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Evaluation and Selection of a Reference Resource

For this assignment, I evaluated the reference section at Charles Dickens Elementary in Vancouver. Dickens offers a multiage program and many teachers use project based learning, which requires frequent access to quality reference materials. As such, the school has chosen to support a full-time teacher librarian and the school library resource centre is a dynamic, vibrant, well used space in the school.

The physical set up of the library has many different spaces for students to work – at tables, in quiet corners with carpets and pillows, and has a bank of computers. The fiction and non-fictions resources are found throughout the library, and there is not one dedicated “reference section”.

The resource I have chosen to evaluate stuck out immediately – a collection of World Book resources taking up an entire top shelf near the back of the library. There is a set of World Book 2006 edition encyclopedias, as well as a set of The World Book: Student Discovery Encyclopedias from 2005.

I modelled my assessment rubric after the standards found in Achieving Information Literacy (2003) and have highlighted where the World Book resources fall in the five categories below:

	Below Standard	Acceptable	Exemplary
Access	Resource is inaccessible to students (ex. too high on shelf) and/or too cumbersome to use effectively. Limited copies.	Resource is in a spot where students can access, but not featured. Multiple copies that can be used by students with ease.	All students can access resource at any time. Resource is featured prominently for ease of access.
Relevancy	Resource is not relevant to the needs of the students, it does not effectively support research and inquiry.	Resource is useful for students' inquiry projects though lacks depth of information required.	Resources fully supports students' research with wide range of topics and in depth information.
Currency	Copy right date more than 10 years old	Copyright date 5-10 years old	Copyright date within last 5 years
Curricular Connections	Supports some aspects of the revised curriculum	Supports most aspects of the revised curriculum	Supports all aspects of the revised curriculum
Use	Resource is rarely used in library or checked out by a limited section of student population.	Resource is used and checked out occasionally by some of student population.	Resource is checked out or access on a regular basis by wide range of students.

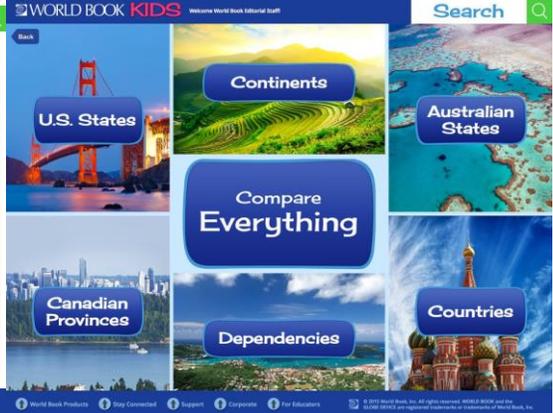
As is obvious by the copyright date, these resources were purchased over a decade ago and would have cost upwards of \$1000, which would be almost half of the current yearly budget for the school library resource centre. The current teacher librarian has never seen any student use them, and no student has ever asked about them. The reading level for the World Book set is aimed at upper intermediate, yet the depth of information that these students require for their projects is not represented in the content of the resource and there is little to no opportunity for any critical thinking to take place with this resource. The Student Discovery Encyclopedia

does have a lower reading level, but is not very engaging for young readers and those with newly acquired information literacy skills.

The students at Dickens use about a 50/50 split between print and digital resources. There is access to some databases through the school board, and intermediate students at the school have attended workshops put on by the Vancouver Public Library on how to access their databases, which are free. However, there is a lack of resources that primary students can access. Considering this deficiency in the current collection, I decided a digital resource aimed at early elementary would be a great addition to the reference section.

Using the original resource as a jumping off point, I considered what the World Book publisher had available in terms of online encyclopedias. Looking at the standards of accuracy and authority for evaluation and selection in Riedling (2013), I felt that World Book would fall under the requirement of a standard title from a prominent and reputable publishing company.

World Book has a Kids Online Encyclopedia (<https://www.worldbook.com/products/kids-online-encyclopedia>) which would fit the need of a resource aimed at primary, as this resource is aimed at grades K-5.



This resource covers a wide variety of topics relevant to the revised elementary curriculum, however it does lack in-depth information to support the Aboriginal component of the revised curriculum. There is direct support for educators linking the content of the resource to curricular standards, though unfortunately this is only available for American and IB curriculum. However, given that the revised curriculum is much less prescriptive, I feel not having access to this feature is not an issue. Topics are linked to each other within the resource, with key words and concepts highlighted and clickable to go more in depth or make connection across curricular areas. The image based navigation is extremely accessible, especially for primary aged learners, and there are many interactive activities, games, maps and videos that help to support more visual learners. There are options to have the articles read aloud to users as well,

which can support those students who struggle with reading. World Book Kids can translate information into over 80 languages, a fantastic feature for ELL learners.

The format of this resource is streamlined, with information very easy to find. Pictures and videos for topics are imbedded within articles, and accessible separately with links to more information or cross-curricular links. The resource is optimized for use on a tablet, and given that the library only has six computers available for students, but there are many class sets of iPads available at the school, this will support access for all students.

This resource is supported through several training videos for teachers and also includes teacher resources (activities, projects, discussion questions, lesson plans) within the subject areas.

A license for the resource is \$375 a year, which would be about 16% of the library's yearly budget. This is much more reasonable than the cost of the resource it would replace, and supports a much larger section of the student population.

References

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