

Visiting a Library Series: A Middle School Library *by Ray Pun, IFLA CPDWL Advisor*

January 26, 2024



As part of this CPDWL blog series on visiting libraries, I wanted to highlight a middle school library visit (a library for students ages 11-13). Located in Palo Alto, California (USA), this middle school is called "[Ellen Fletcher Middle School.](#)" A mutual friend connected me to the teacher librarian, Ms. Lee, who was gracious to show me around and shared what she and her library assistant Ms. Arlana have been working on. We talked about school library advocacy work, embedding library collections into the curriculum, project-based learning, media literacy, honor books, short story dispenser and more!

The library space was very open and there weren't many students at first since they were in class. It gave me an opportunity to explore the library's collections and services. I'll highlight a few unique features that this middle school library is doing to support the students here.



On the left, it is a [short story dispenser](#) where this device can create and print out a 1, 3 or 5 minute-stories for students to take and read! [It's been popular in universities like in Penn State too](#). Ms. Lee received this opportunity through a partnership with the Palo Alto Public Library. Students could grab a short story to read as they go in or out of the library. In addition, the library hosted a contest for students to write a 1 minute story and these stories would be entered into the machine for other students to read. It was a nice way to engage with literacy and creativity.

Ms. Lee told me that the judges came from other school and public libraries and teachers too.



Afterwards we looked at the honor books on a shelf. Honor books are books that anyone can borrow without having to ask about it or be seen checking them out. The topics focus on teens, youths, and adolescent interests such as puberty, mental health issues, and more. It was a safe shelf for students to borrow a book and not have to talk to anyone about them.

Next, I noticed the book cart focused on sustainability topics and issues. It was very interesting to see how the books aligned with specific topics like climate, transportation, and other topics. Even the garbage bin was labeled with helpful information about landfill.





We also discussed collection development strategies and how they actively diversify the collection to reflect different voices and identities. I learned from Ms. Lee about how she as a teacher librarian, engages with the curriculum by collaborating with teachers on assignments such as an Ancient Egypt research project, having books ready on shelf on that topic. She was also ready to engage with students having to cite their sources. I also noticed the [IFLA Spot a Fake News flyer](#) in the library too, which is timely since California recently mandated [a new media literacy curriculum in schools](#). Teacher librarians will be great collaborators on this issue.



Ms. Lee also developed a lot of online resources such as [research guides](#). You can learn more this library by visiting their [website with extensive book recommendations to students](#). I also noticed there's a focus on engaging teachers and students through learning technologies and resources developed by the library, such as online tools to help students cite their sources properly.

It was evident that Ms. Lee and Ms. Arlana were striving to make this library into an inclusive and fun learning space. I appreciate visiting this library because I learned a lot about what

our colleagues are doing and can better inform our work in the library field! I highly recommend visiting a school library and connecting with colleagues there!

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