Power Library Redux

In its early days, an unknown someone is said to have characterized the Internet as a "worldwide system of libraries filled with electronic documents instead of books." It is that, but it has also become a headache corrupted by links filled in some cases with un-truths, half-truths and outright lies. How to tell the difference? Especially, how do inexperienced children and young adults tell the difference? One great way is to use Power Library (https://powerlibrary.org/), a world of preferred resources made possible through the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's Library Access funds administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Office of Commonwealth Libraries.

Emma Beaver, Library Director at Murrysville Community Library until 2019, put together a flyer about Power Library and "STEM Resources" in one page, a written guide for teens participating in the Pittsburgh Regional Science and Engineering Fair. The electronic link for information based on that guide is to be found at https://www.wlnonline.org/prsef/. With kids getting ready again for science fair season, it is time to revisit this subject.

Here are some of the key Power Library e-resources from the written guide to share with your teenagers: Academic OneFile; E-Books [EBSCO]; Gale Virtual Reference Library; General OneFile; GREENR [Environmental, Energy, etc.]; Health & Wellness Resource Center; Power Search; Research In Context; Science Reference Center; TrueFLIX.

And Emma gave the following written guidance about "Sharpen Your Resources" too:

"When researching your project, it is imperative to vet your resources and ensure that they are authoritative. Do they come from a trusted source? Has the author's work been peer-reviewed or verified? Avoid sources like Wikipedia where anyone is able to contribute to the content.

"Think about your topic. Identify reliable, expert authors. Consult and compare multiple resources. Search for background information. Read carefully and completely. Use information ethically."

She also spoke about how to "Sharpen Your References":

"How resources are cited and referenced is just as important as the resources being used. Choose a formatting style, such as MLA and APA, and carry that style throughout the entirety of the project. Whether citing references in a research paper or on a final Reference page, formatting help can be found by visiting https://owl.purdue.edu/."

Print copies of the original Power Library guide, as prepared by Emma, are available at Murrysville Community Library, and you might be able to request copies from staff at other WLN Libraries by reference to Murrysville.

All kids, and all adults too, can benefit greatly from learning about how to find factual information and also how to cite the references properly. Power Library indeed is a powerful tool, whether on a STEM career track or any other career track! Check it out.

Charles B. Greenberg
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