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NEW CONTENT

A 21st-Century Approach to School Librarian Evaluation

Patricia Owen walks viewers through AASL’s evaluation workbook—suggested readings, action tips, and evidence collection—to help school librarians engage in rigorous self-evaluation and to shape school administrator evaluations.

Join the Common Core Conversation

Kristina Holzweiss is creator of the growing Common Core Conversation group on Edmodo and the Common Core Conversation website. Learn about these valuable resources and how to join other educators in the conversation.

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Your eLearning Laboratory: Content, Collaboration, Community

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UPCOMING EVENTS

A School Librarian’s Role in Preventing Sexting and Cyberbullying
Thursday, March 28 | 6:00 p.m. CST

Laurie Nathan will address ongoing Internet safety issues affecting children, tweens, and teens, such as sexting and cyberbullying. Media stories and statistics will be used throughout the webinar to illustrate these behaviors. Participants will also learn about free safety resources from NetSmartz Workshop that are easily implemented to help teach students how to stay safer online.

Library Spaces for 21st-Century Learners
Wednesday, April 3, 2013 | 10:30 a.m. | 12:30 p.m. | 2:30 p.m. CST

Join AASL for a 30-minute Lunch ‘n’ Learn webinar. Each session will present the same information and broadcast LIVE at three times, so you can be sure to catch one session in your time zone! Times listed above are Central Time. To see all time zones, visit www.ala.org/aasl/ecollab/upcoming.

Margaret Sullivan will discuss concepts for conducting a needs assessment for your school library space. This webinar will focus on observation techniques found in chapter 5 of AASL’s newest publication, Library Spaces for 21st-Century Learners: A Planning Guide for Creating New School Library Concepts.

This webinar is open-access.

To register for upcoming webinars, visit www.ala.org/aasl/ecollab
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For centuries, being an advisor and providing training to people beginning their careers has been part of many trades and professions. During the Middles Ages, all-powerful guilds had strict rules for lengthy apprenticeships, followed by journeyman service, and, finally, master status. Given that this custom continues, exactly what does it mean to be a mentor in 2013? In some respects, the old top-down model is still followed today. For example, modern-day academia maintains a structure through which one moves from adjunct, to instructor, lecturer, assistant, associate, and, finally, full professor status. And along the way, those pursuing a career at the college or university level are generally supported and assisted by senior faculty members with tenure status. The fields of medicine and law also have distinct phases of study, clinical practice, and internship wherein the more senior members of a profession instruct and advise those joining their ranks.

Likewise, in the K–12 arena, we continue to provide pre-service opportunities via internships and practicum experiences that assign student teachers to supervising or cooperating teachers. Once hired, a rookie educator is sometimes offered mentoring, though the form varies from school to school, district to district, and state to state. A mentor program may be as simple as assigning a veteran to assist a new teacher. This veteran introduces the newbie to the rest of the faculty, conducts a cursory tour of the building, gives a one-on-one demonstration of how to use the copy machine, and issues a reminder that the building secretary and the custodian are really in charge. Or, as you will read in this issue of *KQ*, a mentor program can be much more formal and effective, helping the beginning teacher or school librarian to develop successful instructional strategies through regularly scheduled opportunities for mentors to connect with and/or observe novices. These structured situations also call for reflective practice and often include joint professional development.

Nonetheless, while conceding that today’s educational institutions, to a greater or lesser degree, continue to follow time-honored induction practices, we must also note that, as Bob Dylan sang, “…the times, they are a changin’…” (1963). In some instances, mentoring in the 21st-century is a far cry from what has been the norm for hundreds of years.

Not Just Top-Down Anymore

Obviously, the traditional model still has its place. However, the reality is that, increasingly, school librarians recognize that individuals with more years of practice are not the only persons capable of serving as mentors! In the 21st century, we benefit from social media and Web 2.0 tools that make lateral mentoring and bottom-up mentoring possible.

We also recognize that school librarians just entering the profession bring with them fresh ideas,

When it comes to mentoring, it is critical for all of us to recognize that any of us (and any of our students!) can serve as mentor at any time and to anyone.

**Mentoring in the 21st Century**

*Susan D. Ballard, 2012–13 AASL President | sdballard@comcast.net*

*President’s Column*

*When it comes to mentoring, it is critical for all of us to recognize that any of us (and any of our students!) can serve as mentor at any time and to anyone.*
perspectives, and skill sets. In fact, in some areas, especially teaching skills for inquiry learning and integrating technology with the curriculum, recent grads of LIS programs have stronger skill sets than more experienced school librarians. Many LIS programs spotlight the use of digital resources to ensure that school librarians are able to deal with inquiry in the digital age. Recent graduates can serve as “reverse” mentors and help bring veteran school librarians up to date with current and emerging trends to improve the delivery of services and instruction.

However, in a profession where too often we may be the only one of our species in a school, face-to-face one-to-one mentoring, reverse or otherwise, is difficult to implement. Fortunately, as several authors in this issue point out, we can use the Web to expose all members of our profession to divergent thinking and points of view, as well as to provide access to a wealth of how-to information and advice. Through our involvement with professional associations and development of personal learning networks, we can participate in a wide variety of activities and within diverse circles of interest. We can use the Web 24–7–365 to connect with savvy school librarians who generously offer their take on how to optimize use of new tools and resources to improve our practice. These school librarians and other educators engage us in a continual professional conversation and reflection via conferences, workshops, seminars, blogs, wikis, webinars, and other social and collaboration tools.

Generation Gap?

We can look at many wonderful examples of sharing, learning, and growing in the profession. (In fact, some of these examples are highlighted in this issue of KQ.) This being the case, I must nonetheless admit that sometimes I have been a bit concerned that the so-called generation gap is alive and well, and living in school library-land. Sometimes I hear complaints about “old bun-heads” who need to move along because they are viewed as resistant to truly meeting the needs of today’s students and teachers in flexible learning environments. Conversely, seasoned school librarians, who have worked long and hard to continually evolve—almost always while fighting budget battles—are sometimes resentful of what appears to be newbies’ dismissive attitude toward maintaining some standards and protocols. Likewise, veterans can get a little cranky when they feel that, because they haven’t tried or used every new app, they are perceived as irrelevant.

Ultimately, the real issue is not about the length of time one has been a school librarian, but rather one’s attitude toward lifelong learning and supporting the needs of 21st-century learners. Can we afford to be dismissive of any talent and expertise that can help us to work smarter—especially in an age of dwindling budgets—and improve learning outcomes for our students, while maintaining high standards for ourselves and for learners?

Drawing on the Best of the Past and Present

When it comes to mentoring, it is critical for all of us to recognize that any of us (and any of our students!) can serve as a mentor at any time and to anyone based on a level of understanding and competency in any particular area. And it is equally critical to acknowledge that maintaining mutual regard and respect for one another is essential, regardless of where we fall on the years-of-service spectrum.

Collaborative partnerships that place needs of our students first can help us build on the strengths of 20th-century school librarianship as we adopt the best of the 21st-century attitudes and tools to “ensure that students and staff are effective users of ideas and information.” We can maintain our focus on the reason we became school librarians—because we know we can empower “students to be critical thinkers, enthusiastic readers, skillful researchers, and ethical users of information” (AASL 2009, 8).

Susan D. Ballard is the president of AASL. She is a school library media educator and consultant, and an adjunct professor in the Simmons College GSLIS/ITL program.

Works Cited:

Visit Knowledge Quest Online at <www.ala.org/aasl/knowledgequest> for additional resources and information about mentoring and collaboration.
An essential step in leading educational change is accomplished when school librarians form collaborative partnerships among administrators, teachers, other librarians, and students. When school librarians lead efforts for collaborative partnerships, the outcomes raise skill levels (students’ and educators’), change school culture, and transform learning into meaningful large-scale reform. A powerful consequence of professional collaboration is the opportunity for multiple levels of mentoring throughout the school. Infusing formal and informal mentoring initiates change to the learning environment. Michael Fullan has stated that when standards of practice combine with cultural change, the combination generates powerfully connected forces resulting in change (Fullan 2007, 292).

Empowering Learners: Guidelines for School Library Programs provides standards of best practice designed to change school culture and direct empowered learners toward success in the context of 21st-century needs. Embedded in these guidelines are targets requiring school librarians to lead change by modeling best practices for the school community. Collaboration, mentoring, and reciprocity undergird the concept of shared learning during which school librarians partner with students and teachers. These best practices are powerfully connected forces driving relevance and change to library programs and learning.

Since school librarians have promoted collaboration since the late 1980s, exploring collaborative partnerships in 2013 may seem unnecessary. However, our view is that the authors in this issue of Knowledge Quest have gone deeper than focusing only on working with teachers on integrated lessons. Instead, the authors explore collaboration as a function of program administration and mentoring that impact professionalism and instruction. Simultaneous mentoring and reverse mentoring—collaborative partnerships—assist new hires while benefiting experienced librarians.

In addition, school librarians and teachers must respond to a new generation of learners who thrive on shared learning. Effective instruction in the 21st century requires approaches in which shared learning among teachers, students, and community members solves essential questions. By using technology, as well as face-to-face mentoring practices, school librarians—through leadership of the school library program—can empower learners.

Today’s schools are complex environments where instructional changes have the potential to create engaging learning opportunities for students. School librarians know that collaborative partnerships improve skills and foster development of new habits of learning for teachers and students. The daily reinforcing of these skills, when placed into context of educational change, results in meaningful reform. Read through the articles in this issue. They provide strong ideas, articulate practical implementation, and place collaborative partnerships into the context of leadership of the library program.
Michael Fullan has stated that the new professionalism is collaborative, open, and outward-looking (2007, 297). Reciprocity, shared learning, and mentoring form collaborative partnerships that keep the school library program relevant and essential. For school librarians, collaborative partnerships are a facet of the new professionalism needed to meet the needs of 21st-century learners.

The theme of this issue, “Mentoring through Partnerships,” covers diverse topics related to mentoring as it impacts school librarians, teachers, and students. This Knowledge Quest issue is packed with tested tips and strategies for school librarians to implement as they effectively lead their library programs and educational change.

Personal Experience
We’d each like to share some personal thoughts on mentoring.

Melissa

The topic of mentors and mentoring is one that is dear to my heart. I really believe I would not be where I am today without the mentoring of some truly phenomenal school librarians! When studying for my Master’s degree, my Administration of the School Library course required me to join not only the state organization, but also AASL, the national organization for school librarians. I remember thinking that, as a full-time student with no real income, I couldn’t afford these memberships. But who knew that the $35 I spent on my student membership to AASL would change my life! The support and mentoring from other school librarians I met through AASL encouraged me to step up and take on leadership roles in my school and implement a truly collaborative school library program. The professional learning from conferences, workshops, and journal articles from AASL kept me current on the latest instructional uses for technology, which I then shared with teachers and students. The encouragement from mentors gave me the nudge I needed to expand my participation in AASL and ALA.

Finally, as a result of mentoring from Dr. Nancy Everhart, I entered the doctoral program at Florida State University, and now today I am teaching and preparing future school librarians.

Ann

In Carmen Agra Deedy’s 1994 book The Library Dragon the librarian slips into scorching practices without the benefit of a role model. Thank heavens that nearsighted Molly Brickmeyer came by the library and demonstrated best practices for the library dragon, thus transforming Miss Lotta Scales into a helpful and kind librarian. For me, so many Molly Brickmeys—in the form of professors and librarians—influenced my professional practice by imparting their wisdom, sharing their understanding, making key points, and giving me courage over the past 30-plus years. In short, every librarian, AASL staff member, AASL member, and state library leader has served as a mentor to me along the way.

Mentoring is not always about the job; it is lonely in the school building or at the district level being one of a kind. Two very special district supervisors and I have formed ultimate collaborative partnerships. We are the go-to people for each other. We give each other support in so many ways. Sometimes it is just the right word for a document that needs to go to the superintendent; other times it is laughter that provides a reality check and the camaraderie of sharing ideas, training modules, and written or unwritten policy issues over lunch. Ann Fondren from Spotsylvania County, Virginia, and
Julie Tate from Hanover County, Virginia, and I are collaborative partners who mentor and guide each other via e-mail, phone calls, and face-to-face conversations. Wherever you are, find a library colleague with whom to collaborate. You will never turn into the library dragon with friends to keep you focused on what really matters.

Ann M. Martin is an educational specialist in Library Services for the Henrico County Public Schools in Virginia. She is a past president of AASL and author of Seven Steps to an Award Winning School Library Program (2012). She has received many awards including the Longwood University Professionals Who Made a Difference Award (2008), AASL National School Library Media Program of the Year (2002), and Virginia Tech Excellence in Education Award (2000). Ann’s school district, Henrico County Public Schools, was one of three AASL National School Library Program of the Year Award winners in 2011.

Melissa P. Johnston is an Assistant Professor at The University of Alabama in the School of Library and Information Studies, where she coordinates the school library media certification program. Johnston worked as a school librarian for 13 years in Georgia before completing her PhD at Florida State University’s School of Library & Information Studies. Johnston’s research interests include school librarians as leaders, the school librarian’s role in technology integration, and the education of future school librarians. She is a monthly contributor to the blog Building a Culture of Collaboration: <http://cultureofcollaboration.edublogs.org>.

Works Cited:

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Science

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APRIL IS SCHOOL LIBRARY MONTH

STUDENT VIDEO CONTEST

WHAT DOES COMMUNITY LOOK LIKE IN YOUR SCHOOL?
Is it learning together? Working toward a common goal?
Building school spirit? How does your school library program promote community?

Student videos should reflect how the school library connects to this year’s School Library Month theme “Communities matter @ your library.” Submissions should visually illustrate how the school library program fosters a sense of community in their school. Contestants are urged to unleash their creativity and just have fun! Use humor, drama, music, special effects—anything to help showcase your amazing school library.

Students may submit their videos via SchoolTube.com for a chance to win. The deadline for submissions is March 19, 2013. The winning entries will be announced April 1. For more information on contest rules and guidelines, visit www.ala.org/aasl/slm.

Decorate your library or library website with School Library Month themed posters and web graphics!

Start promoting your library program activities early! Visit the ALA Store today to get your 2013 School Library Month materials.

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MENTORING THROUGH

COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

UNTIL THE END OF TIME...
Until the end of time”...Yes, we could hardly believe those words when we saw them in the advising section of our university’s student-information system, but there they were. We’re not sure if they are a default setting in the system or a placeholder that the IT folks put in, but this phrase perfectly reflects what we do in our university’s School Library Media Preparation program. The relationship that we have with our students can truly be described as a lifelong partnership of learning.

Our graduate students are, for the most part, nontraditional adult learners. They are teachers who have decided that they want to become school librarians, expanding their spheres of influence exponentially. They are professionals who have decided that they want to help students become “critical thinkers, enthusiastic readers, skillful researchers, and ethical users of information” (AASL 2009, 8). They bring much to their coursework and to the program—a wealth of educational experience and rich life experiences.

The time they spend in graduate study with us is about mastery of the content that they need to know to be effective school librarians; it’s about developing the knowledge and skills that will help them to be leaders, instructional partners, information specialists, teachers, and program administrators (AASL 2009, 16–18). But it’s also about helping them develop the dispositions necessary to be successful in the field.

Our job as professors in the school librarian preparation program is to provide learning opportunities for our students in order that they might themselves develop into productive school library leaders.

Frances Reeve
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Audrey P. Church
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Our philosophy of practice is closely aligned with Ruth Ash and Maurice Persall’s Formative Leadership Theory: “[l]eadership is not role-specific, reserved only for administrators; rather the job of the leader is to fashion learning opportunities for faculty and staff in order that they might themselves develop into productive leaders.” Our job as professors in the school librarian preparation program is to provide learning opportunities for our students in order that they might themselves develop into productive school library leaders. From the point of first contact, we provide scaffolding. We promote collaboration; we model professionalism; and we practice mentoring.
Mentoring is More Than Advising

When students are admitted to our program, they are assigned an advisor. As they progress through their coursework, we certainly advise them—which courses to take, when to take them, when to sign up for clinical experience, when to take their comprehensive exams, and so on. Cassidy R. Sugimoto (2012) asserts that, for LIS Doctoral education, mentoring is more than advising, and we believe this to be true at the Master’s level as well. We advise, but more than that, we mentor. We develop a personal relationship with each of our students. As one of our graduates commented in an e-mail:

You all watched and listened as I became a mother as well as a librarian. I just felt like I was having class with a friend, not necessarily a professor. I know I’m not the best or brightest student you’ve ever had, but you have always made me feel as if I could do anything. You make me want to be better and try harder. That’s made the program so enjoyable. It’s like a family.

We have been school librarians, and we know what’s involved. We know that being a school librarian is much more difficult than being a classroom teacher; that on any given day, a librarian will be pulled in a million different directions; that being a librarian can be a lonely job, especially for someone who is used to being a member of a department or a grade-level team. We work, throughout their coursework, to help students understand this and to help them develop a personal professional network consisting not only of us, as their professors, but also of their peers.

Making Connections with Peers

As graduate students, we each had the experience of sitting an entire semester in a course and, at the end of the semester, not knowing the names of our classmates. Because we understand how critically important networking in the school library field is, we deliberately work to help students make personal peer connections as they complete their coursework. In our hybrid courses, which combine online work with Saturday class sessions, we use everything from name tents to peer review of presentations to cooperative work groups to help students form those personal connections. In our fully online courses, introductory class blogs complete with photos and synchronous online class sessions allow students to connect with one another, and an “In the Hallway” discussion board forum provides them a space in which to interact at will, as they would in the hallway during breaks in a face-to-face class. As another graduate shared in an e-mail:

I am so grateful every day to have had the Longwood learning experience. It is not easy to decide in your late 30s to return to school for a Master’s degree while trying to manage a family and full-time job. From the very first class in my program, I began to form lifelong friendships with people from all over Virginia. I get excited every time I go to professional conferences because I will get to visit with these friends.

We have an advisees’ course in Blackboard so that we can communicate with our students easily, keep them informed, and, at the same time, provide them the virtual space where they can, once again, connect with other students in the program. While enrolled in the capstone course for the program, students are required to attend the state school librarians’ organization’s fall conference. They attend a first-timers’ breakfast where they connect with other first-time conference attendees and board members and are welcomed to the organization and to the field of school librarianship. We were happy to read in an e-mail from one of our graduates:
When I went to the fall VEMA conference, I was fully prepared to not know anyone and quietly go about the day. Then I ran into Frances in the hall, and got a big hug and a chat. Then I went up the escalator, and there was Audrey with another big hug and a chat. For a minute there I felt like an important person at the conference, and it completely brightened my day!

**Clinical Experience Opportunities**

Emphasizing the importance of the field experience, Josette Anne Lyders and Patricia Jane Wilson assert that "theoretical and practical learning are needed in approximately equal measure by all library students" (1991, 31). As our students finish their content coursework, they enroll in a three-credit, 200 clock-hour clinical experience. Although they are, for the most part, seasoned classroom teachers, during this clinical experience they have the opportunity to integrate their teaching skills with the content and theory that they've learned in their school library coursework and to apply what they've learned, and we are there to scaffold and mentor.

The clinical experience course syllabus provides the contract between our students and us and outlines requirements for the course: reflective journaling, collaborative lessons, development of a professional-growth plan and submission of artifacts to document mastery of standards. Surrounding these basic course requirements, however, is an almost individualized clinical experience for each student. Students not only submit written assignments but also teach a collaborative lesson that one of us observes. Our students are located across the state...
of Virginia. We’ve observed in western-most Lee County, across the Chesapeake Bay in Accomack County, to the north in Loudoun County, to the south in Halifax County, and all points in between.

For the student this observation visit is a culminating, validating event. It brings closure to coursework and confidence in readiness for the job ahead.

For us the benefits are tremendous. Visiting in school libraries keeps us connected to the reality of 21st-century school librarianship; we don’t want to become those “LIS professors [who] are out of touch with true practice” (Stephens 2011, 38).

Michael Stephens asserts that “the mentoring should go both ways. Profs should get on the front lines every so often with the person they’re mentoring—that way, both learn” (2011, 38), and we could not agree more. In fact, we’ve learned firsthand that mentoring can be mutually beneficial.

Beyond Coursework

As students complete their coursework, we work to help them to internalize the professional dispositions they need to be successful practitioners. We work with them to develop leadership skills, and we encourage them to participate actively in professional organizations by attending conferences, serving on committees, and submitting presentation proposals. We scaffold our students by copresenting conference sessions and coauthoring articles. Our graduates appreciate this help. For example, one wrote in an e-mail:

Audrey and Frances have both given me their support as I volunteered to help in VEMA as a director-elect two years ago. Frances sent me e-mails while I was preparing for the conference, offering encouragement. And, of course, who was the first to respond to my e-mail about evaluations? The answer is Audrey Church, with a note that made me proud to be a librarian of Longwood University tutelage.

And they go on to do great things! They present at state and national conferences; we are in the audience not only giving them kudos and glowing with pride but also learning from them. They serve as supervising librarians for our current clinical experience students, and we enjoy the “…benefits to be gained from professional partnership between the practicing school librarian and the university professor” (Lyders and Wilson 1991, 35). Sometimes we experience total role reversal as we contact a graduate to ask: “How does this work?” “How do you use this particular program?” Or, “What strategy have you found to be most effective in this situation?” As Aniko Halverson Nijhoff relates, “…turning to my former mentee for advice has shown me a new ideal to which mentorship can aspire: We can learn from, and depend on, each other” (2011, 29).

Each year at our state’s fall conference, we host a student/alumni event. This activity allows us to reconnect with alumni and them to reconnect with each other. It also offers the opportunity for current students to meet with program graduates. New mentor/mentee relationships often develop.

We maintain an alumni e-mail distribution list, which we use to share information about professional development events and job openings. We’ve been known to use it to appeal for assistance as well. For example, as we prepared to highlight our program for the college’s accreditation visit last fall, we sent out a request to alumni for “program stories” depicting activities in their school libraries—in less than 10 days, we had over 100 responses, complete with photos, showing 21st-century school libraries filled with K–12 students actively engaged in learning.

Until the End of Time

Elizabeth A. Buchanan, Sarah E. Myers, and Sherrie Langston Hardin suggest:
"A mentor provides support, encouragement, friendship, and is a person with whom to share joys, frustrations, and feelings."

"A mentor offers professional development advice and information and serves as an intellectual resource" (2005, 7–8).

We would agree on both counts and would argue that the mentoring that we do for our graduate students returns to us tenfold. Our university colleagues, even those in our own education department, don’t seem to quite understand the unending connection that we have to our graduates. Once they graduate, they are, truly, colleagues for life. One recent graduate noted:

Thanks so much for all your support and encouragement these past three years at Longwood. You’ve been an outstanding advisor, and I truly appreciate the time and effort you’ve invested in my progress and for always believing in me. I look forward to seeing you at many library events in the future and wish you all the best.

We always look forward (with pleasure!) to interacting with our former students who have become peers. We are all part of the larger community of school librarians. Mentors. Mentees. It’s all about mentoring, community, collaboration, and caring…until the end of time.

Frances Reeve is an associate professor of school library media at Longwood University in Farmville, Virginia. She is coauthor of “Prove It! Using Data to Advocate for School Library Media Programs” in Educational Media and Technology Yearbook, 2009. She is currently coadministrator of the AASL Blog and president of her state organization, the Virginia Association of School Librarians.

Audrey P. Church is an associate professor of school library media at Longwood University in Farmville, Virginia. She is the author of Leverage Your Library Program to Raise Test Scores (Linworth 2003), “The Instructional Role of Library Media Specialists as Perceived by Elementary School Principals” (SLMR 2008), and “Secondary School Principals’ Perceptions of the School Librarian’s Instructional Role” (SLMR 2010). She currently serves as the Educators of School Librarians Section representative to the AASL Board of Directors.

Works Cited:


AN EFFECTIVE MENTORING PROGRAM FOR SCHOOL LIBRARIES
All LIS programs help pre-service school librarians learn the fundamentals of librarianship, and many programs also help pre-service librarians develop their skill sets through internships. However, no LIS program can totally prepare new school librarians for their (often) solo work in the trenches, and as situations arise during new librarians’ first year, support is needed. Without such ongoing support, many new librarians in some districts move on after their first year. School divisions challenged with recruiting and retaining the best applicants to fill library vacancies can offer assistance by developing an effective support program to help mentor professionals new to the field of school librarianship.

In Henrico County (VA) Public Schools (HCPS) has developed a mentoring program using collaborative practices; a similar program can turn around other districts that may be seeing new hires leaving the profession after only a few years on the job. A formal mentoring program, designed specifically for school librarians, will promote professional collaborative partnerships and relationships in school libraries. The carefully crafted and implemented mentor program at HCPS, which has evolved over the years, has increased librarianship longevity and, ultimately, increased student achievement.

In 2010, Marion Herbert interviewed Joyce Ricks and Susan Howe, school librarians in HCPS. Herbert reported that newly hired librarians had a very low retention rate; HCPS retained only 56 percent of its new library recruits (2010). No formal method of induction was provided; no tried-and-true plan or system of support was in place for new librarians.

In 2004 several seasoned school librarians informally took the fledglings under their wings, trying to assist new librarians by suggesting various solutions to the inevitable problems that arose. Contact was by phone and e-mail. This assistance was better than nothing, but, without the benefits of having a formal mentor, new librarians were sometimes left to solve problems on their own—especially if they didn’t reach out to their more-experienced colleagues. Ann Martin, education specialist for HCPS (and 2009 AASL president), agreed that librarians were not receiving the vital support needed to improve the district’s declining retention rate and that action was needed. By 2005, the Collaborating Partners program in Henrico was launched to help novice librarians be more successful in their first year of teaching. Action may be needed in your district, too.

What Actions Can You Take?

I agree with Michele Israel’s notion that building a strong mentoring relationship includes having compassion and a deep understanding for the mentee (2002). Being skilled at reflective listening and coaching are also necessary attributes for strong mentors. The mentor becomes the coach and trusted friend to his or her protégé. Many frequently asked questions must be answered when developing a plan of action for mentoring new school librarians. These questions include:

- How will the program be coordinated and by whom?
- How are partners matched and trained?
- What are responsibilities, characteristics, and expectations of mentors and mentees?
- What are specific benefits of a mentor program?
- Does mentoring work?
- And, how is the program evaluated?
The answers to these questions are vital. They must be generated and answered at the onset of planning for a mentoring model.

First and foremost, the program must be strongly supported at the district level. The library supervisor must work closely with the program’s coordinators to ensure the mission and function of the program are clearly defined and implemented. In Henrico, Ann Martin collaborated with program coordinators to design, plan, and conduct formal training for new school librarians and their mentors. Because a successful program must provide training documents, offer additional assistance with classroom management, and articulate strategies for program management and implementation, these were developed in HCPS.

An effective mentor program is designed to connect seasoned and new school librarians. It must provide mentors willing to share experiences, helping all to grow professionally. In HCPS, Ann Martin and coordinators Susan Howe and I, mutually agreed on mentoring pairs and implementation procedures. Mentors and mentees are partnered based on their interests, goals, similar school populations, and geographical proximity of their schools. The mentors are contacted and asked to commit to a yearlong position of support. Mentors must have a genuine interest in helping school librarians who are new to the profession.

The mentoring program in Henrico County begins with an annual kickoff event where mentees and mentors formally meet each other. The partners agree to monthly meetings where they share ideas, frustrations, and questions with one another. The mentors are required to visit and observe the novice librarians on several occasions. In addition, the new librarians are invited to observe their mentors. This visit provides an inside look at the mentor’s library. This face-to-face interaction may trigger discussions about the physical structure, features, and design of school libraries and, more importantly, discussions about the role that librarians play as contributing members of the school program.

Both mentor and mentee agree to invest a considerable amount of time and effort, making the relationship work for the common goals of all.

Both mentor and mentee agree to invest a considerable amount of time and effort, making the relationship work for the common goals of all. Both partners maintain a contact log and are willing to share files, lessons, and personal job-related experiences. In meetings, the mentee discusses his or her questions and concerns with the mentor. In return, the mentor offers advice, support, and encouragement. Open and honest communication is paramount to maintain a free flow and exchange of ideas and information. Open dialogue is a building block for a successful mentoring relationship. It is also important to remember that communication between the mentee and mentor must be kept confidential.

Discussing goals and expectations for the partnership is necessary and central for maintaining a mentoring relationship. Mentees are expected to communicate with their mentors several times during each month. The coordinators and members of the mentoring program meet regularly to discuss topics of importance and interest. Various topics about budgeting, collection development, program management, and effective library instruction are included.

From these meetings, new librarians will move through the developmental stages of the job as they learn to become experts. During this first year, the seasoned school librarian helps the new librarian to survive and transition into his or her new position.

What Makes a Library Mentor Program Successful?

For a successful mentoring program to develop, a strong mission statement is needed to move the direction of the program forward. The mission statement for Henrico’s Collaborating Partners is to provide “professional collaboration” between new and existing librarians through frequent conferences and reviews of teaching and learning, information access, and program administration processes (Henrico 2006). Various function statements identify vital goals to support the mission statement. Two important goals include recognizing and accepting responsibility for the role of a mentor and forming a professional relationship where both the mentor and mentee are learning through a reciprocal exchange.
A successful collaboration model for school librarians is structured, with well-defined characteristics. A key for an effective mentoring program includes an extensive handbook with clearly outlined objectives. The handbook defines the relationships and responsibilities of all parties involved. Two of four valuable outcomes in Henrico’s handbook include: "(a) The mentors will assist, guide, and coach toward skill level improvement” and ”(b) Attain sustained growth by analyzing individual and collegial experiences as they relate to learning and teaching, information access, and program administration” (2006, 2). Specific documents in the program’s handbook are also valuable additions; among them are:

- Librarian self-evaluation form
- List of necessary actions to be performed at the start of the year
- Instructional responsibilities for the 21st century librarian
- Directions for completing an annual professional growth plan
- Checklist of "look-fors" in a quality school library program
- Mentor/Mentee communication log
- List of end-of-the-year tasks
- Mentoring program evaluation form

Providing these essential documents gives the novice librarian a sense of structure and direction. These policies and procedures are essential components for a mentoring program.

**Benefits of Mentoring**

A successful mentoring program benefits both collaborating partners. The beginning librarian receives encouragement, support, and guidance. The novice school librarians meet other professionals, engage in networking opportunities, and develop confidence in themselves to work in a school setting. They also receive help with honing their skills in teaching and curriculum development. Mentoring helps in the development of management and administrative skills, and allows for the opportunity to discuss educational issues that are related to developing an effective school library program. During the partnership, the novices receive honest and constructive feedback, which is used to improve the quality of their school library programs. As for the mentors, seasoned librarians, the benefits include rejuvenation and reflection on their own skills, abilities, and current practices. Mentors learn new ideas and techniques from the novices, while contributing support to the profession. In addition, mentors receive personal satisfaction from teaching and sharing their skills and experiences. Mentors, mentees, and the educational specialist play vital roles in developing a mentoring program. A quality program must be strongly supported at the district level. Ann Martin, educational specialist in HCPS, carefully watched over the program’s development. For the program to succeed, the district’s educational specialist must take a leadership role in the structure of the program. Key actions at the district level include:

(a) Meeting with mentor coordinators to discuss plans for mentor training.
(b) Meeting with mentor coordinators to select mentors and match them with their mentees.
(c) Providing training documents and reflective questions for group study.
(d) Meeting periodically with mentor coordinators to discuss progress of mentees.
(e) Providing end-of-year evaluative survey for data collection and review.
(f) Analyzing survey results and providing feedback to mentor coordinators.
(g) Providing follow-up on training strategies and requests from mentor coordinators.

Those involved in the mentoring process, whether mentor, mentee, or educational specialist, all benefit. Providing a formal mentoring program for librarians results in better school libraries, increasing librarianship longevity, and, ultimately, improved student achievement.

**Does the Program Perform Its Mission?**

How can you tell if a mentor program is working and fulfilling its mission? In Henrico, an extensive rubric (Henrico 2006) was carefully designed and created to define various standards of the program. This detailed rubric is also used...
as the model for evaluating the standards of the mentor program. The information outlined in the rubric’s framework includes activities, timelines, and specific dates for professional development of both the mentor and mentee.

A strong rubric aids in the development of action plans for continuous program improvements. A rubric shows the steps toward evaluating an existing program and assists in building goals and objectives for a more effective mentor program. I encourage you to evaluate your mentor program and its effectiveness on library-staff retention rates. You will want your mentor program to move from deficient or basic to proficient and on to an exemplary model, ensuring the best support is provided for new library hires and their mentors.

**How to Evaluate a Mentor Program**

The mentor and mentee are both responsible for evaluating their growth toward meeting the partnership’s goals and objectives. The library supervisor and program coordinators must provide support by checking with the pair and offering help when needed. The mentor and mentee both evaluate the program to see if it has been successful.

To effectively evaluate its mentor program, Henrico requires feedback in the form of an end-of-the-year survey. An electronic survey is given to new librarians with one year in the profession and mentoring librarians (who, at that point, always have at least four years of experience). Questions inquire about the experiences during the collaborative relationship. The questions on the survey focus on important aspects of the mentoring project as they relate to the needs of the collaborative partners. The library supervisor compiles and discusses the survey results with the program’s coordinators and participants. The program coordinators use the analyzed data for future decision-making and planning to improve the program.

**Proven Success**

With a mentoring program in place, Henrico has recorded a reduction in attrition of school librarians. Over the past five years 39 librarians were hired in Henrico. The retention rate for these new hires is 93 percent. Three librarians left to move out of state, and, of these, two are currently working as school librarians in the state to which they relocated.

It is safe to say that support provided by mentors can successfully move from informal buddy interactions to a professional mentoring program. Formal mentoring provides stability and creates a welcomed support system. New librarians who receive consistent interactions with mentors tend to have better job satisfaction, and, after two or three more years of experience, go on to become mentors and leaders themselves.

As mentors, we can help others master the skills needed to become successful school librarians. The greatest reward from mentoring comes in the form of building lasting and professional relationships. In Henrico, the Collaborating Partners program is facilitating professional relationships and successfully changing a district with declining retention rates to a district that recruits and retains valuable resources: its school librarians.

Joyce Jones Ricks has 36 years of service in education, with the past 22 years as elementary librarian. She is currently the librarian at Twin Hickory Elementary in Henrico County (VA) Public Schools. A longtime mentor, Joyce is passionate about mentoring those new to the profession. She has found mentoring to be highly rewarding and inspiring.
Works Cited:


Like many children of the ’70s, I was a great fan of the Star Wars movies. Good triumphed over evil, and Jedi Masters trained their students in the ways of The Force.

In the movie Star Wars VI: Return of the Jedi, the ancient Master Yoda advised us to always “pass on what you have learned” (IMDB.com n.d.) That’s good advice for school librarians, too.

While educators may not be engaged in a technology war, it can certainly seem that way to stressed teachers looking for a helping hand to keep current.
To gather ideas about how school librarians can provide this helping hand, in September 2012 I sent a Google Doc questionnaire “The Librarian as a Technology Mentor to Teachers” to school librarians in my district and to members of my professional learning network. The ideas and examples below were garnered from the responses and follow-up exchanges of e-mails. Also provided is a list of recommended online resources and examples, many of which are mentioned in this article.

Gwendolyn Brooks College Prep High School

In Chicago’s far south side is the beautiful campus of Gwendolyn Brooks High School. Students at this school, who are 80 percent low-income and primarily African American (85 percent) and Hispanic (12 percent), enjoy a beautiful library facility staffed by school librarian Regina Berg. Among her other strengths, Berg is a proven technology leader in her school.

In one recent successful unit, Berg collaborated with English teacher Chrishan David in the study of the classic Antigone. Students created VoiceThreads with images and lines from the play. To prepare, Berg created a pathfinder of electronic resources. During instruction, she taught the students how to make VoiceThreads and how to use EasyBib to cite their sources. She and David co-taught the entire unit. As an assessment piece, Berg taught the students how to create wikis, which they used to facilitate peer review.

When asked to reflect on the importance of the collaboration with the school librarian, David commented, “Working with Regina really took the stress out of creating a rigorous unit that integrated technologies I was unfamiliar with. I could stay focused on the content, while learning how to use the tech tools and never miss a beat with the students...We were able to implement the unit with consistency for the whole freshman-level team, ensuring that all students received the same access to tech instruction” (2012).

Librarians as Technology Leaders

To mentor classroom teachers in technology integration, librarians must first be regarded as technology leaders in their schools. School librarians are naturally positioned to take on that role because they work with each teacher, across grade levels and departments. School librarians are charged with knowing the larger curriculum. They work with all of the students in the building and have the unique opportunity to observe student performance in various classes and over years. Their position is collaborative in nature, so they have the added benefit of many established collegial relationships.

Compelling reasons exist for school librarians to mentor teachers on how to successfully integrate technologies into teaching. Classroom teachers have many claims on their time. Teachers may want to integrate technology, but they may be challenged to find sufficient time to keep up with all of the rapid changes.

As the information-literacy leaders in their schools, librarians realize that many of the resources needed to conduct research now exist only in digital format. Also, technology has opened up a much broader menu of assessment options. To afford their students the benefits of using these resources and tools, the classroom teacher must also be on board. Technology mentorship cultivates a relationship of ongoing support in a safe, nonthreatening environment based on real need.

That mentorship equally benefits the librarian. The school library program becomes more aligned with core school goals and activities; quality collaboration is nurtured; and students are engaged and work more productively. As the influence of the school library program expands and the librarian is seen as a technology leader in the school, the administration can see the obvious value of supporting the library.

It’s in the Relationships

Like almost everything we do as school librarians, our success often hinges on our relationships with the people we serve. If we are perceived as cordial, nonjudgmental, accessible,
and tolerant, our colleagues will be much more likely to want to accept our mentorship in the realm of technology. If we present good work traits, such as responsiveness, a willingness to listen and contribute, and respect for deadlines, teachers will know they can count on us.

A “fear factor” makes many teachers hesitant about attempting to learn to use a new technology. That fear, coupled with a lack of time, makes it difficult for teachers to add to their repertoire of skills. A friendly school librarian, who understands the instructional goals and will be there to help should things go wrong during class, can be the motivation a teacher needs to progress.

It helps to go the extra mile to mentor teachers. Diane Mentzer, a librarian at Bester Elementary School in Hagerstown, Maryland, convinced her colleague Nancy Miller, a third-grade teacher at the school, to work after school to learn new technology skills. Miller created a classroom website, and she went on to share her knowledge with other teachers in the school.

Sometimes it helps to rally around a common goal. Julie Hunefeld, a librarian at Namaste Charter School in Chicago, had received a cart of iPads through a different grant. The initial learning curve is steep when figuring out how to set up, sync, select apps for, and use iPads in the classroom. Hunefeld determined that the best way to mentor the others was around collaborative teaching units. In one case, she combined forces with Nawal Qarooni, an eighth-grade writing teacher, to deliver a unit on social issues. Hunefeld suggested appropriate apps, such as PaperPort Notes for note-taking, and Book Creator for the final assessment. The two teachers cotaught the class, and now the school has a stellar library of student-created e-books on a variety of social issues.

### Becoming a Technology Mentor

In the past, school librarians have counted on some tried-and-true strategies to foster mentorship relationships with colleagues. Brown bag lunch sessions, roundtable events, after-school mini-workshops, and one-on-one help still go a long way toward establishing those connections. However, with the advent of new technologies, it has become easier than ever to provide mentorship.

Gwyneth Jones, the librarian at Murray Hill Middle School in Laurel, Maryland, has greatly enriched her mentorship of colleagues with online tutorials, informational guides, and resources linked from her MHMS Daring Tech wiki [http://thedaringlibrarian.wikispaces.com]. Colleagues can use this wiki to get quick information on a variety of topics. Jones’s wiki has become an online, on-demand extension of her mentorship. Jones shared, “Wikispaces are a daily source of communication and an invaluable tool to our program here at MHMS...One-on-one learning sessions, group technology “petting zoos,” planning time “tech drive bys”, and a comprehensive Daring Tech wikipage with resources, comic tutorials, links, screenshots, downloadable presentations, and infographics empower them to learn on their own. I always say, ‘If it’s not on the Wiki, I’ll eat a bug!...dipped in chocolate!’ ” (2012).

At the Chicago Public Schools Department of Libraries, we also see the value in providing mentorship through online resources. We maintain various wikis, websites, discussion groups, video channels, slideshows, and online resources to support the school librarians in our district. Providing access to online resources doesn’t mean it’s always necessary for busy librarians to create every online artifact from scratch. It’s especially important to support teachers in how to...
use technology in circumstances unique to your school, such as how to use a specific district Web portal or your school’s integrated library system. Don’t reinvent the wheel. Many times, great content is already available, and curating good resources created by others can be just as valuable as creating your own.

**Technology Mentorship Topics**

One of the first things a school librarian should do as technology mentor is establish priority topics. It’s best to mentor on technologies that have the greatest impact on student learning or help teachers to meet administrative goals quickly. While there is still a need to share information about the school library’s subscription databases or instructions for using the school’s online catalog, librarians should expand beyond these traditional topics.

Chicago Public Schools recently began using Google Apps to facilitate communications, work productivity, and student learning. MaryAnne Pysson, the librarian at Alcott High School, saw the opportunity to support her colleagues in the transition. She showed teachers how to set up their accounts, download Google Drive, and use the Apps suite. She held an after-school workshop to quickly instruct larger groups of teachers. Pysson stated, “I believe that it makes sense for librarians to play the role of technology mentors in schools. They know a lot about how to relate technology to the curriculum and how to solve problems that may arise when using technology with students.”

Avoid being “tool-centric.” It is not helpful for most teachers to receive a list of the top 100 Web 2.0 tools. Instead, most teachers appreciate learning about a few tools, at the point of need, with clear connections to how teachers can work more efficiently while supporting student learning.

Take time to vet technologies appropriately. In addition to narrowing the list of topics, verify that the tools are safe and appropriate to use with your students. Read each web-based technology’s Terms of Use to make sure using it with your students’ age levels is permitted. Comply with any required terms, such as parental notification. Be aware that some technologies require teachers to state that they have permission from their district to act on the district’s behalf—a permission often not granted by districts. Be selective and bypass technologies that do not meet your school’s policies and needs. The good news is that many technologies can be used safely and appropriately.

**Technology Mentorship and Teaching**

Carolyn Foote, a high school librarian at Eanes ISD in the Austin, Texas, area believes “librarians play key roles on their campuses in providing professional development opportunities for teachers. Since librarians work with teachers closely, they have a pulse on the needs of teachers and students.” Foote recalled a time she mentored her colleague, Kristy Robins, a sophomore AP English teacher. Students were required to deliver panel presentations. Foote provided expertise in live streaming and using CoveritLive to broadcast the panels and to launch a class discussion room.

To sustain these important mentorship relationships, it is important to be an active participant in the teaching process. School librarians should frequently coteach with the classroom teacher. Teachers appreciate working with librarians who are supportive; have a strong commitment to the success of the class; are ready to adapt, as needed; who assertively make suggestions to improve instruction; and have good rapport with the students. School librarians often stop short of contributing to student assessment, but consider offering this assistance, as this helps the librarian to be a more successful mentor and teaching partner.

**Cutting the Cord**

Colette Eason, the librarian at Marsalis Elementary School, in Dallas, knows that part of good mentorship is to encourage colleagues to move toward self-reliance. She actively mentors teachers, but she also believes that technology expertise is a part of the job description for all teachers. In one case, she worked with a teacher who initially wanted Eason to do the work of setting up a classroom computer rather than teach her how to do it herself. Eason showed her colleague the appropriate manuals and recommended that she take a course, if necessary, to upgrade her skills. The teacher did take a course and later expressed to Eason her gratitude for the “...push into technology.”

A line exists between mentorship and dependency; school librarians should always work toward fostering teachers’ technology independence. Keep in mind, however, that a teacher may be expected to achieve competency in one technology, but need mentorship in another. Teachers should also be expected to transition toward mentoring their colleagues in their own grade levels and departments.
Garnering Administrative Support

Successful technology mentors know they need the ongoing support of their principals. Irish Leo-Bain, the librarian at Crane High School in Chicago, makes a compelling argument to administrators to support school librarians with needed technology hardware. She asks administrators, “What do you do when you have one popular tech item? Give it to your librarian! What better way to ensure that a staff member is completely trained and able to use this technology, is able to share that training with any interested coworker, and the item can be found and maintained for use by the entire campus?” When budget-conscious administrators view librarians as key influencers who mentor a number of other teachers, are early adopters of new technologies, and distributors of the hardware, administrators see value in supporting the school library program financially and programmatically. Make sure your administrator sees (via monthly reports, lesson planning, and other documentation) all that you do to mentor colleagues.

Maintaining the Mentorship Role

Diane Papageorge, the librarian at Marsh Elementary School in Chicago, regularly conducts staff trainings on topics such as iPads, Apple TV, her school’s online databases, and e-printing. To maintain her leadership, she said, “The role of the librarian is always evolving….My role changes to reflect the way we gather information. Being on top of the latest trends in technology benefits our students in preparing for the future. As a technology mentor, you never stop learning.”

It’s important to keep on the forefront to be a successful mentor. Develop a robust professional learning network to keep up with the latest technologies. Use a feed aggregator, such as Google Reader, to follow technology blogs. Become a regular Twitter user. Many of our leading techie librarians freely share their wisdom on Twitter, especially at the #tlchat hashtag. Read professional journals; attend webinars, such as those provided by AASL and the TL Virtual Cafe; and go to conferences, as funding permits. By spending ten minutes a day with professional networking tools and other resources, you are guaranteed to find several gems that you can investigate for use in your school. A small investment of time enables you to get a great start on being a long-term valued technology mentor. Pass it on!

Lisa Perez

is a network library coordinator for the Chicago Public Schools Department of Libraries. In her position, she supports approximately 350 elementary and high school librarians. She designs and delivers various grant and technology training programs for school librarians. In addition, she manages the CPS Virtual Library, a district-wide digital library of over 9,000 titles. She is a Google Certified Teacher and Google Apps Qualified. In her spare time, she volunteers for several positions, including the ISTE Media Specialists (SIGMS) Executive Committee Member-at-Large, the ISTE Public Policy and Advocacy Executive Committee, and the AASL Best Apps for Curriculum Task Force. She is also the president of the ICE–CAP, the Chicago chapter of the Illinois Computing Educators.

Works Cited:


Recommended Resources and Examples


Jones, Gwyneth. 2012. Personal e-mail correspondence.

Networking in Hartford

Networking is consistently rated by attendees as one of the top reasons for attending the AASL National Conference & Exhibition. AASL knows the conversations shared outside sessions are also valued professional development opportunities. For more information and opportunities to connect in Hartford, visit national.aasl.org.

Networking Events

Dinner with a Local Librarian
WED., NOV. 13, 6:30 P.M.-9:30 P.M.
Begin the conference exploring Hartford in a local school librarian’s favorite restaurant, and enjoy networking with new people in a relaxed social setting. (Dutch treat—sign up on-site.)

ISS Networking Reception
THURS., NOV. 14, 9:00 P.M.-10:00 P.M.
FEE: $30
Join fellow Independent School Librarians for an evening of networking! (You must register in advance.)

Special Events

Celebrate Conference
First-Timer’s Orientation
THURS., NOV. 14, 1:00 P.M.-1:45 P.M.
This session is especially designed for first-time attendees who want to learn how to get the most out of the AASL National Conference. AASL member-leaders and other experienced conference-peers share helpful tips and strategies for navigating the event, and making it a memorable and worthwhile experience.

Students to AASL
Special this year, the Students to AASL reception offers a networking opportunity exclusively for Library and Information Science (LIS) students and their mentors.

AASL National Conference Closing Celebration
SAT., NOV. 16, 6:30 P.M.-9:30 P.M.
The Closing Celebration is an event that attendees won’t want to miss! There’s no better way to celebrate and wind down from an intense and focused few days of learning than to join peers for food, dancing, and networking.

Continue the Conversation
Expand your learning by connecting virtually with other attendees before, during, and after conference using AASL’s social media communities.
Don’t forget to use the official conference hash tag #aasl13.

Register early to save
and start planning your conference experience in Hartford!
national.aasl.org
PASSING THE TORCH
MENTORING TO SUPPORT INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM IN SCHOOL LIBRARIES

Helen R. Adams  I  hadams@mansfield.edu
The Olympic torch is passed from runner to runner until the flame is lit in the Olympic stadium. Much like the Olympic torch, principles, wisdom, and guidance are passed from an experienced person to an uninformed or uncertain individual through a process called mentoring, which is defined as to “serve as a teacher or trusted counselor” (Webster 2008).

The Many Facets of Mentoring

Within the library profession, intellectual freedom is based on a set of ethical principles and best practices that can seem difficult to apply in a school library setting. For example, a principal, concerned about the content of a library book, wants it removed from the collection, and an inexperienced school librarian may be uncertain how to proceed. A teacher wants to know if a student checked out specific books, and the librarian is unsure if the information should be divulged. In both cases, a school librarian (and, increasingly, a library’s support staff) can turn to a mentor—an individual with more knowledge and experience—to obtain counsel.

There are different types of mentoring. Formal and informal mentoring within the school library profession can be one-to-one between colleagues or in a wider context through the efforts of state and/or national associations for library professionals. Mentoring also occurs outside the profession, but within the school community, to educate administrators and teachers about the American Library Association’s Code of Ethics, the Library Bill of Rights, students’ First Amendment rights, and legal protections for students’ library-use records.

Learning about Intellectual Freedom

Experienced school librarians can often remember their introduction to intellectual freedom and the instance in which they first needed to apply its principles to a real-life situation. Ann Martin (2012), an educational specialist in library services for the Henrico County (VA) Public Schools, recalls:

“I remember being educated in library classes about intellectual freedom. The concept of intellectual freedom seemed easy enough to grasp—every student has the right to seek and receive information from all points of view without restriction. Until a specific challenge comes to a librarian, it is easy to espouse intellectual freedom ideas. It is when a concern is facing the librarian that mentors are helpful. The reality is that my knowledge developed over time, and there were many people who guided me along the road to where I am now.

"My first challenge came soon after I was hired in Henrico County. Bev Lammay (district supervisor of libraries) was a mentor for me during those first challenges. It was her guidance and confidence in the Instructional Materials Review Policy that provided me with the conviction to support intellectual freedom. I still remember how the leadership supported the process. To me, this was new. I had seen books taken off shelves in other districts and worried that politics might interfere with the process. From that first
challenge through the many that have followed, I know that censorship is not tolerated here. The [reconsideration] process makes it easy to support and advocate for intellectual freedom because it is grounded in legal and professional guidelines. The process takes the emotion out of the concern while allowing the books a fair hearing.”

Ann’s experience is not unique. Barbara Stripling (2012), a former school librarian and current ALA president, shares:

“My initial encounter with intellectual freedom came in my first year in the library. We (a fellow librarian who had been in the school a few years and I) discovered that the principal, who both of us respected a great deal, had removed a Rolling Stone magazine from the library mailbox because he didn’t think it was appropriate. We went to his office to confront him and explain why access to information is so important and censorship is harmful. He understood our point, and the censorship did not happen again. I still remember how nervous I was, but we worked it out very professionally. I relied on the guidance of my fellow librarian who was willing to take a strong stance. Her guidance gave me courage.”

Mentoring is a component of field experiences for pre-service librarians. Students work under the tutelage of an experienced school librarian. There are a set of responsibilities and skills practiced, but the conversations that take place between the master librarian and student are invaluable. It is in these settings that future librarians learn how to apply ALA’s intellectual freedom statements and the Code of Ethics to everyday challenges such as those inherent in Internet filtering and selection of library resources.”

Mentoring Strategies in the Profession

What effective strategies can guide beginning librarians in their initial encounters with intellectual freedom dilemmas? Ann Martin (2012) uses the New Teacher Academy held annually in her district to formally discuss intellectual freedom and issues school library professionals may confront. Ann reports:

“At the New Teacher Academy, I talk with new librarians about intellectual freedom. I want them to understand how to use the selection policy and the review process when a challenge arises so that they act by following school district procedures rather than react when a challenge arises. I instill confidence that the policies and practices in place will support their choice of materials. I assure them that a materials’ challenge may come; but, it is not an attack on their judgment. I give examples of a wide variety of challenges, explaining what went well and what could have been done better. I give tips on what to do on the fly should a complainant approach them, such as listen rather than comment for or against the concern. I suggest that they familiarize themselves with the language in the selection policy because its concepts provide talking points for a discussion with a concerned parent.”
Ann also provides continuing counsel for current librarians in the district:

“It is important for experienced librarians to know they can contact me whenever they anticipate a concern. This gives me an opportunity to remind them of the steps they need to take, as well as provide guidance and talking points as they relate to the specific concern. What makes intellectual freedom issues so difficult is that each concern is unique with different personalities involved. My job is to help the librarian pull out the basis for each concern and give direction on how to position dialogue with the complainant.”

Providing leadership about intellectual freedom to all New York City Public School librarians is a huge task. Each school situation, student body, and administration is unique, and as director of library services in the largest city in the U.S., Barbara Stripling (2012) reports that she needed a different approach:

“The main strategy I used to extend the idea of intellectual freedom to our approximately 1,200 librarians was to develop a Collection Development Policy with a form and procedure for reconsideration of a work. I modeled the policy after the one we used in Fayetteville, Arkansas. I oversaw the process of getting the policy approved for use in all of our schools. We included the policy in a section on intellectual freedom in our Librarian’s Handbook, which was distributed to every librarian who attended our fall conference and new librarians as they joined the system.”

State associations support mentoring for intellectual freedom through their intellectual freedom committees, programming opportunities, and association special interest groups. In addition, the Wisconsin Educational Media and Technology Association (WEMTA) has an IF Network comprised of four school librarians who have experienced challenges and one technology director who is knowledgeable about Internet filtering and other technology-related concerns. All are willing to be mentors and provide confidential collegial support to other WEMTA members. School librarians needing assistance are referred to a WEMTA IF Network member by knowledgeable librarians at the Cooperative Children’s Book Center (CCBC) in the University of Wisconsin-Madison’s School of Education, who provide initial telephone support to Wisconsin public, school, and academic librarians facing resource challenges and other intellectual freedom issues.

WEMTA is not the only AASL affiliate organization where mentoring related to intellectual freedom is occurring. Christine Eldred, the intellectual freedom representative for the Vermont School Library Association (VLSA), designed a brochure about students’ privacy rights in school libraries. The brochure is based on Vermont’s 2008 law governing confidentiality of library records, and she regularly answers questions about privacy issues on the VSLA’s discussion list. She also created a LibGuide with intellectual freedom resources <http://chs.csdtv.libguides.com/intellectualfreedom> for school librarians. Christine relates, “A challenge can be very stressful and taking the time to look up information on best practices can add anxiety. I created a [LibGuide] section ‘If a Book in Your Library is Challenged’ so that librarians can quickly locate information that will help them feel informed and well prepared” (2012).

Nationally, the ALA’s Office for Intellectual Freedom (OIF) offers telephone and e-mail support for school (and other) librarians concerned about intellectual freedom issues such as resource challenges, restrictive filtering, and student privacy. OIF’s assistant director, Angela Maycock, frequently mentors school librarians with individual queries on a case-by-case basis. Angela declares, “I think of my role at OIF as providing tailored support to librarians based on their needs. The opportunity to develop these positive, collaborative relationships with school librarians is one of the most rewarding aspects of my job at ALA” (2012). Less personal but also effective, OIF’s website <www.ala.org/offices/oif> and the companion site for the eighth edition of the Intellectual Freedom Manual <http://ifmanual.org> provide the full text of ALA’s intellectual freedom statements and step-by-step guidance on dealing with challenges.
ALA has an Emerging Leader program, and in 2007–2008, AASL sponsored five school librarians in the program. The group selected intellectual freedom as the focus of their project, and they were mentored by the chair of the AASL Intellectual Freedom Committee. Alabama high school librarian Annalisa Keuler was a member of that class of Emerging Leaders, and today she is the chairperson of the AASL Intellectual Freedom Committee. “I attribute my chair position to my involvement in the Emerging Leaders program,” Annalisa explains. “The mentoring I received and the opportunity to work with others on issues in intellectual freedom gave me the skills and connections I needed to feel confident in continuing my work with the association. As chair, I hope to become a mentor to other potential leaders in the committee and to those with an interest in intellectual freedom issues” (2012).

**Mentoring Outside the Profession**

Principals, teachers, and technology directors frequently do not learn about intellectual freedom in their preparation courses. If school librarians want these colleagues to be supportive of students’ access to information in all formats, librarians need to help them understand the principles of intellectual freedom and why they are important.

Erlene Bishop Killeen is a school librarian in a Wisconsin district that does not filter Internet access for students. Instead, students are guided by a strong acceptable use policy (AUP) that emphasizes teaching them to be good digital citizens. When the Children’s Internet Protection Act was enacted in 2000, she worked closely with the district’s new technology director to develop the district’s AUP.

Erlene (2012) recalls:

“Bob was a computer teacher prior to being hired as tech director. I shared the Freedom to Read statement [with him], and we worked on our district Technology Plan and AUP together. Intellectual freedom was there all along. Bob and I presented all policies together to the school board. I have always worked closely with our superintendents over the years, and they have all grown from being here.”

Sara Kelly Johns (2012), a secondary school librarian in New York, applies her knowledge of intellectual freedom to mentoring administrators and teachers.

“We have had such turnover of administrators in the last five years that I spend time mentoring the new ones as they arrive. I make sure to discuss library-related policies when principals first start and then continue the conversations. For instance, I outline the library’s approach to filtering and research projects. The library staff members have [filter] overrides used on a case-by-case basis to let students go to blocked sites if needed for research. I also discuss our book selection policy and its protections for the school as well as its support of student reading. We brainstorm how we would act if there were a real challenge and what resources we have available from ALA and the New York Library Association.”

In Sara’s case, mentoring includes having good communication as she describes in this example:

“It is important to alert principals about any ongoing occurrences such as when a parent stopped in to ask that I monitor her sixth-grade daughter’s book selections in our 6–12 library. Principals are often the first line of defense when parents call, and ours needed to know that I told the mother she should be clear with her daughter on what she expected of her. This could have been a challenging situation, but the principal knew about the discussion and could back me up if a phone call came to him. In addition to updating administrators, starting in new teacher orientation I let teachers know that ‘I have their back’ for classroom censorship cases.”

**Passing the Torch**

Mentoring for intellectual freedom has become increasingly important as issues proliferate and the number of solo librarians rises. Formal and informal mentoring provided by supervisors, colleagues, and state and national associations passes the flame of intellectual freedom forward to continue protecting students’ access to information and privacy. Now, it’s up to you; share your knowledge and experience with others.
Helen Adams, a former school librarian in Wisconsin, is currently an online instructor for Mansfield University and is a trustee of the Freedom to Read Foundation, chair of the AASL Intellectual Freedom Award Committee, and a member of the ALA Office for Information Technology Policy Advisory Committee. She is author of Ensuring Intellectual Freedom and Access to Information in the School Library Media Program (Libraries Unlimited 2008) and Protecting Intellectual Freedom and Privacy in Your School Library (Libraries Unlimited 2013).

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Visit Knowledge Quest Online at <www.ala.org/aasl/knowledgequest> for additional resources on mentoring and collaboration!

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Polls open March 19, 2013, and votes must be received by April 26, 2013. For more details and candidate biographies, visit www.ala.org/aasl/elections.

Let School Library voices be heard! VOTE!
"The mission of the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) is to advocate excellence, facilitate change, and develop leaders in the school library field” (AASL 2012). The guidelines that guide the profession call for school librarians to become leaders within their schools, and technology integration provides an area where leadership opportunities exist for school librarians. Yet, many school librarians experience difficulty enacting this role in practice due to the confusion and ambiguity surrounding school librarians’ role in technology integration (Asselin 2005; Everhart, Mardis, and Johnston 2011; Johnston 2012; McCracken 2001; Shannon 2002, 2008). As our profession looks for ways to cultivate and develop leaders, especially in the area of
technology integration, mentoring through professional organizations has emerged as an important factor in enabling leadership (Johnston 2012).

Need for Leadership
School librarians are expected to accept and fulfill numerous roles in their daily practice; one of these roles is that of a leader. Providing leadership in technology integration for the purposes of learning is paramount in today’s education environment and presents opportunities for leadership. Empowering Learners (AASL 2009) reiterates the belief that school librarians should act as leaders within their school communities to ensure that learners are equipped with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in the technological society of the 21st century. School librarians are charged “to play a leading role in weaving such skills throughout the curriculum so that all members of the school community are effective users of ideas and information” (AASL 2009, 46). This “weaving” or integration of technology into the curricular areas is where school librarians—based on their knowledge of pedagogical principles and school curriculum, technology expertise, and collaborative experience—can serve as leaders and valuable assets to their schools.
These standards further assert that, to address the needs of a new generation of learners faced with a changing information landscape that includes interactive technologies and a participatory culture, school librarians must evolve as leaders. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards defines “accomplished library media specialists [as] visionary leaders in their schools and in the profession” (2010, 14). Yet, standards (NBPTS 2010; AASL 2007, 2010) and guidelines (AASL 2009; ISTE 2010) published to date offer little practical guidance for practicing school librarians, who need more clarification and role definition, along with explicit techniques or strategies for enacting the leadership role. As I began my research, I focused my efforts on clarifying this role by first identifying what enables some school librarians to thrive as technology integration leaders and what constrains others. The identification, classification, and explication of these enablers and barriers serve as a foundation on which to build research-based strategies to support practicing school librarians in understanding how to enact this vital role.

**Research Process**

To investigate what was enabling some school librarians to enact this role and what was hindering others, I used data obtained from two open-ended questions at the end of the School Library Media Specialist and Technology Integration Survey (PALM 2009). This survey consisted of three sections that asked the school librarians for demographic information, such as staffing levels, education, and experience; 60 statements related to technology integration leadership activities; and three open-ended questions that asked respondents to discuss barriers, enablers, and other factors that influenced their leadership practices (Everhart, Mardis, and Johnston 2011). The open-ended questions asked participants to respond with enablers and barriers that facilitate or constrain their technology integration leadership involvement. Specifically, these questions asked respondents to: “Think back about the activities in the preceding statements, specifically those in which you are fully involved. What enables you to be involved at that level?” and “Again, think about those activities addressed earlier. Are there any activities in which you’d like to be more involved than you are right now? If so, please tell us about the barriers that hinder your involvement” (PALM 2009).

The population used for this study included 2,100 National Board Certified school librarians from across the United States, practicing in elementary, middle, and high schools as of April 2009. This population was chosen because these participants are uniquely positioned to inform this research due to their documented accomplishment in meeting the rigorous standards of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, especially Standard V: Leading Innovation through the Library Media Program, which asserts that “[a]ccomplished library media specialists lead in providing equitable access to and effective use of technologies and innovations” (2010, 23). There were 295 usable survey responses, and this research is based on those respondents who answered the two open-ended questions addressing the variables of interest: enablers and barriers to the enactment of the leadership role in technology integration. I found that 279 (94.5 percent) participants had answered the enabler question and 263 (89.1 percent) respondents had answered the barrier question.

**Methods**

The responses from the two open-ended survey questions that addressed factors perceived as enablers or barriers to enactment of the technology leadership role were analyzed in a two-step process. To extract the specified enablers and barriers from the written text of the open-ended questions, I performed content analysis to extract individual descriptors of each enabler and barrier. Then, since this research was based on the assumption that the leadership practices of school librarians are essentially those of teachers who are leaders, the data was coded by categories according to an existing framework taken from

Visit <www.ala.org/aasl/slr> to read the research paper, *Reaching All Learners: Understanding and Leveraging Points of Intersection for School Librarians and Special Education Teachers*, by Anne Marie Perrault.
Lynn F. Zinn’s research on teacher leadership: the four domains of supports and barriers to teacher leadership (1997). Statistical analysis, including frequency distribution and percentage difference, was then performed.

Results
This research serves as the initial identification of enablers and barriers that accomplished school librarians encounter when enacting a technology integration leadership role. Implications of interest to the school library profession as a whole were found; a finding that is of particular interest in the context of this issue of Knowledge Quest is the identification of professional organizations as an enabler.

Professional organizations emerged in the area of “People and Interpersonal Relationships” as the second most frequently occurring enabler facilitating accomplished school librarians’ efforts in technology integration leadership. Support by professional organizations was one of the enablers unique to school librarians; it was not mentioned in the teacher-leadership literature as a noteworthy support for teacher leadership. However, indicators from Zinn’s framework did describe a mentoring and supportive relationship from respected colleagues and professional organizations as a “strong community of librarians” as an enabler as frequently as they did collaborative teachers. There is often only one school librarian in the building, and this finding demonstrates the importance of professional organizations as a means of developing and maintaining relationships with other school librarians who share the same interests, can act as mentors, and can provide support to facilitate school librarians’ involvement in technology integration leadership. Respondents identified a mentoring and supportive relationship from respected colleagues and professional organizations as an enabler more frequently than those who are not highly involved. These findings reveal the importance of professional organizations as providing a network of fellow school librarians to learn from and share with as an enabler for accomplished school librarians in enacting leadership in technology integration.

School librarians who have access to a strong and active network of other school librarians are more committed to ongoing professional education, mentoring, advocacy, and policy development than those who do not (Dekker as cited in Oberg 2006). Additionally, those participants highly involved in technology integration leadership identify professional organizations as an enabler more frequently than those who are not highly involved. These findings reveal the importance of professional organizations as providing a network of fellow school librarians to learn from and share with as an enabler for accomplished school librarians in enacting leadership in technology integration.

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Discussion and Implications
Mentoring has been recognized as a critical component in leadership development, and effective mentoring is essential to the growth and success of librarianship of all types (Freedman 2009). Mentoring, the “process whereby a more experienced individual provides counsel, guidance, and assistance to another person, serves an essential function in helping younger or newer employees to develop leadership skills and advance within the organization” (Lanna-Lipton 2009). Professional organizations have made the development of new leaders a top priority and recognized that mentoring is a critical component of leadership development (Davidson and Middleton 2006; Zabel 2008).

Mentoring is also a critical component of sustaining the leadership of the organization and the profession. Not only are professional organizations mentoring individuals to assume leadership responsibilities within the organization, but by extension are developing leaders for the profession. “It is the role of current leaders in an organization to cultivate future leaders, and mentoring can be used as a strategy for growing leaders” (Davidson and Middleton 2006, 350).

Through both formal programs and informal opportunities, professional organizations can help members of the profession connect with more experienced professionals who can offer practical advice, career guidance,
and opportunities to network with other professionals. The support from a mentor can build confidence, encourage and maintain motivation, provide enhanced skills and knowledge, and broaden horizons (Golian-Lui 2003; Freedman 2009). This reality was echoed in the respondents’ comments that they felt “empowered,” “supported,” and that they had “someone to turn to for help” because of other professionals they had met through professional organizations. In turn, mentors gain personal satisfaction from helping someone else, contributing to the profession, and working with mentees who bring a fresh perspective to professional issues (Freedman 2009; Golian-Lui 2003).

Professional organizations provide the community of support that respondents talked about in their survey responses, but also afford opportunities for developing leadership skills and improved communication skills, and for establishing a professional community of continuous learning (Freedman 2009; Davidson and Middleton 2006). Mentoring is recognized as a valued practice for career development for library and information professionals (Freedman 2009). Survey respondents frequently spoke of the benefits of the professional development they received from participating in professional organizations and activities sponsored by these organizations. Respondents commented that they felt “up to date” and “technology savvy” as a result. Not only do professional organizations provide support for school librarians through relationships with other school librarians, but this research finds that professional growth opportunities from professional organization activities such as conferences and publications serve as enablers as well.

Conclusion

The most recent Standards for Initial Preparation of School Librarians state the expectation that school librarians “become active contributors in education and information professional organizations and use publications, conferences, and virtual professional development experiences and opportunities to engage in social and intellectual networks that address best practice in school libraries” (AASL 2010, 13). These relationships provide a support and enable school librarians in their career, professional development, and leadership development.

It is vitally important that school librarians embrace the technology leadership responsibilities that have become mandatory in this age of information and digital resources (Asselin 2005; Everhart, Mardis, and Johnston 2011; Johnston 2012; McCracken 2001; Shannon 2002, 2008). Professional library organizations play an important role in teaching and developing skills—including technology leadership skills—by providing mentoring experiences for their members. Mentoring “is an essential part of the leadership journey because mentoring provides opportunities for significant personal, professional, and leadership development” (Freedman 2009, 172). Participation in professional organizations does contribute positively to a librarian’s career, and mentors play an instrumental role in facilitating and encouraging mentees to become active in professional organizations (Freedman 2009).

In a profession that is constantly evolving, it is critical that school librarians become active in professional organizations to garner this support. Through encouraging pre-service school librarians to join and take an active role in professional organizations, the importance of support from colleagues should also be emphasized in preparation programs for school librarians. It is the students who will benefit when school librarians participate in professional organizations, mentor colleagues, and seek advice from mentors to develop leadership skills in the area of technology integration.
Melissa P. Johnston is an Assistant Professor at The University of Alabama in the School of Library and Information Studies, where she coordinates the school library media certification program. Johnston worked as a school librarian for 13 years in Georgia before completing her PhD at Florida State University’s School of Library & Information Studies. Johnston’s research interests include school librarians as leaders, the school librarian’s role in technology integration, and the education of future school librarians. She is a monthly contributor to the blog Building a Culture of Collaboration: <http://cultureofcollaboration.edublogs.org>.

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FEATURE

Against the Odds
Mentoring Strategies for Large Districts

Melissa Jacobs-Israel
Mjacobs7@schools.nyc.gov
In my elementary school library I vividly remember crying my eyes out on my first day of working as an elementary school librarian. Here I was…a licensed and certified school librarian, MLS in hand, standing in front of a tall bookshelf of nonfiction material, and I couldn’t remember how to organize the Dewey Decimal System. Sweat beading on my brow, I was in an official moment of sheer panic. To make matters worse, in the auditorium minutes before, the principal had introduced me to the staff as being a “real librarian,” an apparent first for the school. He sang my praises as the professional who was going to build a new library for the school community. It was nice to have the vote of confidence, but I was quickly coming apart at the seams and in desperate need of professional guidance—or, at least, someone who could relate to what I was going through on my first day as a real librarian. Earlier in the day, I had uncovered half of an automation system that had never been installed, a shelf list belonging to another school three states away, a filing cabinet full of thousands of rexographs, boxes of useless stuff, plastic baskets with nonsensical labels like “monkeys and mice,” and a disgruntled custodian who just glared at me every time I filled up another black garbage bag and left it near the door.

Mentoring in a Big City

It has been a long time since I was considered a newbie, but the memories of my first few weeks working as a school librarian ground me each time I stand in front of a group of new teachers ready to take the plunge into librarianship. As a coordinator of library services for the New York City School Library System, I understand just how much school librarians are accountable for. I also appreciate how little understanding teachers and administrators comprehend of the scope of the school librarian’s position. It is easy to feel completely overwhelmed in the position no matter how competent one is. In most school environments, a school librarian is an “only.” The only person working in the library—the only one responsible for: shelving; automating; building a collection; weeding a collection; establishing management policies; teaching information literacy; guiding students through the inquiry process; creating an environment conducive to learning; engaging readers; organizing the physical space; collaborating with teachers; interacting with parents; providing reference services; managing a budget; assisting students, teachers, and parents with technology; and connecting with each and every student in the school.

A school librarian has countless responsibilities no one else in the school building has the skill sets to accomplish. This circumstance is an incredibly overwhelming and isolating experience, especially for someone new to a job. With no one on site to turn to and ask basic questions, how does an only wipe away the tears and confidently build a school library program of distinction? Where does an only seek out opportunities for support, professional growth, and development beyond graduate school and transition effectively into the profession? How does an only build a professional learning network and gain support from colleagues and peers?

Working in a school system as large as New York City requires thinking outside of the box on so many levels. It is nearly impossible to develop programs that are scalable without apprehensive thoughts, endless brainstorming, and relentless trial and error. With over 1.1 million students and more than 2,000 public and nonpublic schools, a lot of pedagogues—with an array of skill sets, education, and knowledge—must be considered in a variety of complex and varying environments. It is a challenge to accomplish a successful advisory relationship that is sustainable, supportive, and rewarding for all parties involved in a district with the scale of New York City.

Mentoring requires collaboration through partnerships, as well as abridged versions of the traditional mentoring relationship. Successful strategies have been out-of-the-box, targeted, differentiated, and needs based. Strategies have changed year to year with developing technologies, emerging best practices, and the increased number of certified school librarians hired over the years.
librarians hired over the years. The integration of the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and the alignment of the CCLS and the Empire State Information Fluency Continuum (IFC) have also presented new challenges to the levels of support we need to provide to the field [http://tinyurl.com/bavo2uf]. How does a school library system meet the needs of singletons in school buildings across the largest urban school district in the country with over 2,000 buildings while relying on only five professional library coordinators?

NYCSLIST
The New York City School Librarians Information Sharing Tool (NYCSLIST) was developed to connect librarians across the city so they can celebrate successes, share stories, provide lifelines to librarians dispersed throughout schools in the five boroughs, empower school librarians to reach out to one another for assistance, inspire new learning, and build community. NYCSLIST was built on the premises that the worst questions are ones not asked and that there is power in knowledge sharing amongst colleagues.

NYCSLIST began in 2004 before the age of Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest, and the influx of social media and crowd-sourcing tools available today. E-mail was still not considered a conventional tool in one’s professional life, and listservs were definitely not an electronic tool that the majority of library personnel in New York City ever used. The community on NYCSLIST took time to build, coach, and guide in the nuances of electronic communication using a listserv. There were many days of gentle coaching, off-list conversations, a little tough love, and a couple of precarious moments of union activity getting carried away online. It was often a struggle to steer conversations away from contract negotiations, and toward reflection and thoughtful practices that helped build the professional community and raise the quality of services provided by school librarians in NYC today.

In the eight years since NYCSLIST’s creation, users have moved from Luddites to world-empowered contributors. The conversations on NYCSLIST have grown richer, more reflective and inspiring. I am often in awe of how quickly school librarians in the field respond to offer help to one another. And often the responses are so thoughtful, professional, and accurate. Terri Rosen, an elementary school librarian in Brooklyn said, “NYCSLIST is a lifeline. It helps me get through the rough weeks because it reminds me that there are others who are trying to juggle the same multiple responsibilities. Whenever I am able to post something useful or respond positively to a request, it gives me such a boost. I take advice from my colleagues, follow all links, and tag many for future use” (2008).

Over the years, the professional community of school librarians has grown stronger, closer, and more appreciative of the knowledge of their colleagues. It may be an unconventional way to mentor, but
NYCSLIST is a strong mentoring network of over 1,000 users.

Targeted Modules for Newly Assigned

Professional development is crucial in the ongoing support provided to the field. In a city as diverse as New York, turnover is also a major reality dealt with at the start of every academic year. Some school librarians transition between grade levels, schools, or campuses; also, annually a large population of teachers is newly assigned to school libraries, but has completed no graduate work in librarianship. Newly Assigned Modules for Librarians is a series of full-day workshops designed around the concept of survival for former classroom teachers newly assigned to the library and new school librarians entering the largest school system in the country. Additionally, a level of bureaucracy working in a system like NYC makes all of these undertakings even more complicated.

Although school librarians are born teachers, teachers are not necessarily born librarians. Enormous amounts of technical work, organization and management, technology and automation, cataloging, budgets, purchasing, professional ethics (i.e., intellectual freedom, copyright), collection development, vendor relationships, and collaborative interactions need to be considered. For people just exiting a classroom, collaboration is often a stumbling block. Building a successful collaborative relationship is a skill that is somewhat foreign to them. As classroom teachers they may have sat in on grade-level meetings or curriculum committees, but the skills of actually planning a lesson/unit and coteaching must be learned and mastered.

A further consideration is learning the language of librarianship. Librarians live in a professional world that prides itself on acronyms and well-crafted jargon that is unique solely to the field. The role of the classroom teacher is not equivalent to the role of the school librarian. As such, classroom teachers transitioning into their new role need to quickly get up to speed and prioritize what steps they need to take to function on a daily basis. Lack of knowledge of the language of librarianship slows down these newly reassigned educators.

Joann Ortega, a teacher newly assigned to the school library in an elementary school on Staten Island, is currently immersed in the new experience. She has found the modules add a tremendous amount of value to her professional learning experience. "With 31 years of teaching experience," Ms. Ortega stated, "I was shocked to discover just how different teaching in the library was from a traditional classroom and quickly realized I was not in my comfort zone anymore. The support and guidance from library services was extremely motivating...the staff is an invaluable resource to all librarians in the field" (2012).

Newly Assigned Modules for Librarians is a starting place. It is not a crash course in librarianship, nor meant to supplement professional graduate work in librarianship. It is rather a course that throws a lifeline to pedagogues who are often in over their heads, and immediately need the proper tools and skills to be successful. For a classroom teacher like Ms. Ortega to successfully transition to teaching in a library, these modules are the guidance and support she needs. The modules also emphasize school librarians as teachers, which is the most significant aspect of the job.

SLS21: Building a 21st-Century Library Program

Librarianship is a quickly changing field and one that requires personal dedication to lifelong learning. Successful school librarians are "Although school librarians are born teachers, teachers are not necessarily born librarians. Enormous amounts of technical work, organization and management, technology and automation, cataloging, budgets, purchasing, professional ethics (i.e., intellectual freedom, copyright), collection development, vendor relationships, and collaborative interactions need to be considered. For people just exiting a classroom, collaboration is often a stumbling block. Building a successful collaborative relationship is a skill that is somewhat foreign to them."
constantly learning, reading, creating, and expanding their skill sets and professional proficiencies. SLS21: Building a 21st-Century Library Program grew from the Newly Assigned Modules after identifying the need to advance the skill sets of librarians who had been working in the field for five or more years. The instructional shifts of the Common Core Learning Standards and alignment with the Information Fluency Continuum developed by lead school librarians in New York City elicited the demand for a new level of teaching, knowledge, and mentorship amongst practicing librarians. SLS21 also took into consideration the integration of smartphones, Web 2.0 tools, and collaborative technologies that prompted a new level of support to be established.

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The SLS21 series was opened to newly assigned librarians, as well as practicing professionals. Within the four full-day workshop series, librarians were encouraged to sit with people of varying skills. This arrangement fostered a mentoring relationship amongst participants; this relationship encouraged experienced librarians to step into a leadership role, and share with and mentor their new peers. The arrangement also provided experienced librarians an opportunity to look at their own skill sets through a different lens. Through guided conversations, school librarians who had skills that were in need of improvement were able to personally reflect on their own practice and self-assess where they needed to demonstrate progress. The value of this interaction with colleagues and the ability to openly discuss their experiences, express ideas, listen to feedback and learn from their peers provided an unforeseen benefit to the SLS21 series.

"Mentoring provides individuals with opportunities to grow, share, and learn from experiences that are not accessible in many graduate-school classrooms. Practical experience adds tremendous value to growth and development as a school librarian."

The course modeled several Web tools to assist school librarians in building and tweaking their technology toolbox. Edmodo (<www.edmodo.com>) was used to frame the course, and participants were instructed to sign on as students. All course materials were linked and assignments were posted in the Edmodo online environment. The premise was for school librarians to mirror the learner experience, explore technologies outside their comfort zones, and build an online community to support and supplement the in-person instructional environment.

Additionally, participants were introduced to LiveBinders (<www.livebinders.com>), a digital three-ring loose-leaf notebook for the Web. This tool enables users to collect resources, add documents, video, and websites in a central location. In SLS21, LiveBinders was used to organize the course material (<www.livebinders.com/play/play?id=43435>) and provided a valuable resource for librarians unable to attend. Participants were also encouraged to use LiveBinders to build their professional portfolios and collect evidence of their work in building a strong library program.

The Value of Mentorship

In any career, networking and mentoring have always been fundamental to professional learning and add a tremendous amount of value to any profession. They are ways to connect with like-minded people to help you grow proficiently by sharing best practices and save you when you are overwhelmed by the enormity of the tasks ahead. Mentoring provides individuals with opportunities to grow, share, and learn from experiences that are not accessible in many graduate-school classrooms. Practical experience adds tremendous value to growth and development as a school librarian.

In large urban environments, it is often difficult to build a one-to-one mentoring program that meets the needs of the entire community. As such, large districts need to look outside of tradition and use the skills of practicing professionals to develop a curriculum that is targeted to the skills of incoming school librarians, and use existing and emerging technologies to meet the needs of the field.

Melissa Jacobs-Israel is a coordinator in the Office of Library Services for the New York City Department of Education. In that role, she has created the New York City School Librarian Information Sharing Tool (NYCSLIST) listserv, which hosts over 1,000 school librarians in NYC. Currently, Melissa serves as chair of the newly created AASL Best Apps for Teaching and Learning Task Force and is a member of the AASL Best Websites for Teaching and Learning Committee. She is also the Region II Representative for the School Library Systems Association of New York State and the Section of School Librarians for the New York Library Association. She enjoys exploring emerging technologies, social media, lifelong learning, and obsessively collecting cookbooks. Connect with Melissa @missyji or e-mail her at mjacobs7@schools.nyc.gov.

Works Cited:


FEATURE

SCHOOL AND

A Collaborative Conversation

PUBLIC LIBRARY

COOPERATION
This article is a conversation between Shelley Dorrill, school librarian at Paul W. Bryant High School (PWBHS) in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, and Jana Fine, former youth services coordinator at Tuscaloosa Public Library (TPL), now youth services consultant for the Florida Department of State, Division of Library and Information Services, Bureau of Library Development.

Jana Fine: Shelley, the collaborative efforts between TPL and PWBHS have been very successful for quite a while. I never thought that I would be so fortunate in working with such a great group of people in Tuscaloosa. When I worked at the Clearwater Public Library I had such great collaboration with K–12 schools, but I was hesitant to believe that I could be so lucky again. Boy, was I wrong!

Shelley Dorrill: Yes, we have worked together over five years now, and it has been so beneficial to both libraries.

Jana Fine: I remember the first week I was on the job in 2006, a woman named Judy Johnson came in, introduced herself to me and asked, “So, what are we going to do for YALSA’s Teen Tech Week?” My mouth flew open, and I was speechless since that was the very first time a school person ever approached me first. Once I got over my shock, I was able to start a very meaningful dialogue with her and her fellow librarian at the time, Shannon Bogart. We came up with the first gaming event that combined the talents and resources of all the librarians involved. Even though the turnout wasn’t the greatest, the event started a successful relationship between us.

Shelley Dorrill: Yes, and I was fortunate enough to join in that collaboration when I came to the PWBHS media center in the fall of 2007. Being mentored by librarians who always strove to cooperate and support others led me to see that there are incredible advantages when the library community works together. The first joint library event I remember was for our 2007 Books with Bite Teen Read Week program (see Figures 1 and 2 in page 48). That was the year the Twilight movie was going to come out, and the kids were agog with all things vampire.

“When I worked at the Clearwater Public Library I had such great collaboration with K–12 schools, but I was hesitant to believe that I could be so lucky again. Boy, was I wrong!”

—Jana
We ran with the horror theme and turned the school library into a 1950s drive-in. The students sat in cars, ate popcorn, and enjoyed a video we made of horror clips from throughout film history. We then had classes in for that great game TPL created and led.

We ran with the horror theme and turned the school library media center into a 1950s drive-in. The students sat in cars, ate popcorn, and enjoyed a video we made of horror clips from throughout film history.

Jana: That’s right. We decided to present a Twilight Family Feud Game for YALSA’s Teen Read Week. The youth staff at TPL worked for several months, in collaboration with PWBHS librarians and student workers, to come up with questions and answers about the Twilight series. Once it was ready, Shannon worked with the English department to have students attend the presentation at the school. It was great fun, and the winning team won Twilight messenger bags (which I made for the occasion). The program was so successful that we presented it at the local Barnes & Noble store for the release party of Breaking Dawn.

Jana: I also remember that Shannon had a great book club that discussed banned books. You asked me to come in and discuss with the students several of the books. I was impressed with the students as they were very prepared for the discussion with smart and curious questions. I felt much honored that your graphic novel book club discussed YALSA’s Michael L. Printz Award–winning American Born Chinese by Gene Luen Yang. I was a member of that 2007 selection committee. I had no idea how you and Shannon did so much with all of the other work you were responsible for. It’s amazing that the two of you had at least ten book clubs going throughout the year.

Shelley: Our students loved that event. I think I will never forget the New Moon reader’s theater that TPL youth services wrote and our PWBHS students performed at the TPL Twilight event on the opening night of New Moon. Twilight was such a big draw we even had teachers competing for those prizes (see Figure 3).

Jana: I do remember that! I had such a great experience with that Teen Read Week event. You all did so much work, and it was so impressive for everyone. I still can’t believe that we were able to put such a large event together in about two months.

Shelley: It was our first big collaboration, and it was immediately evident how we could accomplish so much more together than either library could separately.

Shelley: School librarians do have very full plates. We wear so many hats in the school. While we are librarians, the school’s
needs force us to focus on a huge number of nonlibrarian roles. However, that is precisely why collaboration with public librarians is so essential. Neither of us can meet all the literacy and information needs of our teens. However, as a community we can help each other fill in the gaps and add enrichment to the curriculum.

**JANA:** Do you remember the Halloween Horror event that you had at school? I had such a wonderful time telling some scary stories to the students. I even think they were surprised they could be scared at such small and unexpected jump tales.

**SHELLEY:** That is a great example of how your talents and skills made a school library program possible.

**JANA:** What I also enjoyed was the time when my youth librarian worked with several of the students to present a *Hunger Games* party at the public library. They played a quiz from a website, and then had to race in teams of two to dress in a style from each of the districts. Prizes included books and jewelry. There was also food representing the different districts. All in all, the girls and guys from the public, the high school, and the University of Alabama School of Library and Information Studies who attended had a really enjoyable time. It was truly a very creative idea, and the students from PWBHS were fantastic!

**SHELLEY:** I know the teens liked it as they spoke to their friends about how much fun they had at the public library. It was gratifying to know they felt comfortable enough to express their enjoyment of this collaborative event. It is interesting to note that at this point in time our teenagers flowed so well between the two library worlds—it was almost as if we were just different branches of the same library system.

**JANA:** That’s pretty incredible, I must say. Another great program was the Books with Beat program during Teen Read Week. I was excited when you asked if I could come and help out. I got to watch the boys and girls act silly and dance different dances from different eras. It was so inspired. How did you come up with that idea?

**SHELLEY:** Well, we had already done the drive-in in 2008. Then, the next year we took the Teen Read Week theme of Beyond Reality and created *Star Trek* “holodecks” throughout the school library. Led by our library student assistants portraying Starfleet officers (see Figure 4), the school’s students went to each of the holodecks and experienced different fantasy books complete with actors representing book characters. I don’t know if you remember how much help TPL gave to the creation and production of that week-long program. From helping to build the sets to being actors in the holodecks, we couldn’t have done it without you. So, it was natural we would want to include you in the next year’s program. We knew we wanted the students to be more interactive in the 2009 program—participants and not just observers. When we heard the theme was basically music, Shannon and I looked at each other and just thought, “Hey, let’s have a 1950s sock-hop!” So, we did. We decorated the outside of the school library to look like the entrance to a high school gym from 1955. The sock-hop experience included a video highlighting 20th-century youth music, costumes, a jukebox, and even Coke floats. All of it just seemed to flow from the initial idea as we tried to make a media center into a dance hall.

**JANA:** I think we all had some creative moments when we saw the ways the students responded to technology at that program. When TPL purchased a Wii and an Xbox 360 Kinect, I thought it would be interesting to bring the games into the school to see if the students would enjoy a break. I believe it was during a time when the students who had finished testing could come to the library, wasn’t it?
SHELLEY: Yes, it was a huge part of our Teen Tech Week program that year. Even the school administrators started dancing.

JANA: That’s right. It was so funny to see the guys having dance-offs with each other!

SHELLEY: It was funny, but it was also just fun. In our world of high-stakes testing, modern-day high school students don’t have much fun. One aspect of our library philosophy is that the school library needs to be a place of enjoyment. It needs to be a hub of all sorts of learning and amusement in the school. I am constantly thinking how I can market the library. We could have the greatest resources available for our students, but if they don’t want to be in the school library and they don’t see us as a go-to destination, those resources won’t help students. In a school of roughly 900 students, the library had over 40,000 student visits last year. Those visits can be attributed to several factors, but one of the main causes is the programming created and produced through the relationship we have with TPL.

JANA: After the tornado disaster in Tuscaloosa, storyteller Regina Ress contacted me and offered to visit and tell the students stories of survival and hope. I immediately accepted her kind offer and thought of PWBHS first, as I knew high school students would have a harder time recovering emotionally. The students were fantastic—very respectful and attentive. She was duly impressed with the youth who attended.

SHELLEY: I was so thankful for that program. Our students needed it. Few people have experienced their neighborhoods wiped off the map by an F4 tornado. Few people...
could share surviving that level of tragedy. Ms. Ress’s stories of survival in New York City through the 9/11 attacks gave them that cathartic experience they needed. It couldn’t have happened without the public library connection.

JANA: While my job has changed, and now I work and consult with public library staff who work with youth, I do reflect back on the numerous conversations that we had about all the commonalities we shared, and the joys and frustrations we had in working with teens. It is so gratifying to know that there are librarians who care about the teens and want to bridge that gap between school and public libraries. I know you always promote the public library with your students and have gone so far as to make a mini-public library movie place at school.

SHELLEY: Yes, as a school librarian I know I can learn from the public library sector. What serves your patrons can often serve my students as well. Having seen the popularity of DVD circulation at TPL, I just wondered why we don’t do that. So, Shannon and I built an entertainment movie collection available to students. Again, it was just marketing the school library by first enticing the students with something fun. We have literally seen students move from checking out the latest Madea movie to reading The Color Purple.

JANA: I believe that from the onset, the initial welcoming reception I had from Judy Johnson and Shannon Bogart propelled me to reach out to other school librarians in both the Tuscaloosa city and county schools. A large majority of those women and men were very receptive to cooperating and collaborating with the public library, and great programs, such as storytelling, summer library promotional programs, Wii and Kinect games, author/illustrator visits, and special thematic topical programs, were created and enjoyed by youth from Pre-K through high school.

SHELLEY: Again, I cannot overstate the power of collaboration and community. In the education world, the school library is a collaborative element in the school, yet we so often isolate ourselves from resources, people, and ideas outside of our school or school librarian groups.

JANA: And so many public youth staff never seem to grasp the idea that both school and public librarians share the same demographic. It is extremely important that school and public librarians work more closely together to promote literacy initiatives. I feel it is essential that public library staff reach out to school library staff and create a collaboration that will serve them well over the years, especially when the Common Core Standards become official in 2016. What I truly treasure from all of this is the friendships I have enjoyed with you, Shannon, and the other school librarians I worked with in Tuscaloosa, as well as in Florida, where I worked for many years as a youth librarian.

SHELLEY: Jana, you are right. With the Common Core, expectations for student abilities and knowledge will be set higher. Our youth need us to work together to provide them with the literary and informational help they will need to succeed. When we collaborate, we all win, we all feel supported, and our youth receive the best from us. I know I would not be the librarian I hope I am if not for the friendships, support, and lessons I have received through school library and public library collaboration. Ultimately, without this collaboration, I know my students would be the ones who didn’t receive the best they could, and really, they are what this is all about.

With increasing student-achievement expectations and decreasing finance and personnel both in schools and public libraries, it is more important than ever to connect and collaborate. Once cooperative communication with either a school librarian or public librarian has been made, word will spread and a larger connection will form. Once those connections have been formed, then youth will have the best possible chance to excel and thrive in today’s and tomorrow’s world.

Shelley Dorrill began her work in the Paul W. Bryant High School library in 2007 after a stint in the public library world. Having been mentored by phenomenal school librarians and public librarians, she believes the school library and public library play an integral and collaborative role in educating our children.

Jana Fine has worked in public libraries for over 30 years. She has been fortunate to work with a variety of ages and enjoys programming. Jana is passionate about school/public library collaboration and is very lucky to have been given opportunities to work with equally passionate school librarians.
“The team that wants a successful new school library as much as you do; involve stakeholders: teachers, administrators, and students. They can all be valuable team members. Members of the IT department can also be extremely valuable to this evaluation and prioritization process.”


Planning a new school library should be a team sport. When you play on a team everyone has a role; everyone participates with different skills. You practice and develop a game strategy for winning. Whether you are running the court or waiting on the bench to go in, you have to have your “head in the game,” understand the rules and know the plan. The objective is to work together and win. And when you win, the community stands up and cheers.

I have been going to a lot of high school basketball games lately. One of the last games I attended I watched with admiration as a freshman girl went to the line with just seconds left in the game and hit both of her free throws to win. In the stands we call her “fearless” but she became fearless by practicing in her driveway for years. She is usually the smallest person on the court and regularly gets pushed around by much bigger players. Yet, when she takes the court she is always smiling; her body language just screams I love this game and we are going to win no matter what.

I think school librarians should be like that fearless freshman. She never takes the court alone, her teammates give her stature and she gives them speed and a faster tempo of play. She is constantly looking for the best person to pass the ball off to and the rest of team trusts her because of those assists. They score more points because she sees how to leverage their skills.
Okay, now let’s shift to thinking about how to plan a new school library.

Developing a game plan for your new school library is best done with a team of educational peers. As a school board member, I have the opportunity to sit on several committees which include teachers and administrators plus on occasion, students. One committee I particularly like is the group updating our district’s technology plan.

The group includes an elementary school principal, the district business manager, a school librarian, the TAG coordinator, the district IT coordinator, the director of pupil services and special education, both the middle and high school technology and engineering instructors and a second year 4th grade teacher who immerses his students in technology. The group brings in so many perspectives and experiences it is exciting to be a part of it. Our connections to and instructional goals for students come from diverse viewpoints. Yet we are all focused on developing a technology plan that will enrich student learning.

It is the divergent views and insights of the team members which is making the final plan richer. We are compiling research and reference material. We are sharing our favorite resources and reading material normally not on our palette. We are surveying students, teachers, parents and the community to evaluate where we are currently and what will be important over the next three years. The team is reviewing the surveys, clustering results into key concerns and ranking those concerns for prioritized action. Every time I leave one of those meetings I think about how much fun it would be to work with the group to plan a new school library. I believe this team, with its diversity, energy and creative thinking, could envision an incredible learning space.

These team techniques could be used to help you decide how your school library will evolve to meet the learning needs of students. A team of divergent thinkers provides many viewpoints. They challenge preconceived biases and pull the focus away from budget limitations. No winning team starts a game thinking about all the reasons they cannot win. If they did, they might as well forfeit and save the community the price of admission.

Put your team of educational peers together by including key stakeholders in your school. Find teachers who want to partner with you on blended learning, who frequently use current library resources and have their students engaged in active learning projects. Curriculum or Technology Coordinators are also excellent team members as are special education and guidance personnel. Art or music instructors can add a creative flair to the team while someone from the administrative office can ground the group with timelines and offer insight into building concerns that might not be known to other members of the team. If there are parents who have insight or want to participate include them.

As the school librarian you can be the coach or mentor of this team in some sessions, especially early in the process when you are establishing timelines or formulating questions that need to be answered. However, over time try to transition into being one of the team members. If you must remain the coach at least have another team member who is your co–coach. You want to make sure you are not dominating the process and are free to actively participate and learn.

Let the team decide how to gather information for decision making. Let them have input on formulating surveys and how those surveys are taken. The team should always interpret the information gathered and set priorities together. New ideas will emerge; new ideas require different kinds of resources and spaces. This new mixture of ideas, resources and spaces will invite new ways for people to interact and work together. It is a creative and winning process that will result in a school library unique to your students’ needs.

Plans resulting from the creative work of a diverse team will be more impressive when presented to your district administrators, school board or an architect. This is especially true if the whole team shows up to explain their process and advocates for their joint conclusion.

And remember that fearless freshman; alone a winning strategy would be overwhelming but on a team she can excel at what she does best. Everyone participates and everyone wins.

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PUTTING THE CITIZEN IN SCIENCE

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Ask your students to name a scientist, and you will get many answers: Albert Einstein, Marie Curie, Jane Goodall, or, perhaps, Bill Nye, the Science Guy. The word “scientist” generally conjures up visions of white-coated individuals in laboratories with brightly colored potions in test tubes, researchers typing frenetically on computers, or investigators outside with large binoculars, staring at some rare animal, trying to learn its habits before it becomes extinct. We assume those people studied long and hard to become experts in their fields before they started doing “science.” Rarely would any of us think that we could make valuable contributions to scientific fields of study without a formal education and training. However, citizen-science projects allow us to do just that.

“Citizen science” is a term used to describe scientific experiments that use people without formal scientific training to collect the data (or, in some cases, mark up already collected data) needed for the experiments. Many of these projects are ideal for students who are learning about science in school, and indeed, many projects are targeted toward students. Technology has allowed citizen-science projects to flourish because of the ease of capturing and submitting data. Technology has also enabled scientists to mentor students from a distance through interactive tutorials and rapid responses to inquiries. Today, citizen-science projects can be found in areas of study as diverse as astronomy, botany, marine biology, ornithology, and paleontology. The opportunities for collaboration within our schools, school libraries, and communities are plentiful.

Numerous benefits can be gained by using citizen-science techniques to conduct scientific research. The biggest benefit to science is that with more people participating in scientific research, more data is collected. Teams of trained scientists are often limited by time available to collect data and the distance they are able to travel. Citizen-science techniques allow data to be collected over large geographical areas and over long periods of time. The large sets of data generated can reveal trends that would not be obvious in smaller samples. Benefits also extend to those who participate in citizen-science projects. Participants are exposed to the scientific process by actually conducting research, experience that lays a foundation for scientific inquiry in their future. Students engaged in citizen science are offered opportunities that could increase enthusiasm for science after working with and being mentored by experts in the field. Proponents of citizen science believe that participation in these projects may increase the scientific-literacy skills of the participants, a known concern in the United States (National Science Foundation 2012). Introducing students to citizen-science projects in school may help set the stage for increasing the number of scientifically literate adults able to make more informed decisions about public policy and their own personal health.

History
Professional science as we know it is a relatively recent phenomenon. Only in the 20th century did formalized science education programs in colleges and universities become widely available to the public. Before then, most individuals conducting scientific research were themselves
amateurs—often well-off gentlemen (or an occasional gentlewoman) who could spend time pondering the mysteries of the universe. A famous example is Benjamin Franklin, a self-educated man, who conducted many experiments and notably flew a kite during a thunderstorm to “discover” electricity in nature. Once formalized education became the norm, by and large people were required to have scientific credentials to contribute to the body of scientific knowledge. Only in two areas of scientific study did amateurs continue to make discoveries and have a significant impact: astronomy and ornithology. It is, therefore, unsurprising that these two areas are represented by many citizen-science projects.

Although records of bird strikes to U.S. lighthouses were kept as early as the 1880s, the first formalized citizen-science project in the United States was the Cooperative Observer Program (COOP), authorized by an act of Congress in 1890 that established the Weather Bureau. Observers record data, such as temperature and precipitation, and send daily reports to the National Weather Service. This program continues today with observers now submitting their reports electronically (Dickenson and Bonney 2012).

Another early formalized citizen-science project is the Christmas Bird Count. Frank Chapman of the (then) Audubon Society began the project on Christmas Day 1900. At the turn of the century, it was a popular holiday tradition to engage in a “side hunt”; people would divide into teams, or sides, and go hunting. Whichever team brought in the most killed animals won the competition. Chapman suggested a competition of counting birds rather than killing them, and the idea took off; 25 bird counts happened in 1900 (National Audubon Society 2012a). The Christmas Bird Count continues today, and in 2011, 2,215 bird counts took place throughout North and Central America (National Audubon Society 2012b).

**Types of Projects**

Many different citizen-science projects on a multitude of subjects—from astronomy to zoology—are available to interested participants. There are also projects that stray outside science as their focus; one Zooniverse project has participants helping to transcribe ancient papyri. Selecting a project may be the most difficult part of getting started! In addition to varying by topic, citizen-science projects can also vary greatly in format. In general, projects fall into two broad categories: those that ask participants to actively make observations and submit data, and those that ask participants to mark up data already collected.

Projects that require active observations may be best to make children feel that they are really doing science. In these projects, they observe and take measurements just as a trained researcher would. To help ensure consistency among hundreds, if not thousands, of participants, training materials are always a part of citizen-science projects. Materials may be instructions that accompany a kit, online modules that walk a participant through the process of observing and submitting data for the project, or instructions that accompany each step of the project. These training materials offer

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**Today, citizen-science projects can be found in areas of study as diverse as astronomy, botany, marine biology, ornithology, and paleontology. The opportunities for collaboration within our schools, school libraries, and communities are plentiful.**
educators an excellent opportunity to mentor students. An example of a project that has participants actively collect data is the World Water Monitoring Challenge (WWMC) <www.worldwatermonitoringday.org/default.aspx>. Participants measure the turbidity, pH, temperature, and dissolved-oxygen content of water from a local water source. Water monitoring kits are available for purchase (about $21 shipped; classroom kit also available) if one does not already have the tools to take the measurements. Included with the kit are instructions on how to measure these indicators and submit the observations to the WWMC website. Like many other citizen-science projects, the WWMC, through its website, allows participants to see data submissions from other locations, so students can feel connected with others taking part in the experiment throughout the world. In coordination with this project, guests, such as operators of local water plants, could be invited to the school in the role of a community mentor.

Projects that ask participants to mark up data are often set up like games. Zooniverse’s recently introduced project Seafloor Explorer shows participants images of the seafloor. First, the participant marks what substrate is present (sand, shells, gravel, etc.) and then marks any species of animals seen. Scallops, fish, starfish, and crustaceans are counted and “measured” by clicking and dragging a mouse over their dimensions. Participants can classify one image and stop, or continue and mark as many images as they want. Because of their slightly addictive, game-like nature, people may end up spending more time on these projects than originally intended! These projects are ideal to show students that contributing to science can be fun. Such tasks may also be useful for times when some students have finished their work ahead of others and need constructive projects to work on in a computer lab.

All projects are set up to cater to the convenience of the participant; they do not typically require a large amount of time, either to make observations or to submit data to the project. Cornell Lab of Ornithology’s project, eBird, will accept an observation of one bird that you may have seen flying by as you walked into your school building. Longer observation times with multiple species are welcome, of course, but not necessary. Submitting an observation online to eBird takes only a couple of minutes, depending somewhat on the number of species you observed. Zooniverse’s projects can be “played” for as long as one chooses.

Schools and School Libraries

Citizen-science projects are ideal ways to integrate science education with classroom activities and, indeed, the entire life of your school, including the school library. Because of the small time commitment required for many of these projects, citizen-science projects can become a daily activity if a teacher or school librarian so chooses. School librarians can aid in citizen-science projects with individual teachers, or collaborate and compare the observations from different classrooms and the entire school.

Teachers could have their students build on the findings of each project. For example, gathering data on birds that come to a feeder outside the classroom window and submitting the data to eBird could lead to a discussion of migration and to research assignments on bird species. If, by chance, a student already has a marked interest in birds, he or she could serve as a peer mentor to other students in the class or school. Other lesson plans could be tied into a project as well—in this case, a discussion of feather structure and light refraction as a physics lesson, a poetry unit that uses poems that feature birds, a music class that plays and discusses works that may have been influenced by birdsong, or a history lesson on John James Audubon and the exploration of America in the early 19th century. Arts and crafts projects can easily coordinate with the theme of the projects, as well. (Anyone want a pinecone birdfeeder?) During all of these citizen-science endeavors the school librarian could collaborate and integrate with research on birds, building LiveBinders on Audubon, or creating Learnist or Pinterest boards featuring the students’ arts and crafts projects. The collaboration opportunities are endless; citizen-science projects are set up for these types of ventures.

The school librarian is integral to the success and integration of these projects: first, by finding and coordinating citizen-science projects for the classroom or school, and second, by supporting the projects and the students’ learning by providing relevant resources for each project. To support the project and any accompanying lesson plans, librarians can collect resources such as books (field guides, fiction and nonfiction with similar themes), videos, music, and online resources. Many citizen-science projects make this task easy by providing on their websites additional resources and lesson plans to assist teachers. Some projects provide lists of individuals willing to speak to community groups and schools about the projects. These individuals could also serve in the role of community mentors.
At the end of the school year, data can be aggregated to give students an idea of how much data they have contributed. End-of-year projects could also be based on this cumulative data. Students could be assigned to groups and asked to present a poster on what they have found over the school year. If available, community mentors could even judge the posters in a contest with a desirable incentive as a prize for first place. If different classrooms are participating in different projects, students, as subject specialists or mentors, could make project presentations to other classes; these presentations could be effective tools to instruct one another and to stimulate students’ interest in various subjects.

Citizen science is, at its core, about collaboration, whether it’s librarians working with teachers to facilitate a project, educators helping various citizen-science projects gather data, or students working collaboratively to complete the ventures themselves. In the context of AASL’s Standards for the 21st-Century Learner (2007), citizen science connects with standards on thinking critically, making informed conclusions, and creating new knowledge. Common Core Standards are met by drawing conclusions, distinguishing facts, and making judgments while participating in citizen-science projects.

Collaboration at this level is a win for everyone: students, scientists, teachers, and librarians. Not only can science at this level be incredibly interesting, but it’s fun, too. And you don’t even need a test tube!

**Zooniverse**

<www.zooniverse.org>

is home to some of the largest citizen-science projects. The Zooniverse team is continuously working on projects and adding new ones. If you are looking for a new citizen-science project for your school or library, this site is a great place to start. Create an account to see the projects and keep track of your class’s account, too.

**SciStarter**

<www.scistarter.com>

is another citizen-science website and an excellent source of ideas. This website is the one to visit for ideas, classroom activities, and research projects in which your students can take part. The idea is to bring together citizen scientists from all around the world in one online location to have a shared space for their projects.

**Project BudBurst**

<http://neoninc.org/budburst>

is a group of citizen scientists who monitor plants as the seasons change. Data is being collected across the country; thousands are participating, and your classroom or school library can, as well. Project BudBurst is open to all age levels and range of abilities; a downloadable app is available to make experiments mobile.

**Leafsnap**

<http://leafsnap.com>

is a free app developed by Columbia University, University of Maryland, and the Smithsonian Institution as an electronic field guide. Users can identify a tree by taking a picture of its leaf. The app contains high-resolution images of trees, leaves, bark, seeds, fruit, and more. Leafsnap is a good resource to accompany work in the field when doing BudBurst projects.

**eBird**

<http://ebird.org/content/ebird>

is a real-time, online collaborative checklist for bird-watching citizen scientists. It exists to list the existence and absence of birds in a particular area, and for the science of ornithology, this is an incredibly useful site. It offers supporting materials for K–12 educators. eBird welcomes birders to record their sightings and observations, and to upload their images to the eBird database. Data can be viewed in multiple graphic formats; the site is available in English, French, and Spanish.
World Water Monitoring

<www.worldwatermonitoringday.org>

allows you to engage your students in monitoring their water as part of a worldwide collaborative project. Students share their findings in an effort to protect a precious resource. Visit the site to download lesson plans, fact sheets, and other resources; to order testing kits; and to view data gathered by teams around the world.

Museum of the Earth (Mastodon Matrix Project)


lets your students examine a bag of sediment (dirt) that is 9,000 years old. Students document what they find and are encouraged to go to the website to record what they find. The Mastodon Project provides information and instructions so students will know what to look for in their bag of sediment. Students may find anything from rocks and shells to bone fragments. Very exciting!

Allison Scripa is the college librarian for science at Virginia Tech and liaison to the departments of Biological Sciences, Economics, Psychology, and Statistics. She is currently serving as the chair of the Student Relations Committee for the Special Libraries Association Biomedical and Life Science Division. She holds a BS in zoology and an MLIS, both from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Follow Allison on Twitter @ajscripa.

Heather Moorefield-Lang is the education and applied social sciences librarian at Virginia Tech. She is the former chair of the AASL Best Websites for Teaching and Learning Committee and now serves on the AASL Research and Statistics Committee. The focus of her research is in technology in libraries, at this time particularly in the area of handheld and mobile technologies. To read more of her work, see her website at <www.actinginthelibrary.com> or follow her on Twitter @actinginthelib.

Works Cited:


Visit <www.ala.org/aasl/30second> to view new 30 Second Thought Leader videos from school library leaders on mentoring!
At Albany (CA) High School, the school librarian collaborates with many individual teachers, departments, and smaller learning academies on a variety of research projects. One research example is the ninth-grade debate project during which almost 300 freshmen conduct intense research in preparation for two days of formal debate. Students dress in business attire and perform on a stage in front of hundreds of upperclassmen and teachers. Another is the junior Honors English project; each student selects a U.S. author and two of that author’s works to read and analyze, and then researches literary criticism in preparation for a major paper. And sophomore classes explore topics about genocide, imperialism, and industrialization. All of these projects require collaboration between the school librarian and classroom teacher, and incorporate the use of technology as part of the students’ research process.

Last year Albany High School received the AASL Collaborative School Library Award for a research project conducted within the school’s environmental science learning academy: Environmental Design, Society, English, and Technology (EDSET) (Habley 2012). The research project integrated technology into every aspect of the project design, from teacher collaboration and planning to student research and presentation.

Project Summary
EDSET is an interdisciplinary two-year program for one section of juniors and seniors. During their junior year, students take Environmental Science with teacher Darren McNally. They also take United States History with humanities teacher Corinne Berletti. During their senior year, these same students take Government and Economics with Berletti and English with teacher Jessica Park. All these teachers collaborate so that environmental themes are taught in an interdisciplinary manner across courses. Midway through the academic year, both the juniors and seniors conduct a major research project about an environmental issue related to the internships in which students participate outside school. Both research projects are developed in collaboration between the school librarian and the three EDSET classroom teachers.
The learning objectives of both projects are for students to conduct authentic research, to use critical thinking and analysis to deal with ambiguous evidence, and to use effective oral communication skills to report their findings, process, and conclusions. For both projects, students begin by developing a quality essential question, and then move on to finding and evaluating credible sources, synthesizing the information, stating a conclusion, and, finally, creating a presentation. The research is largely conducted in the school library in collaboration with all EDSET teachers, and the students’ final presentations are viewed and evaluated by students from both EDSET classes, other senior classes, and select faculty members.

**Junior EDSET Poster Project**

Junior EDSET students conduct formal academic research with the option to incorporate original research experiments. Some examples of essential questions that junior EDSET students researched last year include:

**Kylie:** What is the most effective energy-efficient “green” upgrade that a fitness business could implement?

**Hannah:** How can LEED certification for commercial and residential buildings be financially beneficial?

**Kevin:** What is the best way, without hurting the environment, to eradicate invasive non-native plants?

**Katy:** What methods on campus create the greatest increase for recycling and composting for K–12 students?

While Kylie and Hannah used only formal academic-research sources, Kevin and Katy researched their topics formally and then

**Figure 1. Example of junior’s poster presenting essential question, summary of research, and more.**
set up their own experiments at their internships (Kevin at a municipal garden and Katy at an elementary school) to test their research in a real-world context.

The final research project for junior EDSET consists of a written abstract, along with a graduate-school-style poster that displays the student’s essential question, a summary of research, methodology, analysis of the information and evidence, student’s conclusion, and any data graphs or images that support the research, as well as ideas for future research (see Figure 1). Learners present their research in the school library. Ten stations are set up and, over three rounds of presentations, all juniors report and justify their findings to a small audience (five to eight people) of junior and senior EDSET students, faculty members, and students from senior AP classes. Audience members receive the presenters’ abstracts in advance and have prepared questions that force the presenters to have a full grasp of their research and issues. The EDSET teaching team encourages the juniors to be up-front with their audience about the struggles with ambiguity or lack of information that they encountered during the research process. Audience members fill out evaluation form rubrics to give feedback about both the content and effectiveness of each presentation.

Senior EDSET “Radiolab” Podcast Project

The senior research project builds and expands on the research and oral presentation skills of junior year. The final fall semester project for senior EDSET research is a podcast modeled on the popular science radio show Radiolab, distributed by NPR. Radiolab hosts Jad Abumrad and Robert Krulwich take a science topic and, using a casual conversational tone, explore it through various lenses (scientific, social, economic, philosophic) to create a podcast full of interviews and layers of sound that help communicate the hosts’ examination of the topic. Often Radiolab episodes are exercises in intellectual curiosity and do not always come to a firm conclusion about a topic.

Similarly, the senior EDSET research project involves students in exploring their internship-related essential question through a combination of formal academic research, interviews of experts, and surveys and focus groups of community members. Students collaborate in teams of two or three. Each team’s goal in creating a podcast is to engage a general audience in an exploration of an environmental issue through a societal lens (health, economics, etc.). Much in the same way that students use images to enhance a report in a slideshow, the EDSET seniors are encouraged to edit sound, music, and interview clips in an engaging and effective way.

Some examples of essential questions from last year’s seniors include:

- **Anna and Colleen**: What are the environmental impacts and the carbon footprint of pets?
- **Stuart and Moby**: How do cities successfully set up bicycle infrastructure?
- **Hannah and Tracy**: How beneficial is organic/local ice cream to both the community and the environment over the typical big-name brands of ice cream?

The project culminated in a listening session in which the EDSET seniors evaluated each other’s podcasts using a rubric. The podcasts were also shared with faculty members.

Technology and Collaboration

Both the junior and senior projects took three weeks and had a lot of moving parts. The key to these projects’ successes was the collaboration and use of technology among the EDSET teaching team, among the student collaborators, and between students and teachers. Here is how we used technology and collaboration from start to finish.

Planning the Projects, Sharing the Tasks

Because all teaching-team members have different prep periods, we used technology to facilitate the planning for both projects. After an initial face-to-face meeting to hash out the general goals and formats, we used Google Docs to create and share project timeline documents that designated responsibilities for each member of the team. For example, for the junior poster project, science teacher Darren McNally introduced the students to what an academic poster looks like by showing them one he had published as a postgraduate. History teacher Corinne Berletti helped each student develop a viable and meaningful essential question is one of the most difficult aspects of a research project because it is a time-consuming step.

Developing the Essential Questions

Helping each student develop a viable and meaningful essential question is one of the most difficult aspects of a research project because it is a time-consuming step.

Each of us was also responsible for developing graphic organizers and other documents for student use. The Google Doc timeline (see figure 2) served as both a planning document and as a reference to keep us on track. It also served as a means of communication between three teachers who did not share a common prep time or even the same floor of our school building. Throughout both projects we also maintained a separate Google Doc where we noted ideas about what was working and what needed to be improved in terms of organization and instruction for the next year.

Helping each student develop

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question (i.e., developing a research plan). Even with both a librarian and a classroom teacher (Berletti) together in the school library’s computer lab, it would have taken each teacher much more than two 90-minute block periods to consult with 15 junior students each! Furthermore, science teacher McNally would have been left out of the conversation about the students’ refinement of their essential questions and their research plans.

To solve this problem, we used technology to help us collaborate better with each other and to front-load helping the students with their essential questions. For the junior poster project, McNally set up a Google Form and required students to enter three possible essential questions to research. Google Forms automatically formats responses into a Google Spreadsheet, which McNally shared with me and history teacher Berletti (see figure 3). Then all three of us used a color-coding system to review students’ essential questions (EQs) for viability. Green meant that the question was good as-is and that the student could begin research. Yellow meant that the question had promise but needed to be further refined, and, therefore, a conference with the student was required. Red meant that the student was in critical need of assistance.

**Technology was essential for monitoring students’ progress as they began identifying sources for research and taking notes.**

Berletti and I shared the spreadsheet with all students at the beginning of their first research day in the school library and instructed them to look at our feedback about their EQs. To help them see how they might adapt their questions, students who did not have green-lighted EQs could look at other students’ EQs. As Berletti and I each conferenced with students, we made notes on the document about how we reshaped their EQs and what research strategies they could try. By the end of a 90-minute block, we had managed to get almost all the students ready to research with a viable essential question. Those students that needed more help were assisted by McNally in his classroom the next time their class met. McNally also recorded conferencing notes so that Berletti and I would be up to speed when the students came back to the school library to continue research.

Corinne Berletti, English teacher Jessica Park, and I followed a similar process with the senior EDSET students. We created a Google Doc (see figure 4) and shared it with the class. Collaborative teams signed up with their topics and their proposed EQs. Berletti, Park, and I wrote feedback and highlighted viable EQs in green and problematic ones in yellow. Although the seniors do not have McNally as a teacher, we also shared the document with him so he could still be involved in the project and offer guidance when necessary.

**Monitoring the Research Process**

Technology was essential for monitoring students’ progress as they began identifying sources for research and taking notes.
notes. With the juniors we used NoodleTools as our major monitoring tool. Students created individual projects and shared them to a dropbox accessible to Berletti, McNally, and me. In the Dashboard, students wrote their approved essential questions and all the tasks and deadlines for the project (see figure 5).

As students located information sources, they cited them in the NoodleTools Works Cited module. I provided feedback on the quality of the sources as well as the format of the citations. Monitoring students’ citations during the research process is a critical means for ensuring that students are using credible and relevant sources. Students also used NoodleTools’ digital notecard feature to record, paraphrase, and analyze information they found as they researched. Berletti monitored the notecards for relevancy and for student understanding of how the information related to the essential question. This technology is invaluable for keeping students accountable and on track with their research.

Another way we monitored students’ research projects was through a mid-research check-in. We had students fill out the form shown in figure 6 as a way for them to reflect on what they still needed to do to answer their essential question.

After students had filled in the document, we triaged the students and conferenced with those who seemed to need the most assistance. Again, we created a spreadsheet shared between McNally, Berletti, and me so we could communicate to each other about students who needed help with their research (see figure 7).

Because our EDSET seniors had gone through the poster project the year before and had gone through all the rigorous monitoring described above, Berletti, Park, and I decided to give them a little more independence in the research process. This independence let them experience managing their own research in anticipation of college-level work. We did have students create shared Google Docs with their sources, notes, and storyboards so that we could monitor their progress and, if we saw any teams really missing the mark, give feedback. In general, however, we expected the seniors to collaborate with each other, manage their own research, and ask for guidance when needed.
For the 2012–2013 academic year we added an extra level of rigor for both seniors and juniors. This year we required seniors to use NoodleTools for research because we wanted them to be more accountable for their research. We also developed a research rubric that addresses the depth of their sources and their note-taking in response to their essential questions. We put their research scores on both the juniors’ and seniors’ shared EQ Google Docs so that students could get a sense about meeting our research expectations as the project progressed. We told the juniors that their final research score would be displayed prominently on their abstracts for the judges to see prior to their presentations, and this public display of their research efforts greatly motivated students to improve the quality of their research. The research rubric is as follows:

1 – Used mostly unreliable, irrelevant, surface-level sources; minimal research and notes in response to the essential question

2 – Used some unreliable, irrelevant surface-level sources, and some credible in-depth relevant sources; research and notes not deep enough to respond to the essential question

3 – Used mostly credible in-depth relevant sources; research and notes are almost sufficient to adequately answer the essential question

4 – Used all credible in-depth relevant sources; has sufficient amount of research and notes to address the essential question

Putting It All Together
Technology and collaboration were integral to the senior EDSET podcast project. We had students use Aviary’s Myna, a now-defunct online collaborative audio-editing application. In advance of the project, we created a master technology help document (shared on Google Docs) with directions on how to use Myna and other audio-editing tools to capture music and sound effects from online sources. As students encountered technical glitches during the project, Park modeled troubleshooting techniques and set up a shared Google Doc where students could post problems, solutions, and tips related to using the technology. Berletti and I had access to this document so that we could also assist students. Not only were groups of two or three students collaborating on the content and production of their team’s podcast, the class as a whole collaborated with each other to troubleshoot technological challenges. Each senior team’s
Technology was critical for the planning and execution of both the junior and senior EDSET research projects. As teacher Jessica Park remarked, “By collaborating and constantly communicating, we did a pretty good job of making a project that might be daunting for one teacher to take on with all its moving parts. I think our continued use of Google Docs, and emphasis on collaboration in previous projects helped make technology tools easy to use in this project. Students were able to collaborate effectively in class and at home without one student having to do all the work” (2012). Science teacher Darren McNally concurred, stating “By bouncing ideas off of each other first, we were able to assemble a much more effective and complex project than we could have done on our own.”

— Darren McNally, Science Teacher

Graduated senior Claire Fahrner agreed that our collaboration made the projects manageable for students: “All four [teachers]...collaborated very well, always coming up with easier ways to deal with technology, helping EDSET students with any problems they may have, and constantly putting in the maximum amount of effort in order to make sure everything is executed well and on time” (2012).

Another EDSET graduate Maddie Zechar told us, “The design of these assignments challenged me to articulate information in unconventional formats. As a college student, I have benefited from the opportunity I had in high school to develop experience presenting information in a more professional, ‘real world’ medium” (2012).
Sara Oremland is a former Teach for America corps member (1998) and middle school teacher in Oakland and Alameda, California. She has been a middle and high school teacher–librarian for the past seven years. Currently at Albany (CA) High School, she and her colleagues Darren McNally, Corinne Berletti, and Jessica Park won AASL’s Collaborative School Library Award in the spring of 2012 for the project described in this article. Sara also cocoaches 25 students in Technovation, a national competitive program in which high school girls learn to program and create a business plan for Android mobile apps. You can read her reviews of young adult books at <http://lithacker.com> and follow her on Twitter @lithacker.
JOIN US FOR OUR SPRING 2013 SEASON OF PROFESSIONAL WEBINARS

Practical Applications Using the Big6/Super3: Putting the Common Core to Work
Tuesday, March 12, 2013 4:00PM EST

Attendees will gain insights and practical ideas on how to design, create, and manage a systematic, Big6/Super3, Common Core K-12 information & technology skills instructional program.

**Presenters: Michael Eisenberg and Robert Berkowitz**

Mike Eisenberg, professor and dean emeritus, University of Washington Information School is a teacher and mentor whose personal motto is, “make it better!”

Bob Berkowitz, consultant and retired library media specialist, is an educator first and foremost.

Mike and Bob are co-authors of the “Big6 Approach to Information Problem Solving” – the most widely used information literacy program in the world.

Guided Research: Shaping the Learning Environment by Being observANT
Wednesday, April 17, 2013 4:00PM EST

Practical applications of the Guided Research Model will be examined with a focus on tools to help students discover by questioning. Included will be strategies for developing personal learning communities for students along with digital environments for inquiry journal reflections. A major focus of the Guided Research Model is to allow time to learn direction by reflection, this is an opportunity for students to reflect on process and self-assessment and allows for intervention at the point of need.

**Presenter: LaDawna Harrington** is the school librarian at Millburn High School in New Jersey, one of the highest performing public high schools in NJ. She is also a part-time lecturer at the School of Communication and Information at Rutgers University, where she teaches a graduate course in management of school library programs. She is the author of the book *Guided Research: Mystery in the Media Center* (Linworth).

REGISTER NOW!

LMC@The Forefront webinars are now free for members of the edWeb community. To register, please visit edWeb.net/lmcforefront.
Providing extra help and meeting the needs of multiple learning styles are challenges that all educators face. To meet this need, we (librarian, Lauren Newman, and teacher, Linda Humes) decided to use SideVibe, a free online resource, to complete our seventh-grade research project.

The seventh-grade students at our school complete a research paper about the Lindbergh kidnapping. This topic generates a lot of interest not only because of the controversy surrounding Bruno Hauptmann’s execution but also because the crime’s location was New Jersey, where our school is located. Since our students’ research skills are at a beginner’s level, we limit the goals for this project: to find and explain evidence from sources provided, to use in-text citations, and to complete a works cited page.

SideVibe offers a unique way for students to collaborate with peers to complete the project.

As the SideVibe discussions progressed, it was refreshing to see how engaged all of the students became as they analyzed, discussed, and argued the evidence.

Investigating the Crime of the 20th Century Using 21st-Century Tools

Linda Humes
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What is SideVibe?
SideVibe is a website <www.sidevibe.com> that allows educators to create individual and/or social web-inquiry experiences. The fact that the courses are controlled and, therefore, unavailable to the public, eliminates concerns about online safety, which often limit classroom use of Web 2.0 resources (Bosco 2009, 14). Students enjoy freedom, but educators are still able to provide scaffolds.

An educator creates “vibes,” which are questions, activities, or discussions linked to specific educator-selected Web resources. Educators then group these
vibes into "topics" with a specific purpose (like a unit). The topics are then put into "courses" or classes/groups (see Figure 1).

**Using the Vibes**

We placed the students into small groups, and they were really excited to try something new and to work together.

For the first vibe, students individually created MLA citations. In the next vibe, they used the social space to share their citations and collaboratively make corrections and create a perfect list of references for the works cited page.

After creating citations, the next vibes focused on discussing the evidence. In the past, students presented evidence in their final papers with little or no explanation. Through peer discussion, we hoped that students would include more developed explanations in their research papers. As the SideVibe discussions progressed, it was refreshing to see how engaged all of the students became as they analyzed, discussed, and argued the evidence. Watching students argue points based on the deep knowledge they developed through discussion was thrilling!

**Our Contribution**

Not only did we view the discussions, we also participated. Because the students knew that we were commenting on their discussions daily, they used the discussions to ask us questions that they were unable to resolve collectively. We found that the students asked us far fewer questions than they would have without the collective-intelligence groupings, and this circumstance reinforced our belief that they understood more through their peer discussions than they would have through solo work. Because we were not limited to class time when making our comments, keeping up with the workload and giving each student appropriate formative feedback were easier for us than in a more-traditional project. An additional helpful feature is that all students’ responses can be downloaded as PDF or CSV files.

**The Final Papers**

The students wrote their papers using Google Docs, and the final papers were quite impressive when compared to those in past years. The reference lists were done perfectly, detailed explanations of the evidence were included, and in-text references were used appropriately, so our goals were met.

Images copyright of SideVibe.com and Basis Applied Technology, Inc.
Student Evaluation

In SideVibe we also created evaluation vibes for students to complete. These were private and requested that students share their feelings about using SideVibe.

Their favorite things included feeling mature, the Facebook-style discussions, and getting help from teachers and peers in any location. One also really liked “the little window that stalks us as we go to websites because we don’t have to go back and forth.”

They would like to add the ability to resize the companion box, and change the method for replying to posts and viewing past discussions. When asked if they would like to use SideVibe again, every student said “yes.”

SideVibe's Weaknesses

SideVibe is an excellent resource, but it is not without its weaknesses:

• Only one person will have “administrative” control over a course, so coteachers must create a shared account.

• Copying and pasting vibes from one topic or course to another is not yet available, so each course must be set up individually.

Because we were not limited to class time when making our comments, keeping up with the workload and giving each student appropriate formative feedback were easier for us than in a more-traditional project.

• Opening the student vibe is the only way to view a whole discussion flow.

• The size of the companion box cannot be adjusted, so some discussion posts get cut off.

The SideVibe team assured us that they are still working to improve SideVibe, so some concerns may be fixed when we use SideVibe again.

The collective problem solving and peer assessment that took place ultimately led to impressive final products and, in addition, helped prepare our students for the future. Many real-world problems are solved collectively, not autonomously, and this project used the collective intelligence of the group (Jenkins et al. 2006, 41). Another bonus was that the shy students felt more comfortable participating in discussions since they were not public (Consortium for School Networking n.d.).

Not only did the students create thorough research papers, their willingness to try something new and work together led to a deeper understanding for both teachers and students, not only of the “Crime of the Century,” but also of the value that collective intelligence has for all of us.

Works Cited:


Linda Humes is a seventh-grade language arts teacher at Northern Burlington County (NJ) Regional Middle School where she also completed her internship for her MLIS. She has also taught English at the high school level. Her technology blog can be found at <http://muchadoabouthottechnology.blogspot.com>.

Lauren Newman is the information specialist at Northern Burlington County (NJ) Regional Middle School where she has worked for four years. Lauren has a background in English and history education as well. Her website can be found at <http://nbcnewman.weebly.com>.
HAS YOUR SCHOOL LIBRARY BEEN IMPACTED BY A NATURAL DISASTER?

WHEN DISASTER STRIKES YOUR AREA, find valuable recovery resources, including an easily accessible and simple grant application with a fast turnaround for much needed funding at www.ala.org/aasl/disasterrelief.

BEYOND WORDS SCHOOL LIBRARY RELIEF FUND

Since 2006, the American Association of School Librarians, with funding from the Dollar General Literacy Foundation, has given more than one million dollars in grants to over 125 school libraries across the country affected by natural disasters.
How does Learning4Life (L4L) tie in with collaboration?
My short answer: Through collaboration we learn and grow. My long answer...well, let me frame it in the context of the Katamari video games.

What is Katamari?
Katamari is the story of a hero prince (school librarians, of course), determined to rebuild the universe (our schools), which his father the king (no comment), accidentally destroyed (oops). The prince achieves this rebuilding by rolling a sticky ball, a Katamari, through fantastical worlds, picking up all manner of stuff along the way. When enough things have been collected on the Katamari, it can become a star.

School libraries are our Katamari. We have rolled them around for decades, picking up books, information literacy, technologies, and more along the way. We gain a lot by passing around these potential stars, watching them grow bit by bit through each of our contributions. But, in these times of reductions in support for school library programs and elimination of school librarians’ jobs, the sustainability of this paradigm is in doubt. If our stars fade as the universe around us darkens, we are left looking only at each other. Growing our stars is just the beginning of our quest; to become heroes, we must share our stars, bringing light to the worlds of those around us. In the process, we can influence budget-makers’ views of school library programs.

So, what does sharing our stars look like in the real world? We have to be prepared to challenge ourselves to expand our universe—to share what lights up our world, but also to listen to what others need to shed light in theirs. We need to learn from other educators and from our students. What do they need? Where are they going? How can we support them on their journeys? The answers can shape our own development and that of our library programs. As a bonus, we can make ourselves truly “indispensable.”

What does it take to share our stars, save them, and bring light to others? Collaboration. What does this type of collaboration look like in the real world? How do we save our school-library worlds and bring light to others? We L4L.
**We Think**

Effective planning and acting require a strategy. Let’s think hard—both individually and collectively—about making a strategic plan. We have limited resources, and the world has a limited attention span. Let’s think big, but let’s pick our audiences. To be effective, our plan must be well conceived and purposeful; part of that plan involves the creation of ideas and opportunities for collaboration in areas that will most benefit our stakeholders.

If we ask ourselves, “What makes any resource (including us) great?” we’d have not an answer, but a second question: “What are the users’ needs?” Whether we’re supporting students, teachers, administrators, or the global education community, we need to start where they are, and focus on their needs and desires. Then we must create opportunities to demonstrate the power of collaboration in meeting those needs and fulfilling those desires.

Start local. Take the time to learn about what the other professionals in your school are doing in their classrooms, band halls, and gyms. Then ask, “What do you need?” Be ready to explain how you can help—and make that support as easy to use and enriching as possible.

Sometimes other educators are reluctant to collaborate with us. Time, historical baggage, and limited resources can all be barriers to collaboration. Repairing the past and starting new collaborative relationships are up to us. How? No 12-step program is available to address replacing a lousy librarian or even the memory of a lousy librarian from another time and place. However, we have abundant opportunities to show the power of effective school librarians and strong library programs.

Do you see a hole in the curriculum? A posting about a project you could support? Less-than-best practices displayed on a department’s webpage? These problems create opportunities to volunteer support and collaboration.

Seizing opportunities to meet stakeholders’ needs takes initiative, leadership, and the confidence to approach staff members you don’t know. Fill in the blanks and say aloud: “Hi! I’m ______________, the school librarian. I saw you are trying to ______________. Have you ever tried ______________? Could we talk about how we can ______________ together?”

Put your overtures in e-mails, allude to them in a newsletter, or send out pigeons with notes, but, please, open the door to new collaborative ventures by approaching people you haven’t worked with before. These micro-relationships will fuel macro-relationships. Macro-relationships of thousands of school librarians are the best chance we have to save ourselves and support our stakeholders!

**We Create**

As school librarians we have key skills. We can locate, identify, and evaluate resources. We teach, we manage, and we support our schools in ways that no other professionals can. We create resources. In fact, we are indispensable resources.

**Katamari**

Katamari is the story of a hero prince (school librarians, of course), determined to rebuild the universe (our schools), which his father the king (no comment), accidentally destroyed (oops).

This image is the front cover art of the North American version of Katamari Damacy, and is copyrighted by Namco.

**We Share**

Sharing starts small and can quickly get out of hand—in a good way! Sharing can be as simple as tweeting about a library program’s success, e-mailing your counterparts about a problem you
are having, or exchanging ideas at a regional association’s meeting.

Sharing creates a win–win–win situation. Win #1: By collaborating with teachers in our schools, we can improve learning outcomes for our students. Win #2: When we assess stakeholders’ needs and modify library programs accordingly, their needs become our framework for being useful—important—indispensable. Win #3: By sharing with other school librarians, we improve our own and others’ school library programs.

We must take the time to create social media accounts for our school libraries and to share with the world the great things we and our students are creating in the library space. However, we must literally and figuratively step out of our libraries, too. While multitasking in our school libraries, we must do so with an awareness of the problems beyond their thresholds. Though our days are already too full, we must prioritize. Stakeholders’ problems create needs we exist to address.

Being a school librarian can be a lonely job; sharing our strengths and our struggles with another librarian can be inspiring. Sharing our triumphs and struggles with another educator or administrator can be the start of collaborations that can positively influence decision-makers and are the fuel our Katamari need to grow, turn into stars, and keep shining.

Be a stellar librarian. Go to conferences, participate in webinars, write blogs! Never stop learning and sharing. Take your sharing further by curating the best resources you find and sharing them with the world. Then, challenge others to do the same.

We Grow

Growth is not easy (remember puberty?), but it sure is rewarding. In an era of diminishing school library budgets, we need to show that we are constantly growing and supporting students’ growth. When we L4L, we don’t just improve the space between our ears; we demonstrate the value of school libraries. As we learn more about best practices and add to a solid base of evidence, we are empowered to achieve our goals and help others achieve theirs.

When we provide evidence of our schools’ improvements, we create new opportunities for collaboration. When we seize these opportunities and share students’ successes, we’re growing, and stakeholders are, too. Through these win–win–win relationships, we help our students, save our library programs, and influence the effectiveness of library programs for students beyond our districts’ borders.

Mary Fran Daley is a doctoral student in the Lehigh University College of Education program in Teaching, Learning, and Technology, where she is exploring the inquiry to innovation evolution in adolescent learners. She is formerly a school librarian and middle school STEM teacher of technology, video game design, and robotics. When she is not plotting to save the world through school libraries, she can be found chasing her toddler twinados about central New Jersey.

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Membership in the American Library Association is required for membership in the American Association of School Librarians.

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Here’s the analogy: You’re a mom. You’re genetically responsible for half the genes in your kid. Or you’re a dad. Ditto. But the whole child is yours. Caring enough about the whole project and, as importantly, respecting your partner’s right to care about the whole project are key.

How to Work with Your Brother and Survive

Shirin Yim Bridges
cbcknowledgequest@cbcbooks.org

OK. I can see you out there rolling your eyes! “There’s a reason they tell you not to work with family,” I hear you say. Or, more succinctly, “Are you insane?”

Well, here’s my defense: I’ve worked collaboratively all my life. My career, until very recently, has been in advertising. Advertising demands close collaboration. More than that, it demands close collaboration with ornery personalities in hostile environments. I’ve handled it! I even have a reputation for being able to put together cohesive teams within these pits of vipers. How hard could collaborating with a favorite brother be?

I’ll admit, it did occur to me that this might be a mistake. My brother and I share too much in common. We have very similar aesthetics, very similar work ethics. But we are very similarly control freaks, used to running our own shows—I now as publisher of Goosebottom Books; he as president and executive creative director of the new media company Trigger. This fact did give me pause.

But what is a pause in the face of an idea? Ideas can topple governments, unleash revolutions. A little pause can’t hold out against an idea.

My brother, Jason, passed me his iPad with the camera on. “Look at this.”

He placed a picture of a spaceship on the table in front of me. I looked. Spaceship picture…on table… and then all of a sudden, floating above both in three dimensions, the spaceship itself. I could hear the thrum of its engines. I could move around it, examine it from any angle. And when I tapped its guns, it fired green lasers with an exhilarating sound effect.

“@*$%!!”

My brother grinned. “Don’t you think this would make a great ghost book?” he asked.

What chance did the poor pause have?
As if a) being family, and b) being control freaks, weren’t enough, we didn’t know what we were doing. Nobody knew what we were doing. Nobody had done it before. We were about to create the first commercially available book+augmented-reality app in the U.S. and market it—somehow—so that distributors, wholesalers, retailers, book buyers, book sellers, librarians, parents, and children would be convinced to change their established notions about how one buys, sells, experiences, and enjoys books. It was a challenge. And we seem to be meeting it so far. Horrible Hauntings: An Augmented Reality Collection of Ghosts and Ghouls, book+app, was safely launched in time for Halloween. We’ve received reviews and accolades from Publishers Weekly, Wired, School Library Journal, XM Radio, and NPR. Among hundreds of international entries, we won the Best Children’s Book Award from the 2012 Halloween Book Festival; and Horrible Hauntings was featured as “No Ordinary Book” in the Children’s Book Council’s Winter Showcase.

But the going was tough, and here’s what we learned:

1 :: Before you even know what you’re doing, decide who’s going to do it.

A clear delineation of responsibilities really helps. This shouldn’t be a list of tasks, but a set of high-level buckets so that as unanticipated tasks appear, assigning them and absorbing them into the workflow is clear-cut. In our case, it helped that we were building a book+app. Everything “book” went to me; everything “app” went to my brother. And we worked closely together to pick the 10 ghosts that would best showcase the app’s capabilities. We looked not only for the best stories but for ghosts that would allow movement along different planes or that could use sound effectively. We looked for ghosts that could interact with finger taps, screen flicks, camera position. And on the opposite side of the table, Trigger had to work to make sure that their depiction of the ghosts stayed true to the stories—Katherine Howard moves as described by witnesses; the Whalley monks wear the correct habits; and President Lincoln looks like President Lincoln.

2 :: Most of your problems will come from border skirmishes.

There will always be things that fall between buckets. Take the time to think the entire process through and identify what those might be. Decide how these issues will be handled before they arise. Otherwise, resentment will build if someone feels unfairly burdened with an unanticipated task. Or, in our case more commonly, someone might feel frustrated that the other person is swiping more control.

3 :: You might be responsible for only one part of the project, but the whole project is yours.

Here’s the analogy: You’re a mom. You’re genetically responsible for half the genes in your kid. Or you’re a dad. Ditto. But the whole child is yours. Caring enough about the whole project and, as importantly, respecting your partner’s right to care about the whole project are key.

In the making of Horrible Hauntings, although I had control of the book and its contents, we worked closely together to pick the 10 ghosts that would best showcase the app’s capabilities. We looked not only for the best stories but for ghosts that would allow movement along different planes or that could use sound effectively. We looked for ghosts that could interact with finger taps, screen flicks, camera position. And on the opposite side of the table, Trigger had to work to make sure that their depiction of the ghosts stayed true to the stories—Katherine Howard moves as described by witnesses; the Whalley monks wear the correct habits; and President Lincoln looks like President Lincoln.
4 :: Seek first to understand.

In any collaboration, multiple stakeholders will be around the table. No two perspectives are ever identical—and in a collaboration like ours between two businesses from two different industries, the gaps in knowledge can be immense. What did I know about high-tech mobile and gaming technology? No more than Jason knew about the book business. And yet it is human to project your established knowledge set onto a new situation—leading to gross errors.

For example, I didn’t know that an Android app and a seemingly identical iOS app are two very different animals. It’s not like releasing a book in hardcover and then releasing it as a paperback. Creating an app for a second platform requires a pretty fundamental rebuild, not merely an adaptation.

Another hurdle: The new media industry thrives on just-in-time delivery. The app is posted on a certain date, and BAM!—you’re in action. But publishing requires much larger gaps between milestones. You need to be ready well before launch date, so that reviewers and buyers get a chance to inspect and fall in love with the product, and the product gets a chance to be sold onto shelves.

So, first try to take stock of what you don’t know. Try to understand what the situation looks like from the other side of the table. For a good collaboration, everyone needs to understand the cause of everyone else’s anxiety. Only then can good, mutually beneficial decisions be made.

5 :: If all else fails, remember it’s only a project.

This might seem an odd way to end a list of key learnings, but sometimes it’s the only guide wire back to sanity. With the best of intentions, things go awry. Frustration can turn to bitterness. Life’s too short. Let it go.

Seek perfection, and you will find insanity. Seek excellence, and you will find fulfillment.

So how did we do?

A beautiful book. A novel use of technology. A revolutionary new way to be thrilled and fascinated by ghosts, created by two people who used to pore over ghost books together as children.

Good enough.

Shirin Yim Bridges is an award-winning author. Her first book, Ruby’s Wish (Chronicle Books 2002), won the Ezra Jack Keats Award and was named a Publishers Weekly Best Children’s Book. The Umbrella Queen (HarperCollins/Greenwillow 2008) made TIME/CNN’s Top 10 Lists 2008. Shirin is also the head goose at Goosebottom Books, whose first series, The Thinking Girl’s Treasury of Real princesses, won an IPPY Award and is on the Amelia Bloomer Project’s list of recommended feminist books for youth. The Thinking Girl’s Treasury of Dastardly Dames repeated both these achievements and was additionally named an ALA Top 10 Nonfiction Series for Youth, 2012. Horrible Hauntings, released in October 2012, was the first book from a U.S. publisher to use the latest in augmented reality and was named the Best Children’s Book 2012 by the Halloween Book Festival. Last but not least, Shirin has a new picture book, Mary Wrightly So Politely, to be released by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt in 2013.
Now is the perfect time to be thinking about how your school library community functions within the learning space!

April is School Library Month and the 2013 theme is Communities Matter @ your library. Spend some time thinking about what matters to your users as you prepare to invite your community into the school library. Access these NEW resources available from AASL to help you implement new space concepts and showcase the learning spaces your communities are already using!

Library Spaces for 21st-Century Learners:
A Planning Guide for Creating New School Library Concepts
(Margaret Sullivan)

Library Spaces for 21st-Century Learners: A Planning Guide for Creating New School Library Concepts focuses on planning contemporary school library spaces with user-based design strategies. The book walks school librarians and administrators through the process of gathering information from students and other stakeholders involved in planning a resource rich learning space. Information includes how to create needs assessment documents that compliment AASL’s Empowering Learners: Guidelines for School Library Programs. Suggestions for adding meaningful aesthetic components and colorful renderings of sample environments are also provided.

2013 | 100p | ISBN 978-0-8389-8630-1 | $36 | ALA members $32.40

Also available in e-book and bundled:
- e-book | ALA Store item 9400-6301 | $18 | ALA members $16.20
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Contribute to an album of new school library concepts!

Share with others the learning space solutions and resource rich environments you have created in your library.

How to Participate:
1. Join the AASL Flickr group “Library Spaces for 21st-Century Learners”
   www.flickr.com/groups/aasl_libraryspaces
2. Click “Add photos” and select photos from your personal Flickr account to share!
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*The Common Core State Standards were developed in collaboration with teachers, school administrators and experts from around the country to provide a clear and consistent framework to prepare our children for college and the workforce.