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Beyond the Horizon: Perspectives That Inform Our Professional Future

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Many of our daily conversations with friends, family, and colleagues involve astonishment at how quickly the world changes day to day. When I (Lucy) see an advertisement for the thirty-year anniversary of *Princess Bride*, for example, or answer my daughter's questions about what it was like to grow up in the eighties and nineties, it hits me that our present reality looks nothing like what I imagined as a college student or even as a young classroom teacher. As Susan and I brainstormed for this issue, we concluded that school librarians seem to experience these feelings and changes in hyperspeed. Not only do we swivel, adapt, morph, add on new skills, rebrand—we attempt to do so ahead of the curve. We futurecast during our present program implementation. The upcoming AASL National Conference theme "Beyond the Horizon" is an apt descriptor for the way school librarians scan the educational landscape, what they are looking for, what they are moving toward.

Ryan Lee, a U.S. Air Force service member, typically begins his futurecasting process by "compiling sources from various fields (technical data, economic trends, historical facts, expert opinions, social and cultural data, and so on) on the topic of interest" (2016, 94). When Susan and I discussed this *KQ* issue, it became clear we needed Lee's approach: "Beyond the Horizon" had to mean more than the technology and the digital shift taking place in school libraries. It had to include a collection of data points on student access, equity, literacy, media bias, and more.

For this issue we worked to compile information on the multiple perspectives and challenges our profession will face five, ten, and fifteen years down the road. We spoke with school librarians, parents and teachers, and media bias and adolescent literacy experts. The features presented here invite you to futurecast by exploring varied perspectives and conversations. Use these data points and sources to determine how your program will move forward. How do these ideas color your view of the profession beyond the 2018 horizon?

It is not enough to keep abreast of current issues, trends, technological innovations, and the ever-changing educational landscape in which we work. We must keep abreast of these innovations while remembering that there are foundational beliefs about what we do as school librarians and why we do these things. These foundational beliefs and underlying truths will endure in spite of rapid change in the world around us, and should always inform how we move forward as a profession. In this issue we asked our writers to think about what libraries must do to remain relevant, while becoming the indispensable educational spaces Doug Johnson described back in 1997.

Rachel Altobelli, a 2015–2016 Lilead Fellow and current director of library services and instructional materials, Albuquerque Public Schools, calls for us to step outside of our privilege and our comfort zones to ensure we are providing a truly inclusive and culturally responsive library collection and experience for our students. Her

perspective on how we can build library programs that address the needs of ALL our patrons is unique and enlightening.

Dr. Renee Hobbs, professor at the Harrington School of Communication and Media at the University of Rhode Island, writes about using conspiracy theories and fake news as engaging raw materials when we teach students to assess sources for their credibility. Students rely heavily on digital information sources and are exposed daily to ubiquitous social media outlets where anyone can present as an expert. Dr. Hobbs asks us to face conspiracy theories and misinformation sources head on with our students rather than dismissing these theories and sources outright.

Dr. Dustin Dooly, a classroom teacher and mother of a transracial family in Fort Smith, Arkansas, challenges school librarians to develop programs that help students to live multidimensional lives, recognizing perspectives, perceptions, and experiences beyond their own lived realities. She advocates explicitly for teaching and modeling how to build relationships and, thus, develop empathy. She recognizes that people—including students—tend to focus on media stories about people like themselves and discusses ways to help students break out of this habit. She also reminds us of the importance of recognizing our own implicit biases and how they could affect our teaching and delivery of services to some students.

Dr. Phillip Wilder, assistant professor of Adolescent Literacy at Clemson University, argues passionately for the recognition of literacy as a social and cultural practice. He points out that the more narrow our definition of literacy, the more students we inadvertently ostracize. Dr. Wilder's article describes how we can broaden our approach to literacy development by using texts beyond print as tools for literate thinking. Both Dr. Dooly's and Dr. Wilder's features serve as calls for our profession to look beyond the tools and the resources, as well as our own preconceived notions, to deliver a more culturally responsive and inclusive program in which our students and patrons find themselves honored and represented.

Finally, James Allen, a K–12 school librarian in Eminence, Kentucky, describes what is possible in a school library that changes gradually and organically to meet the evolving needs of its user population. His use of corporate staples such as genius hour and passion projects along with a community-centered and service-minded approach to school librarianship will inspire you! What he has been able to accomplish in a tiny corner of Kentucky should remind us all of what can be accomplished if we look past the barriers and think in terms of the possible.

We encourage you to delve into these features and the other resources available in this issue of *KQ.* We invite you to consider and wrestle with the ideas and challenges issued by this group of authors, so that you can craft a vision for your school library program for 2017, 2027, and beyond.

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