We live the future now. Students starting Kindergarten in September 2018 will graduate in June 2032. Not science fiction—rather, a school librarian’s call to action. Our students have no time for our prevarication or procrastination.

This issue invites us to consider the Future of School Libraries. None of us can know the future, but we can provide some insights based on our best deep thinking. One thing we do know is that future-focused education is clearly about so much more than technology integration. We also know that the future is a process of continual innovation and incremental improvement.

Brian Glazer, former principal of Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology in Fairfax, Virginia, the often-ranked #1 high school in the nation, mused in a letter on the school’s website that we must “get comfortable with imperfection in pursuit of innovation.” The future arrives with unexpected demands to meet the ever-changing needs of our students’ realities. The future may be thought of as a series of alternatives from which we (and our students) choose.

I’ve observed over time that enlightened leadership is critical to significant positive impact on learning. Without widely shared leadership, innovation stagnates, the professional learning community fragments, and we lose sight of individual students in favor of top-down compliance and convenience. Teachers willing to leave their egos at the door and leap naked into the uncertain void of change depend on leaders willing to model that leap and value the hard work of teaching.

Finally, the vision that motivates us has significant influence on our ever-changing destination. All members of the school must be able to articulate what students need from their education today. All members must value the experience of every individual student and support change in that student’s world.

In my role as district chair for secondary library services, my steering committee and I have led a two-year process for our K–12 school librarians to envision the future of their libraries and their practice. The process has been eye-opening for us all as we adopted the Future Ready Librarians Framework (available at <http://futureready.org/program-overview/librarians>).

What is the future of school libraries in the midst of this accelerated educational change? Ideas for this issue of *Knowledge Quest* come from thinkers and doers whose work I follow and respect. I’ve attempted to keep the conversation practical and at ground level because it’s not always easy to determine the next step in your particular progression in your particular school library.

Curl up in your favorite reading chair with a cup of coffee and an open mind as you read through this issue. Imagine the possible future...

We begin with Mark Ray, former school librarian and current director of innovation and library services in Vancouver (WA) Public Schools. He is an integral driver of the Future Ready Schools initiative. Mark’s article picks up on Simon Sinek’s TED Talk suggesting that “People don’t buy what you do...they buy why you do it” (2009). Mark talks about the *why we do it* for school
The American School of Bombay (ASB) <www.asbindia.org> is a vanguard school in 21st-century future-focused education. Craig Johnson, its acclaimed superintendent (Special Feature 2016), and his team talk about how school libraries work at this Pre-K–12 international school. Decentralized out of the traditional library space to where they are most needed, collaboration spaces, makerspaces, and book pods have popped up all over the school. The iCommons concept supports the ASB 21st-century vision and provides us with a picture of a possible evolution of school libraries.

Burgeoning urban schools have their own issues that may stir something in your heart as an educator and move you to reach out in ways you may not have considered before. These authors challenge us to teach to what individual students need rather than to the test. Kristal and Musetta get out of their comfort zones and consider what individual students need rather than to the test. Mary Keeling, supervisor of school library services in Newport News (VA) Public Schools and chair of AASL’s Standards Implementation Task Force, offers some perspective. Mary uses AASL’s new National School Library Standards to frame cultural competence and culturally relevant instruction in the urban setting. Her examination encourages us to internalize the new standards in ways that encourage student success across many cultural variables.

For those who cannot wrap their heads around the thinking-forward idea, Lee Watanabe Crockett, coauthor of the book Literacy Is Not Enough and president of the Global Digital Citizen Foundation, has written a feature for you. He draws our focus back into our immediate practice, providing insights on teaching information fluency and global digital citizenship so that students can apply essential skills in the future. He brings a global perspective and urgency to our daily practice.

Kristal Jaaskelainen, ELA master teacher and instructional coach in an alternative education setting, and her colleague Musetta Deneen, an experienced Spanish teacher at the same school, recognize the school library’s expanded role and partnership with other educators. Their practical advice and examples of collaboration may stir something in your heart as an educator and move you to reach out in ways you may not have considered before. These authors challenge us to teach to what individual students need rather than to the test. Kristal and Musetta get out of their comfort zones and persist until they find just the right strategy for each student, often in collaboration with the school librarian.

Works Cited:

Sara Duvall is chair of the 6–12 Library Program Department, Ann Arbor (MI) Public Schools, and is an enthusiastic supporter of ALA’s Center for the Future of Libraries. In 2011 she and two colleagues (Peter Pasque and Kristal Jaaskelainen) won the Gale/Cengage TEAMS Award for an ongoing collaborative project to integrate Google Tools into instruction and learning at Skyline High School in Ann Arbor. She blogs at <www.a2sarahduvall.com>.

Sometimes big-picture thinking and watching for trends can be overwhelming. We can thank our comprehensive eyes and ears Miguel Figueroa, director of ALA’s Center for the Future of Libraries, for his constant scanning for reporting on issues that affect library services. He’s the force behind the Libraries of the Future—Read for Later blog <www.ala.org/tools/future/blog> and an expert in the thinking-forward mindset. In his feature he shares his insights and practical advice.

Mary Keeling, supervisor of school library services in Newport News (VA) Public