Empowering students to be creators, to be innovative, and to be explorers of information is at the core of how I view my job as Librarian. This vision statement for the library is “We are here to provide tools and resources which encourage and empower students to become able learners and citizens of the world. We provide access to ideas and information through a wide variety of both digital and non-digital materials. By creating a compassionate, yet rigorous environment, we seek to make the library a friendly and fascinating place to read and learn.” This vision grounds me and provides the basis from which I promote the library be a place where students are able to ask questions, seek answers, take risks, and create new knowledge. Helping students become explorers of information allows them to take control of their learning which hopefully increases their appreciation and creates enduring learning. Most of what students are exploring is based in the curriculum but students can still be innovative with how they approach the information and the products they create.

In my role as instructional partner and information specialist I am able to bring ideas to the teacher and the lesson that allow students to explore and create. The content teacher and I are able to incorporate strategies and technologies that create a space where students are able to explore their given/chosen topic, think critically about that topic, and synthesize the information they learn into a meaningful product. These lessons can occur during a single class period or may occur over a few class periods, both of which are valuable for students.

Teaching kids how to research information can be a daunting task for all involved but I have discovered that a research scavenger hunt provides a lot of flexibility within a structured process. For example, I was working with a social studies teacher to create a lesson where students would gain an overview of ancient Rome. We used the curriculum to identify the “I can statements” that we wanted students focus on and then developed stations through which the students would rotate. At some stations students were using books, while at others they were using computers to examining maps/pictures/videos and databases to explore and gather information. Students also used an educational game about gladiators to gather information. The scavenger hunt model provides a structured and strategic way students can explore a topic. This model provides them practice with using various types of media when conducting research. Students were given a few different products (PowerPoint, VoiceThread, Padlet) from which to choose to synthesize the information they gained. Using the steps of the Guided Inquiry Design Process the scavenger hunt model focuses on the exploration, identification, and gathering portions of guided inquiry. Although the topics/questions are determined by the curriculum this model allows for flexibility using different types of research media. Students can then explore in depth any topic which may pique their interest. The scavenger hunt model has successfully been adapted for research lessons in chemistry, poetry, mythology, and ancient cultures. As with all research the choice of end product is almost limitless.