Appendix K: 50 Ways

The original “Fifty Ways to Succeed @ Your Library” was created for several conference presentations by one of the book’s authors. Most of them have no real cost attached, so implementing these will help you become the professional you should be. They are divided into four categories: managing, teaching, public relations, and “that extra effort.”

Managing

1. Make your school library appealing to all who enter. Close your eyes and do a virtual walk into your library. What does the visitor see? How can you make it more attractive? Develop a website and a social media presence. They are a part of your library.

2. Don’t put up with broken, scarred, wrong size, mismatched furniture and shelving. This one could cost you some money, so you need to take your principal, a teacher, and a member of your advisory committee to a national or state association meeting where many furniture vendors display their wares and show what the library could look like. Be prepared with the amount that would need to be raised and have some thoughts about how you would raise that money.

3. Improve your signage. If you don’t know how to do this, look around at local bookstores and see what they do. You could ask the art teacher to help with this.

4. Take some hints from public librarians. Some children’s librarians put their bookshelves on wheels to make rearranging spaces quite easy. They also sometimes hang book racks on the end of shelves and do other things to make spaces more useful.
5. Merchandise your collection. Visit the local bookstore or a local department store and look at how they attract customers to want to buy their products.

6. Weed your collection. Nothing is as negative as shelves and shelves of old, unattractive, out-of-date things that nobody wants. Shelves crowded with “dogs” will keep your teachers and students away because they won’t think you have anything that is modern.

7. Change displays, bulletin boards, and exhibitions frequently. What’s on that bulletin board or in that display case will draw students into the library.

8. Help students learn about continuing their educations. Guidance counselors cannot reach students as easily as you can because their offices are small and usually require an appointment to enter. You can help every student find something to do when they finish high school. If students knew how to enroll in programs after high school, quitting school might be less an option. Most of us came from homes where parents let us know what we were supposed to do after high school, so we stayed in high school. You need to do this for students who don’t have parents who see any advantage (or possibility) for study after high school.

**Teaching**

9. Work with teachers and students to make the teaching job easier for teachers and the learning job easier for students. Collaborate with teachers.

10. Meet with teachers informally and formally and plan. Introduce inquiry learning as a possible new and important way to teach. Collaborate with teachers on inquiry units.

11. Teach, with their teachers, things students need to learn. Collaborate with teachers.
12. Teach your teachers all the new bells and whistles technology has to offer. This makes you the hero in the battle to stay current.

13. Welcome all teachers with a smile. Yes, the football coach does like to get rid of classes before the Friday game. You should be thankful that you aren’t responsible for the arms, legs, neck, back, and head of 100 young men who may come away from that game with something wrong with any or all of those body parts. Make sure you have a collaborative assignment for the class, and be a good sport.

14. Share with teachers new articles from your professional collection. They will look to you for leadership in educational innovation.

15. Dream up new ways to approach same old same old. A teacher may be bored to death with some, if not all, assignments, which means students are going to be equally bored. Help spruce up assignments, and learning will increase.

16. Be especially helpful with new teachers or things new to a teacher. In both cases, the teacher may be quite anxious. It is an easy way to become a hero and leader.

17. Encouraging reading has always been the assignment of school librarians. Students today are bombarded by so many opportunities to do anything except read, while many of these opportunities require the ability to read. Use all the ideas you can think of and find on the Internet, in professional books, and in other publications to increase students’ reading skills.

**Public Relations**
18. Copy Walmart’s greeter policy. Assign students to stand at the door and welcome students into the library. This might be a good assignment for an escapee from study hall if your school still has study halls.

19. Watch rules. My principal always told me that a rule meant a punishment for breaking the rule, and keeping up with those who break ineffective rules and their punishment is more difficult than not having the rule in the first place. Two all-encompassing rules are: Do unto others what you would have others do unto you, and do not do unto others what you would not want others to do unto you.

20. Watch and remove rules that limit students, such as “two-week checkout only,” “you can’t come to the library if you have an overdue book” or “one book only.”

21. Make sure the students understand it is their library. This means you ask them what they want and then you try to provide it. If they want to have an area where they can use their cell phones, advocate for that with the administration. After all, it is their library, isn’t it?

22. Overcome overdues. If you lengthen the checkout time (as you do for teachers) and only require that a student return the book when another student requests it or at the end of the semester, you won’t have overdues.

23. Forget fines. Fines cost more in bad public relations and bookkeeping than you could possibly earn.

24. Resist broadcasting negative messages over the public address system. Make these messages about good new books, new things available, and new opportunities.

25. Resist negative reminders in the library. If your library has rules, they should begin with something other than “No” or “Do not.”
26. Have great programs. Schedule exciting events in the library. Shopping centers and airports bring automobiles in for people to see. Ever think about a motorcycle in the library?

27. Encourage students to volunteer in the library. This helps them understand what goes on in there. If they understand a database well, they can teach others how to search, effectively easing your teaching load. It also makes the library *their* library.

28. Keep the principal informed of exciting things going on in the library. Give him or her things to brag about to other principals.

29. Maintain a great website with links to great information. Develop a social media presence. If you can’t do this alone, draft a reliable student or two.

30. Keep your principal informed about what is new in the professional literature. When principals are cutting-edge aware of all the newest educational trends, they won’t be embarrassed at a district meeting when something new is proposed that they haven’t heard of.

31. Have an advisory committee for the library. What they can help you do will surprise you. They become your advocates.

32. Provide at least one event in the library each semester for parents. Make sure the students are involved.

**That Extra Effort**

33. Watch for opportunities for grant proposal writing. This can be time-consuming at the start, but once you get a list of places and their offerings, you can pick and choose. Also, you need not do this alone. Get your advisory committee members or other teachers to help you or, if you want to get a bigger grant, recruit other librarians in the district to join you.
34. Find out about contests in which your students can participate. You may have to help the teachers collect and submit entries, but a winning student makes the newspaper.

35. Find out about field trips. Sometimes you can tell teachers about special opportunities for students and how to go about getting to the place. Sometimes you can take the training offered by the museum or gallery and become the teacher for all the students, thus relieving all other teachers in your building from participating in the training.

36. Don’t miss school events. Students know who attends their special functions, whether it is a football game, the class play or musical, or a field trip. Attending school events is an easy way to become a mentor.

37. Show your worth. You may have to gather some statistics, but when you make a difference, you need a record of that.

38. Keep records of your successful experiences. If something worked well, do it again.

39. Conduct real research. For this, you may need to find a local college or university and an assistant professor in need of research for tenure, but what you discover may have more value than action research you did on your own.

40. Make frequent reports. These should be short and sweet and interesting.

41. Visit your legislators. Take students, teachers, and parents to show off your program. The legislators will know who and what you are when you need to ask for legislation.

42. Invite the school board and legislators to your school. This needs to have your principal’s approval, but it may not have occurred to your administrators that having the school board or your legislators visit the school and library just to show off the great programs there would bring applause to your school. It is another way to help them understand education and school library programs.
43. Be a problem solver for little, middle, and big problems. Gain a reputation for getting things corrected, made better, made possible. You may not always be able to do this alone, but you should learn who the best people are to work with to make things happen.

44. Volunteer to present a session at your state conference. You should be able to get funding to attend. If you really want to ensure this, ask your principal and a teacher to present with you.

45. Volunteer to write for a professional periodical. Your teachers, principal, and community will love seeing their school featured.

46. Bring in the media as often as you can. When you do something in the library, perhaps invite legislators to your building, the media will come mostly because the legislator will want this featured in the media.

47. Make sure students understand Frances Henne’s description of the ultimate in information literacy: “For some students, and in certain schools, this may be many students, the only library skill that they should have to acquire is an awareness, imprinted indelibly and happily upon them, that the library is a friendly place where the librarians are eager to help.” This is what we are all about.

48. Think before you whine; then don’t.

49. Most of all, enjoy your job, all day, every day. The contribution you are making to the teachers and students in your school cannot be measured.

50. Smile.