

# South Dakota Honors “21st Century School Libraries”

[DS thedigitalshift.com/2014/01/k-12/stars-shine-south-dakota-state-awards-honor-top-school-libraries/](http://theDigitalShift.com/2014/01/k-12/stars-shine-south-dakota-state-awards-honor-top-school-libraries/)

Lauren Barack

For Jean Moulton, nabbing an inaugural 21st Century School Library Award from the South Dakota State Library (SDSL) meant more than just personal recognition. The



Sioux Falls school librarian and 21st Century School Library Award winner Kerri Smith (in green jacket) with her students from Washington High School.

acknowledgment highlighted the work of Moulton, a school librarian at Watertown (SD) High School, who is helping prepare students for an effective digital life when they graduate.

“It makes people aware that we’re really doing something important with students as far as using technology,” she says. “We’re teaching online research skills they’re going to need after high school.”

Moulton’s is one of 20 school libraries singled out by SDSL for best representing 21st-century principles as part of the new award program, whose winners were announced in September 2013.

Schools may win three types of awards: Exemplary, Enhanced, and Effective, with exemplary being the top honor. Libraries earn points based on programming, professionalism, and the learning environment for the students, the latter based on factors such as whether trained staff are available during open hours. Applicants nominate their own libraries, and more points accrue toward a higher-level award.

South Dakota statutes don’t require schools to have libraries. But Daria Bossman, South Dakota’s state librarian, who helped coordinate the award, hopes that the new honors will serve as a motivation for other schools and districts to invest in their libraries—while also serving as advocacy tools.

“We want our schools to have an understanding of what a 21st-century library can and should be,” says Bossman. “It’s

more than just a room with books.”

Kerri Smith, whose library won an Exemplary Award, as did Moulton’s, couldn’t agree more. The librarian at Washington High School in Sioux Falls says her facility used to be just as Bossman described—a room full of books, many from the 1970s.

“The library looked like a hospital room with browns and creams,” she says. “Few books were being checked out, there was no collaborative teaching. I dug in and got to work.”

Today, Smith is also the school’s tech trainer, and she coordinates programs, such as a special coding lesson offered at the library last month. There are still books—expanded to include audio titles, graphic novels, and ebooks. Smith booktalks many titles during her daily classroom visits to ninth and twelfth graders.

As a 1:1 school, Watertown High is also heavily steeped in online materials. With the school wired for WiFi, students have 24/7 access to an in-depth collection of resources, ranging from Britannica Academic to Medline Plus. Digital materials are Moulton’s priority, although print resources are also available.

“We have an incredible array of databases,” she says. “Our students are high-end users of technology.”

That’s the image Bossman hoped to convey. “We were frustrated with the 1950s stereotype [of librarians],” she says. “We wanted to break out of that.”

Recipients will retain their award status through 2015, and this year’s winners will help select new honorees in 2014, says Bossman. She hopes that more libraries will innovate and apply as they see how others in the state are pushing school libraries forward.

“This was a show-and-tell where we not only honor and recognize [school libraries,] but showcase them,” she says. “What better than to showcase the best and brightest?”