

I Love My  
Librarian!  
2009 Award

### **Nominations for Lucy Hansen**

Lead Librarian

South Texas Independent School District

Mercedes, Texas

Biblioteca Las Américas

Mercedes, Texas

Nominator:

Marla Guerra

Mercedes, Texas

**1. How long have you known the nominee and how did you come to know him or her?**

Lucy Hansen has been serving as Lead Librarian since 1998. She was in this position when I came to the district as Superintendent in 2001. Throughout my tenure, Lucy has demonstrated exceptional leadership and service to the 2,436 predominantly Hispanic students, 200 teachers and staff members and countless parents and community members that use the resources of our Biblioteca Las Americas in Mercedes, Texas.

**2. How has the nominee helped you and/or students at school? For example, did the nominee help you with a project, recommend resources or collaborate with you to enhance student learning?**

Lucy helps everyone at all the STISD campuses; she believes the library is for the entire school community and is a valuable commodity not to be wasted.

Busy teachers can count on Lucy to help them find the resources they need for their projects whether it is for a class project or for a university course they are attending after a long day at school. Lucy is often seen with notebook and pen in hand as she runs errands or goes to meetings on campus – just in case she runs into someone with a request from the library.

Two collaborative projects of Lucy's are excellent examples of how Lucy collaborates with teachers and students. Lucy and the AP Biology teacher team

teach advanced genetics research each year. The class visits the library where Lucy demonstrates how to search several advanced scientific databases. She spends the class period with the teacher assisting students one-on-one and they come back to her for help until their projects are complete. Last year she assisted a teacher with the selection and purchase of classic novels in graphic format for academically challenged students.

Our library has been the beneficiary of several contracts from the National Library of Medicine that Lucy negotiated. The funding from these contracts is used for a group of students to perform outreach and peer tutoring to medically underserved populations. Lucy's mentoring benefits the students in this group. She follows their school progress and offers them tutoring so they can remain in the program and keep their grades up to her high standards. Sometimes she simply listens to them. She has mentored several of the graduates of this program and assisted them with independent research projects.

Former students frequently stop by to visit and thank her for the help she provided them, to get more advice, and even to say they wish they had been more grateful when they were enrolled here.

**3. How has the library, and the nominee in particular, had an impact on students and the learning process?**

It is not uncommon for Lucy to individually tutor students who need extra help with school work. Two years ago she assisted a student who had just arrived from Mexico with no English skills. There were many afternoons that student visited Lucy's office looking for a friendly face and a comfortable place to practice her English.

Lucy considers it a top priority to meet the academic needs of the entire student population at STISD and strives to ensure that no needs go unmet. She has been one of the driving forces behind the acquisition of the Rosetta Stone language software for the district because she is adamant about affording our students every opportunity to advance in whatever areas they choose.

When Lucy assists students in the library, even just to check out materials to them, she learns their names, asks them about their classes, offers to help with upcoming projects, and follows up. She has developed close relationships with students over the years and her office is often the scene of spirited discussions and vivacious laughter.

Lucy believes it is important for the library to adhere to the same standards as the teaching staff. She regularly meets with district library personnel and frequently conducts training sessions to keep everyone up to date on technology

and library resources. Her staff aims to follow those standards during library lessons.

**4. How does the nominee make the school a better place? Please be specific.**

Lucy makes our school district a better place by always looking for new and exciting opportunities for our students and staff. She recruits students to perform concerts in the library at lunch time on Fridays and cheers the loudest for the rock and roll groups. It is not uncommon for Lucy's office to have drum sets stored there, and this past school year Lucy even went so far as to have the custodians clean out one of the library's storage rooms to provide a place for student musicians to practice for an upcoming talent show at their campus.

She has also hosted local authors and artists during lunch time offering students and staff the opportunity to gain cultural awareness of our rich Mexican-American heritage.

Another event in our district that Lucy is an integral part of is the annual health fair which is held in the library. She enlists a variety of health care providers and organizations to come and share their expertise with our students. Of the 400+ visitors to the health fair each year, on average 96% enjoy the fair and 91% find information important to them according to exit surveys.

Our library is one of the few school libraries that is never closed during school hours; it is one of the few school libraries that is open from 7:45 a.m. until 7 p.m. every day; and it is also a rarity because it is open for full service during summer school hours.

Parents are also warmly regarded by Lucy. She has ensured that families of students have library privileges and has furnished a space and materials for a Parenting Center in the library. Lucy also warmly embraced the idea of a parent book club that was suggested last year and has been its biggest supporter.

**5. How has the individual demonstrated leadership in the school community or the profession?**

Lucy is member of many groups that impact the schools she serves and the services she provides:

- The District Leadership Team
- Campus Advisory Committees
- District Art Committee
- Rio Grande Valley Library Services
- American Library Association
- Texas Library Association
- Medical Librarians Association

- ¡VIVA! Peer Tutor Program

In addition to the committees and professional organization memberships, Lucy has been published in many journals and trade publications including, but not limited to:

“Collaboration as an Element of School Culture: Biblioteca Las Américas,” in *Teacher Librarian* (2006).

“High School Peer Tutors Teach MedlinePlus: A Model for Hispanic Outreach,” in *Journal of the Medical Library Association* (2005).

Lucy welcomes interns to the library and assists them by mentoring and providing meaningful experiences to them so they are prepared to enter the field of librarianship.

She also opens the library doors to professionals who want to study our library; it’s a really special place. Dr. Barbara Immroth from the University of Texas spent several days visiting last year observing Lucy and the library. Jody K. Howard, Library Consultant and President-elect of the Colorado Association of Libraries, spent a week gathering data on our library for her doctoral dissertation. Lucy manages to accommodate all visitors cheerfully and enthusiastically.

Nominator:  
Nereyda Esparza  
Weslaco, Texas

**1. How long have you known the nominee and how did you come to know him or her?**

I have known Librarian Lucy Hansen for eight years now. Lucy was my high school librarian, always keen on volunteerism I spent hours after school volunteering at the library. I developed a close friendship with her through my hours as a volunteer library aide. She was always interested in listening to my stories, my goals and my aspirations. In turn she shared with me her life experiences and we quickly found out we shared the same passion about academics, school culture and an undying love for libraries. Lucy recruited me to be a part of a peer tutor project sponsored by the National Library of Medicine in collaboration with BLA and from then on she became my friend and mentor. Lucy has been present for me through thick and thin and continues to be a pillar of strength in my life. She has continually shown an interest in my development and growth as a strong young woman. She is sincere and truly and completely cares about you, I cannot explain how much I appreciate her friendship. In 2005 I graduated from high school and continued my studies at Smith College. I stayed in touch with Lucy throughout my college experience, when I was happy she knew, when I wasn't she helped, when I was stumped – I called or emailed her. This spring when I found out I had been accepted to study at Oxford University the first person I called was Lucy.

**2. How has the nominee helped you and/or students at school? For example, did the nominee help you with a project, recommend resources or collaborate with you to enhance student learning?**

Lucy Hansen is a visionary, she thinks about the long-term benefits of public education, libraries, school culture and librarianship. Like myself, Lucy was raised in modest circumstances and has overcome barriers in her path to graduate top of her class, become a Fulbright Scholar, teach in Germany, receive two masters degrees and become the Lead Librarian for our school district. We both share a passion for everything that is academic, we believe that education is the key to achieve real change. Lucy's interest in research and scholarship rubbed off on me from a very early age. Over coffee we would share our views on politics and the conversation would quickly turn to what has been written or published on the topic. The excitement in her voice is noticeable when the conversation features education and policy, and to this day Lucy is the only person I know who can name all the resources in the BLA library relevant to your topic. As lead librarian Lucy truly believes that every student deserves the right to have the best resources available to them at their fingertips – knowledge just waiting to be tapped. In high school, under the VIVA project Lucy gave me my first introduction to service learning, grants and research funding. At the end of

my senior year I worked closely with her on my capstone course for research design and development. I decided to do my project on the VIVA study and every step of the way Lucy helped me answer my research question. By the time I got to Smith, I had achieved a level of research that few of my fellow classmates had completed. At Smith I had the opportunity to continue my research interests, I traveled, I did internships and took job placements that benefited my field. Lucy was there to help advise me when I called, and she has been ever supportive in my every effort, as my oldest personal and professional reference she has never complained about writing a recommendation or answering a reference call.

**3. How has the library, and the nominee in particular, had an impact on students and the learning process?**

She is positive and encouraging, she always makes me feel like I'm doing something right. My life has been so enriched by her presence. Lucy Hansen has not only been a strong woman mentor in my life, but also a voice of comfort, compassion and strength in my hardest times. When I had problems at school or home she was the first to hear about them and the first to remind me that nothing could stop me from achieving my dreams. She has taught me perseverance and persistence, always patient in understanding that I am still growing up. With my best interest in mind Lucy offers me constructive criticism, but she has a unique way of approaching the situation and making you understand how to make you stronger. She encouraged me to travel and see the world, knowing this would give me a new globalized perspective. For example, when I told her that I was unsure of studying at Smith College because my family objected to the idea of being so far away, Lucy reminded me that there were many experiences left for me to know and that there was a wealth of knowledge and information that I could get at a women's college. But most importantly, she did something my parents had not; she shared my excitement about my admission, she felt very proud. A true believer in education, Lucy never allowed me to put a barrier between myself and my goals, no matter how far away they seem.

**4. How does the nominee make the school a better place? Please be specific.**

Lucy is a visionary. She wants Biblioteca Las Americas to be a place that is academically stimulating for every student, but also a place to come together, relax, enjoy a good book, a place to gather socially. BLA is unlike any high school library because it is just that – a place where young students can come together to discuss new ideas. Under her management our library a 33,000sq ft facility was built with her vision. I was very lucky to have had such a library for my high school career and few students ever get this privilege. Lucy works hard to ensure that every student has a reason to know and appreciate the space they work in. She is constantly looking for new ideas to make the library a place to learn, research, and grow. She encourages lectures, concerts, group meetings, teaches

German classes afterschool, orders high quality materials for the library (she recently petitioned to get Rosetta Stone for the collection). She trusted me enough to give me the responsibility of opening and running a video editing lab for student and staff use. Lucy also ensures that her library support staff is a dynamic, friendly and very well trained staff.

**5. How has the individual demonstrated leadership in the school community or the profession?**

When many would shy away from the responsibility of running the district's libraries and being the principal investigator for a grant, Lucy took it head on. With her vision, Biblioteca Las Americas in collaboration with the National Library of Medicine, run the ¡VIVA! (Vital Information for a Virtual Age) Peer Tutor Project. The program trains high school students on online resources for community health outreach. Students teach communities how to use MedlinePlus.gov to access free and reliable health information online. Health literacy in the lower Rio Grande Valley of South Texas is one of the lowest in the nation, and the project's long term goals are to raise health literacy levels amongst our predominately Hispanic population. As a former peer tutor I can attest to the impact of this program in our community. Through outreach I have met people that are so impressed with the quality of the website that they thank the peer tutors profusely for the work that they do. Peer tutors do community outreach at their school, in local clinics, hospitals, health fairs and other community venues. In 2006 Biblioteca Las Americas was awarded the National School Library Media Program of the Year.