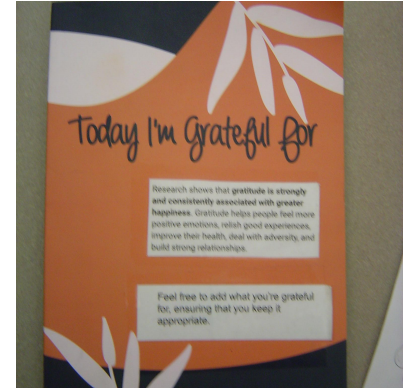
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A nature-themed DVD featuring oceans, waterfalls or outdoor trails is playing each day. I can hear the birdsong and cascading water from the circulation desk. It's such a calming feature of the library. The exercise bikes encourage movement, which also helps mental health.



New for my SLI certification is a basket in the main seating area that encourages the students to create a journal, greeting card or anything they can imagine.

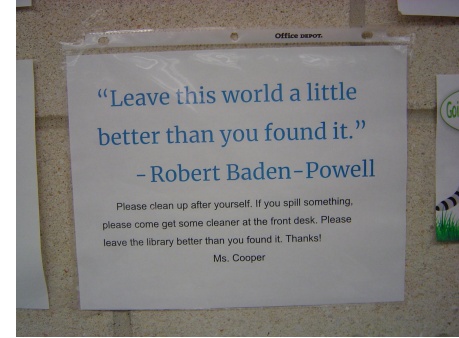


Two of these are in the seating areas for students to write in and lift their mood and the moods of those who read their entries.

Environmentally Sound



Our Social Issues cart has a section on Environmental Justice, and there are more books on that topic in the stacks.



Signs quoting Robert Baden-Powell - "Leave the world better than you found it." - are posted throughout the library to encourage our students to live that maxim every day.



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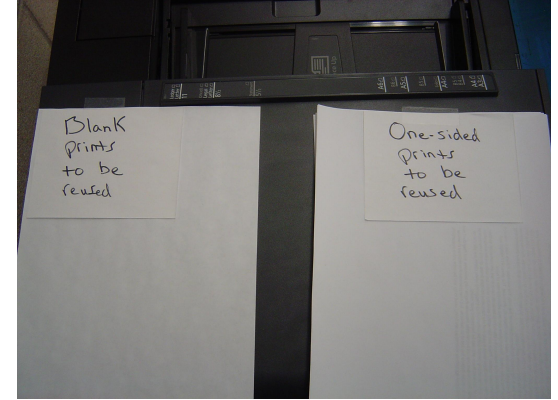
Environmentally Sound



Multiple recycle bins are positioned around the library, and I bring the recyclables home each week. I inspired a neighbor teacher to start recycling in her classroom.



Thanks to my SLI work, the library now has a way to recycle pens, markers and mechanical pencils, and I've advertised this school-wide.



Students are invited to place their misprints on the top of the printer to be reused.



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Economically Feasible



Most of our activities were either donated, purchased at thrift stores, or checked out from the public library. Even the plants are donated!



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Several Attempts and a Goal

In the fall, I contacted several people with ideas for collaboration - from our Teen Leadership teacher to our Key Club sponsor to a Social Studies teacher to our Head of Nutrition Services. For various reasons, none of the ideas I had for collaboration were realized. For instance, I was told that one of the ideas I had - “share tables” in the cafeterias for students to place their leftover, non-perishable foods, was already in the works, though I don’t think it was finalized. I plan to have a “share basket” for uneaten apples, oranges and bananas in the library this coming year. I sometimes have students ask if I have snacks, so I hope to be able to say, “Yes!” this year.

For a couple of years, I’ve been wanting to try a charity read-a-thon. My plan is that students would suggest and vote on a few charities. Students would set goals for themselves on number of books completed and would get pledges from family, friends and community members. I would run it from the beginning of November through the end of March to encompass our Thanksgiving, Winter and Spring Breaks. After Spring Break, students would collect their pledges and donate online to one or more of the nominated charities. I believe that many students would read many more books in that four-month period than they have read in all the rest of their high school years combined. This is something I plan to try again to introduce this school year.



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Thank you, Sustainable Libraries Initiative!



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