

Marc Epstein  
District Technology Director  
Great Neck Public Schools

Good morning, everyone. That was a very flattering introduction, and this is a very special honor. I can't think of a better person to introduce me for a library award than someone named Mr. Reader. Damon is an outstanding librarian much more than even his last name would indicate. He's thoughtful, dedicated, student-centered, tech-savvy, and someone I'm proud I helped hire for our district. Damon, thank you very much for those kind words.

I'd also like to thank Judy McClellan, Damon's colleague and head librarian at Great Neck South High School, who's manning the fort today, for this nomination. Judy and I have worked on many projects over the years and I think it was our most recent

It's never about the hardware, it's always about the people, and that's how I approach my work.

Those of us in education know the challenges we face to change our schools. I'm not talking about what you see on the news or hear from politicians. I'm talking about instruction and learning, what goes on in classrooms. It's always easier to stay in one's comfort zone, especially in schools that are traditionally successful. If it ain't broke, don't fix it. But the truth is that teaching is just as much art as it is science, there's always room for improvement, and you can't move forward if you are standing still.

Librarians have embraced the changes brought about by technology to serve the needs of their patrons. They have adapted to automation, adjusted to video streaming, created content-rich Web sites, and integrated information literacy and research skills into their curriculum by using electronic encyclopedias, online databases, Internet resources, and Web 2.0 tools.

So, what's next? Are electronic books the next frontier? When I asked a group of seniors at Great Neck North High School this question, they almost unanimously answered that they'd rather read a printed book over an ebook. I sarcastically told them they had become their parents even before they graduated high school. But their answer is logical and their preference is easy to predict. Despite texting and Facebook, they grew up doing serious

any book into an audio book, how transformative is that for auditory learners? If I can change the background, orientation, font, and size of the text and add multimedia elements, how helpful is that to a visual learner? If I can electronically annotate, bookmark, take notes, and become a more active reader, how much does that help all readers?

We won't know the answers to these questions for some time. One thing I think we can be certain of is that a transition has begun and this is where I see a synergy between Instructional Technology specialists and library media specialists. Both of us provide a school-wide service and are leaders in our schools. I'd like to see us work together to try to answer these questions over the next few years. I see this very clearly as our next shared transcendent mission and I can think of no better partner to work with to discover and create the future of reading in our schools.

You may not have noticed but this past Saturday, the world did not come to an end. Libraries did not end when the card catalog was replaced or when the Internet brought an information explosion into our schools. Likewise, reading will not end if books become digital. But maybe ebook readers like the Kindle and the Nook, and tablets like the iPad, will help take reading to new heights.

One thing I can say for sure is that there has never been a time when librarians were more sorely needed to help guide students and teachers through this digital revolution. You play a critical role in the mission of your school and you know this because you live it every day. I see it all the time in the elementary and secondary libraries in Great Neck. Students and teachers flock to our libraries. They are the hubs of our schools and have only become busier with all this technological change. I hope the enduring message that I leave you with today is that librarians not only can but must embrace new technologies, even ebooks. You play a central role in what lies ahead in education. I believe this very deeply. If my receiving this award can raise awareness of the importance of the library role to other technology directors, principals, superintendents, Board of Education, and the broader education community and public, then it will have even greater lasting value. This is also the best way I can think of to say thank you for this very special honor.