

Public Abstract

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Graduation Term:FS 2009

Department:Information Science & Learning Technologies

Degree:PhD

Title:Discovering the social organization of school library work

The research examines how school library work is socially organized and how social organization affects cooperation with teachers and others in the school. The researcher uses the institutional ethnography frame of inquiry, providing a way of looking at the role and function of the school librarian/ school media specialist as socially-organized and institutionally-oriented. Using ethnographic data gathering techniques of interviews, participant-observation, and textual analysis in a middle school in the Midwestern United States, the researcher describes social organization of school library work in the categories of collaboration, technology, and access. Viewing school library work through the institutional ethnography frame of reference reveals how powerless media specialists and teachers can be -- how the structures that are supposed to make the non-instructional and disciplinary parts of their work easier consume their time and affect their interactions with students. Institutional ethnography shows people where the work is, especially the work that is not recognized in the official institutional discourse. With the knowledge of how the work is shaped, school librarians can get a clearer view of how to work within the institution to achieve the goals of librarianship: providing physical and intellectual access to information.