

## Teri Richardson

Librarian, Washingtonville High School, New York

### Librarian convinces teachers to trust digital reference assets

Teri Richardson, librarian at Washingtonville High School in New York, once felt as if her digital library collection was all dressed up with no place to go. “At first teachers were very reluctant to use the resources,” Richardson said of the virtual reference materials her school had purchased. “The teachers were afraid the digital resources weren’t actually book sources and instead from the internet.”

Though Richardson did teach some classes, her job was especially difficult as she did not actually have a roster of students of her own to teach. Instead, she relied on teachers to bring their classes to her for instruction on research methodology. It meant she first had to convince reluctant teachers who were loyal to traditional books of the value of digital resources before she’d be able to engage directly with students.

Despite being just an hour from New York City, Richardson says her rural community had to find a way to better use its digital collection if it was to fulfill the library’s mission of ensuring that students become lifelong learners.

### VIRTUAL REFERENCE MATERIALS PROMPT GREATER STUDENT ACADEMIC RESPONSIBILITY

It took two years, but Richardson says once reluctant teachers are now advocates of the library’s digital materials. “I had to convince teachers they could trust the digital resources just like they do physical resources,” Richardson said. “Every time I show a class how it works, the teachers are impressed with all of the information available.”

Richardson credits Cengage Learning’s *Gale Virtual Reference Library* (GVRL), a cloud-based platform that provides digital research and educational resources to libraries, with convincing teachers in Washingtonville. She says GVRL has empowered the district to achieve another of the library’s goals; to teach students to become responsible users of web resources.

“I always teach them to use the library catalogue,” Richardson said, referring to students who come to her for help with research projects. “Now they’re searching library holdings along with the databases in GVRL specific to their research projects.”

The introduction to GVRL has changed the way students complete their research assignments and positively impacted the quality of their work.



#### CHALLENGES

- Librarian struggles to convince teachers, who are initially hesitant to let their students use digital library materials, that these offerings are trusted sources and of the same caliber as traditional books.
- Persuade students to use the web more responsibly and to properly cite high quality sources.

#### SOLUTION

- Gale Virtual Reference Library (GVRL)

#### RESULTS

- Teachers now immediately introduce students to virtual library materials prior to research projects which results in higher quality work.
- Ease of use and the built in citation feature increase student GVRL usage while simultaneously reducing reliance on web.

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**Teri Richardson**

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## INCREASED GVRL USE REDUCES STUDENT RELIANCE ON SUSPECT REFERENCE SOURCES

The 1,430 students at Washingtonville High appear to have warmed to GVRL a bit more quickly than their teachers. Richardson says one reason is that virtual reference materials make it easier for students to properly cite trusted sources of information in the research projects required by common core standards.

“That is the most important thing they can do is have everything cited,” Richardson noted. “I love that everything found in the Gale databases and GVRL has properly formatted citations students can use for their projects.”

Richardson says students are now less reliant on Google since they have access to everything they need in the Gale databases. After teaching students how to properly research their papers, Richardson says she often receives encouraging feedback from teachers. “I have had teachers say that since I have taught them how to use GVRL and how to research, that students use eBooks more than quoting internet sources.”

## SCHOOL SAVES TIME AND MONEY AS DIGITAL COLLECTION GROWS

It’s clear students enjoy GVRL because they can search and access the entire library with minimal effort and maximum return. However, there’s a secondary reason teachers have embraced GVRL. Prior to building a digital collection, Richardson says teachers were forced to manually print articles from databases.

“The citations are fantastic,” Richardson reiterated. “I like that students can download articles themselves and even save them for later.”

The money and time GVRL has saved educators at Washingtonville is now being reinvested in new Gale resources. “We purchased a beginner package of 400 eBooks,” Richardson said. “Every year I buy a few thousand dollars more. There is nothing we can’t find in GVRL.”

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