FEATURES

KEYNOTE

12 The Make-Good Mission
Evaluating and Embracing New Possibilities for Discovery and Innovation in School Libraries
Michael Edson

20 The Conference Challenge: Getting the Most out of Hartford
Courtney Lewis

24 Agent of Change
Keynote Speaker Tony Wagner Offers Experience and Inspiration
Charles O’Bryan

26 Connecting Authors to Readers through the School Library
Karyn N. Silverman

30 The Solo Act
Managing the School Library with an Army of One and Learning from One Another
Laura Bishop

36 Creating Virtual Spaces
Shannon Hyman

40 Lost in Transliteracy
How to Expand Student Learning across a Variety of Platforms
Barbara Gogan and Adam Marcus

46 Flying High with the Information Fluency Continuum
Ana Canino-Fluit

52 Information Superheroes
School Librarians Have a Responsibility to Implement Common Core State Standards
Sara Frey

56 Rise to the Challenge at the AASL National Conference in Hartford
Terri Kirk and Ken W. Stewart

60 IDEA xCHANGE and AASL Preconference Workshops Offer Unique Forums for Best Practices
Rebecca Morris

64 Authors and Illustrators Shine at AASL’s National Conference
Mary Ann Scheuer and Rocco Staino

68 Welcome to Hartford
A Tour of the 2013 AASL National Conference City
Jacqueline Galante and Sara Kelley-Mudie

71 Continue the Conversation in Hartford on AASL’s eCOLLAB
Steven D. Yates

72 Where Planning Meets Reality: Rising to the Challenge
Alice Bryant and Heather Jankowski

76 Social Networking at the Conference
Carolyn Foote

Visit <www.ala.org/aasl/knowledgequest> to read the Online Exclusives “From the Other Side: A Vendor’s View of Conferences” and “Students Lead the Way.”
“Whether you experience the conference in the Connecticut Convention Center or at home wearing your fuzzy slippers, AASL gives you access to great information.”

The Conference Challenge — pg 22
If you have been reading my columns in *Knowledge Quest*, by now you may have figured out that I love to use quotes to express how I feel about a variety of issues. In general, the quotes are of two kinds. As I am a voracious reader of biographies, I tend to quote from real people whom I admire, although I have also been known to quote various literary characters and songwriters whose observations seem all too apropos in many situations! The other reliable source of inspiration is usually poetry—because I was aBrit lit major as an undergraduate, but also because my mother seemed to have an endless supply of rhymes to suit any occasion. And, as I thought about “Rising to the Challenge,” the theme of this issue of *Knowledge Quest* and of our upcoming national conference, my mother’s go-to use of R. L. Sharpe’s “Bag of Tools” (Felleman 1936, 99) came to mind.

I am ashamed to note that whenever my mother repeated the lines, her recitation was invariably prompted by my whining about something, and the poem was intended as a gentle reprimand. Today, I no longer think of the poem as a reprimand but as a reminder that it is up to me to decide if I will view situations as obstacles, barriers, and hindrances, or, instead, see them as opportunities, prospects, and possibilities. I have come to realize that by choosing the latter viewpoint we can craft stepping stones to the future, instead of being tripped up by negative attitudes that mire us hopelessly in the past.

As we reflect on the myriad challenges that school librarians face, I hope that our conference theme will serve to remind us that this event provides a unique opportunity for our community to come together to consider challenges both in our profession and in the wider world of education. The conference is also an opportunity to “think, create, share, and grow” with one another when we connect in Hartford. I truly believe that, despite circumstances that may sometimes seem insurmountable, embracing challenges in a positive manner can show how truly essential the school librarian is. By helping to provide thoughtful, flexible solutions to address the needs of students and teachers in an increasingly complex learning environment, we can demonstrate our value as we focus on helping 21st-century learners acquire the skills they’ll need for success.

**Acquire (and Share!) Fresh Perspectives, New Knowledge, and Inspiration**

Members of AASL’s very capable National Conference Committee, chaired by Terri Kirk and Ken Stewart, have been hard at work to ensure that the AASL 16th National Conference and Exhibition in Hartford is the best conference yet! In addition to outstanding preconference workshops and general sessions that feature prominent thought leaders Tony Wagner and Peter Bregman, the variety of concurrent sessions will allow on-the-ground, work-a-day school librarians to showcase best practices and share what works.
Additionally, members of our scholarly community and school librarian educators will engage us with the latest in research and help us determine how to use that research to improve teaching, learning, and librarianship to benefit our school communities. At the IDEAxCHANGE attendees will be able to talk one on one with other school librarians about successful strategies and programs. The conference is sure to provide every attendee with exciting new ideas and practical advice.

Prepare, Assess, and Reflect

As you read through this edition of Knowledge Quest and begin to contemplate what Hartford may have in store for you, think about the state of your school librarian “bag of tools.” What’s in it now? Do you need to jettison some items? Add others? To decide which events and sessions will be most meaningful to attend, we can use some of the many resources that AASL has provided to help us evaluate and assess our professional skills, responsibilities, dispositions, and self-assessment strategies.

In particular, you may want to check out A 21st-Century Approach to School Librarian Evaluation. This practical, workbook-style publication “uses the AASL Empowering Learners program guidelines as a basis for a school librarian evaluation rubric—one that can be adapted or duplicated by school librarians and shared with school administrators.” This valuable self-assessment instrument can assist in recognizing particular areas where professional development is needed. For more information, see <www.ala.org/aasl/guidelinesandstandards/evalworkbook>.

Two other AASL resources, which are based on Charlotte Danielson’s Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching (ASCD 1996, 2007), can also help you recognize where you are now and identify areas on which to focus your professional development. These are:

- L4L Sample Job Description: School Librarian, available at <www.ala.org/aasl/learning4life/job-description>

See You in Hartford!

Though this is my last column as president, you can be assured that I’ll see you in Hartford—and I’ll be bringing my own carefully curated professional “bag of tools” with me. I never leave home without them, especially the ones that have come my way via my membership and participation in AASL. They help enable me to rise to the challenges that I encounter every day. I hope that our paths cross soon. I expect to get new, valuable tools in Hartford, and I hope that you will, too!

Bag of Tools
by R. L. Sharpe (1870–1950)

Isn’t it strange
That princes and kings,
And clowns that caper
In sawdust rings,
And common people
Like you and me
Are builders for eternity?

Each is given
A bag of tools,
A shapeless mass,
And each must make—
Ere life is flown
A stumbling block
Or a steppingstone.

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

Works Cited:

Recommended Resources:
"I’m so excited. And I just can’t hide it."


Along with hearing about the conference at AASL meetings and in pre-conference publicity, I have had the privilege of reading and editing the articles from the conference committee chairs. Their articles make it clear that the AASL 16th National Conference and Exhibition offers us the best professional development opportunities—from the IDEAxCHANGE to the closing celebration and author breakfast that end the conference.

As we gather in the “Insurance Capitol of the World,” school librarians will be “insured” that the “future’s so bright, [we] gotta wear shades” (Timbuk3 1986). I get ready for conference by registering, making hotel arrangements (how many people can share a hotel room?), and planning my travel to the conference and the surrounding area’s attractions. The enticing information on the conference website <http://national.aasl.org> fuels my need for targeted professional development, stimulating conversations, and fun with colleagues from all over. The library geek in me will experience as much as I can cram into the conference. I don’t sleep well in hotels anyway, so I might as well do everything I can while I am in Hartford!

Looking to a Bright Future

This conference issue of Knowledge Quest features articles by new authors with their reactions to the themes of the conference. Their thoughts on leadership, teaching and learning, reading, literacy, and the Common Core State Standards look ahead to a very bright future.

Most of the authors in this issue are being published professionally for the first time. Two of them, Barbara Gogan and Adam Marcus, wrote the draft of their article on transliteracy for me as part of a student assignment for the Mansfield University School of Library and Information Technologies program I teach. They tackle the somewhat nebulous yet pervasive literacy concept as deeply as Laura Bishop does with her adjustment to being a solo librarian. Laura’s leadership reflections and strategies are valid for all school librarians.

Shannon Hyman’s article reminds us that teaching and learning is not about technology but about the information students discover, how they find it, and the new knowledge they create, which requires us to change the way we teach. Her district, Henrico County in Virginia, has examined and refocused school library teaching and developed training for school librarians to enable them to not only create a virtual library space for students but to also work toward using innovative tools for students and staff.

The enticing information on the conference website fuels my need for targeted professional development, stimulating conversations, and fun with colleagues from all over.
Ana Canito-Fluit and Sara Frey are both school librarians who have tackled their role as Common Core State Standards (CCSS) integrationists with gusto. Ana shares the Empire State Information Fluency Continuum as a way of leading the CCSS implementation through the school library program. Sara’s article is filled with good advice on making it easy for teachers to proactively connect with the school librarian.

Thanks to conference author chairs Mary Ann Scheuer’s hard work and Rocco Staino’s network of connections, the conference is filled to the brim with authors. Karyn Silverman’s article shows how school librarians can connect with authors in Hartford and take that experience back to school libraries and students.

Thanks to a tip from Laura Pearle (who edited some of the articles in this issue), we are honored to include a keynote feature by Michel Edson, the Smithsonian Institution’s director of web and new media strategy. He challenges us to rethink our old assumptions about the scope, scale, and speed of our work, as well as the way we prepare our students for life.

Chuck O’Bryan served on the New York Library Association Section of School Librarians (NYLA/SSL) school library association board with me before he became a college library director, and I listened to him enthusiastically recommend Tony Wagner’s visionary thinking and writings. His article clues us all in about Wagner’s don’t-miss-if-you-want-to-stretch-your-thinking keynote.

For the last several conference issues, we have included an article by a vendor, the “view from the other side” of the exhibits. In an online exclusive, Scholastic VP Evan St. Lifer shares his view on conferences from the vendor side and discusses a distinct shift in how school librarians deliver content to students and staff.

Making the Most of AASL Conference

Though I have attended many AASL, ALA, and state library conferences, I am always looking for survival tips from others. One of my favorite recent lists comes from a Karen Schneider Free Range Librarian blog post on survival tips for ALA conferences <http://tinyurl.com/caltbqa>. From my own experiences and Karen’s tips, I am going to prepare to maximize my conference experience by reading a Tony Wagner book, picking out a couple of Hartford sites to visit, packing comfortable—but-cute shoes, ordering new business cards and, this time, actually creating a packing list so my husband does not have to send me an overnight package.

While I am there, I will celebrate long-time friends, make new friends, take a lot of pictures for my rather large Flickr account, Tweet, post on Facebook, and be star-struck by the authors and speakers who are so willing to share their talents and expertise. This Knowledge Quest issue will be tucked in my briefcase to help make sure I don’t miss anything. I will be ”taking care of business, every day, taking care of business every way” (Bachman-Turner Overdrive 1973) at the national conference that is just for us.

Sara Kelly Johns is a long-time building-level school librarian who has the best job in the school. Along with teaching at the Mansfield University School of Library and Information Technologies since 2008, she has been AASL President (2007–08) and an associate editor of Knowledge Quest. She is currently the AASL Division Councilor for ALA Council and will begin a three-year term on the ALA Executive Board at the end of the 2013 ALA Annual Conference. She never stops taking snapshots and loves to dance—her husband’s band, Double Axel <www.doubleaxel.com>, covers all of the songs mentioned in the article and many, many more.

Works Cited:


If we’re going to get big things done in this century—hard things that fix our current problems and prepare us for the new ones ahead—we’re going to have to start by questioning old assumptions about scope, scale, and speed: what we choose to work on, how big our goals are, and the pace at which we move. Whether you’re a school librarian, a fourth-grader, or the president of the United States, new ideas about scope, scale, and speed change everything.

We now live in a world of withering environmental and social change. Carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has reached 395.55 parts per million (CO2Now.org 2013), and this level is increasing 10,000 times faster than it has changed over the last 65 million years (James Hansen in Childs 2012, 54). At least 16,928 species are currently threatened with extinction, including 21 percent of all mammals (Facing the Future 2013). There are 63 active armed conflicts worldwide (Conflictmap.org 2013), and 1.4 billion people—more than the combined populations of the USA, Canada, and the European Union nations—live on the equivalent of less than $1.25 a day (World Bank 2008). And these are just some of the challenges of the present moment; developments in fields such as biotechnology, nanotechnology, and artificial intelligence ensure that the future will be even more uncertain. It is likely that we are entering a long epoch of dramatic and accelerating change.

So working slowly on the same old tasks, with the same old tools, at the same old speed just isn’t good enough anymore. It’s time for all hands on deck; anyone who can think, teach, or make can play...
an important role in solving big problems. However, to get the job done we’re going to have to change the way we do and think about work, starting now. Starting yesterday.

For my humble part, I work at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC. The Smithsonian is the world’s largest museum and research complex. It is an amazing place with 137 million physical collection objects, 28 museums and research centers, and a zoo. We have 6,000 employees, more than 6,000 volunteers, and 700 buildings. Our mission is "the increase and diffusion of knowledge" (Smithsonian 2011).

That’s a big mission, a big responsibility, but not so different than the call to action in every school and library in the country: make good things happen for teachers, learners, and creators; help people succeed, and through that process, establish the preconditions for individual fulfillment, a healthy planet, and an enlightened democracy. The Smithsonian might be bigger than your neighborhood school, but, at the end of the day, the Smithsonian, like every other institution, is a team of people who has to figure out how to organize themselves to accomplish things, day in and day out. Most organizations rely on common cultural assumptions about how to do this. I don’t know when we, the American workforce, first formed these assumptions, but there seems to be a sort of unspoken, gentleman’s agreement about how we do work in organizations. I’ll call this way of working the broadcast model, and it goes something like the diagram in figure 1.

You hire the smartest and most talented people you can find, experts, and you put them in an organization with offices and support staff and managers and bureaucracy, and, for the most part, the experts define the problems to be solved, design the solutions, do the things that need doing, and deliver the final products—books, exhibitions, instruction, access to information—down a one-way conduit to intended recipients: students, consumers: an audience (see figure 2). The experts do, the audiences consume, and rarely, if ever, do they switch places. The audiences don’t define the problems. The audiences don’t bring expertise or effort to the table, and the audiences certainly don’t build the final products.

A lot of great stuff in the twentieth century got created this way. The broadcast idiom gave us automobiles, the Hoover Dam, Encyclopaedia Britannica, and Baywatch on TV. Much of our culture and commerce has been generated through the broadcast idiom. This is largely how we taught school, ran government, and made things: experts producing for consumers. This model was all that we knew, and it seemed to work well enough, then.

But a nagging doubt formed in our minds when we started typing “http://” and pulling out our smartphones to get things done. We didn’t just find more information; we found new voices, expertise, and ideas; answers and paths that we didn’t know existed; new ways of organizing that went beyond the broadcast model and opened up the possibility that there could be new rules for getting work done. And I
say this, not because I think that you don’t know about the World Wide Web, but because I want you to think about how these changes affect what we strive to accomplish together, how big these accomplishments can be, and how fast we can get them done: scope, scale, and speed.

I think three ideas summarize these changes quite powerfully: Joy’s Law, Cognitive Surplus, and “every user a hero.”

Joy’s Law

Bill Joy was the cofounder of Sun Microsystems in the U.S., and he famously said, “No matter what business you’re in, most of the smartest people work for someone else” (Lakhani and Panetta 2007).

It’s a clever quip, but its wisdom slowly reveals itself. Here at the Smithsonian, we’ve got a strong focus on biodiversity and climate change. There are 6,000 Smithsonian employees, but only a small fraction of them work directly on climate change or biodiversity issues. How many people are there on Earth now? Seven billion? Where are most of the innovation, the drive, the knowledge, and the discovery needed to tackle these problems going to come from? Where is most of that work going to happen? Inside the walls of a single institution, or everywhere else on the planet? Joy’s Law stands one of the main tenets of 20th-century organizations on its head; if you want progress on big difficult tasks, hire brilliant people, but also look outside of your own walls for expertise, effort, and innovation.

Chris Anderson, the author of The Long Tail: Why the Future of Business Is Selling Less of More (Hyperion 2006), told us at a conference at the Smithsonian: Pick any item from our 137-million-object collection and the odds are that the people who know the most about that object don’t work for us, and we don’t even know who they are. But now, thanks to the Internet, they can find us, and they can find and work with each other (Anderson n.d.). That’s what Joy’s Law is all about: finding experts and helping them collaborate, wherever they are.

Cognitive Surplus

The second idea about the present (and future) is from Clay Shirky’s 2010 book Cognitive Surplus. In this book Shirky asserts that the Internet-connected, educated population of planet Earth has a trillion hours of free time every year, time that can be used to achieve some greater good.

A trillion hours.

As a point of reference, Shirky notes that in the United States over 200 billion of those hours are spent watching television every year.

That’s a lot of time that can be used, with a new way of organizing, to accomplish something.

Every User a Hero

The third idea about our 21st-century reality comes from social media thought leader Kathy Sierra. Sierra has observed that in the old days of the twentieth century, an institution, a brand, or government would say to its audience, customers, or constituents, in essence: trust us, buy our...
Sierra tweeted in 2009, “I am your user. I am supposed to be the protagonist. I am on a hero’s journey. Your company should be a mentor or a helpful sidekick. Not an orc.”

Each of these three ideas is useful on its own, but together they describe a new way of thinking about scope, scale, and speed. Joy’s Law tells us that there’s more expertise and know-how outside our organizations than within them. Cognitive Surplus tells us about the size and potential of this vast global network. And “every user a hero” tells us that to harness this potential we need to be humble, helpful guides on a shared journey, not oracles broadcasting to passive recipients. These are not just theoretical constructs; they’re accurate summaries of the way organizations are getting real work done today, and they’re as valid in a museum or a school library as they are in a Fortune 500 boardroom.

The Encyclopedia of Life (EOL) was conceived by biologist Edward O. Wilson to provide “global access to knowledge about life on Earth” by creating a single wiki page for every species on Earth. Even though EOL is supported by a consortium of sixteen research institutions, including the Smithsonian, the project’s leaders know that much of the expertise and effort required for this gargantuan effort will not come from their own institutions. Therefore, EOL was set up to encourage and support global collaboration, and members of the public have contributed over 1,500 articles and 168,000 images to date (Encyclopedia of Life Images 2013). Over a million pages of content have been created so far.

The National Library of Australia’s Trove website encourages citizens to correct text errors made by the optical character recognition program used to automatically transcribe digitized newspaper pages. Over 80 million newspaper pages are now online, and a volunteer army of over 82,000 people have contributed to the effort; active users routinely make over 100,000 text corrections a day (National Library of Australia 2013). What motivates people to contribute their time and effort to projects like this? For the most part, participants report that it’s fun, rewarding, and it gives them a sense that they’re a part of a community that’s working together for an important social good (Holley 2012). Managers of websites like Trove use the logic of Kathy Sierra’s “every user a hero” to make their users feel like stars.

Zooniverse is a website that enables citizens to contribute effort toward scientific research. One of their projects is to create an accurate model of global climate change by transcribing longitude, latitude, temperature, and barometric pressure entries from three centuries of maritime logbooks. Project leaders estimate that there may be a billion handwritten logbook entries to process, a quantity so large that this effort probably would not even have been conceived of or attempted before the Internet. However, with the cognitive surplus of volunteer enthusiasts this work is being done quickly and accurately. As of this writing, over 785,000 individuals have contributed their time to Zooniverse projects (Zooniverse 2012).
OpenStreetMap <www.openstreetmap.org> is, according to its home page, “a free worldwide map, created by people like you.” In the fashion of a wiki, detailed, accurate global maps are built and edited by volunteers without central coordination or control. What kind of scale do you get with this approach? To date, OpenStreetMap’s users have contributed 15 million edits and 1.8 billion map elements (2013a, 2013b), and the resulting maps are free to use and incorporate into new websites and products. A smartphone application enables users to edit and correct maps on the go, from wherever users happen to be standing.

Ancestry.com <http://ancestry.com> has over 900,000 participants—in the old days we might have called them an “audience”—who have created more than 26 million family trees containing over 2.6 billion profiles of people. They have uploaded and attached to their family trees over 65 million photographs, scanned documents, and written stories, making the site richer and more informative for all users (Ancestry.com 2012; SI Web n.d.).

In 2012, 2,241,475 people from over 177 countries pledged $319,786,629 to support 18,109 projects through the crowd-funding website Kickstarter <www.kickstarter.com>. Projects included an open-source Geiger counter to measure radiation levels following the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami in Japan, Baghdad’s first hacker space, and, for $3,720, a temporary exhibition at the public library in Rockport, Maine. In the spirit of Kathy Sierra’s “every user a hero,” Kickstarter is all about helping other people to be successful, and the diversity of the projects supported and amount of money invested is truly breathtaking (Kickstarter 2012a, 2012b).

Finally, I was intrigued by Tom Friedman’s January 2013 New York Times article about online education. While Friedman observed that the online course provider Coursera was teaching 214 courses to 2.4 million students, for me it was the indirect consequences of this astonishing scale that really got my attention. Friedman reported that Princeton sociology professor Mitch Duneier had recently taught his introduction to sociology class on Coursera to 40,000 students from 113 countries. Duneier said, “When I give this lecture on the Princeton campus, I usually receive a few penetrating questions. In this case, however, within a few hours of posting the online version, the course forums came alive with hundreds of comments and questions. Several days later there were thousands. ... Within three weeks I had received more feedback on my sociological ideas than I had in a career of teaching, which significantly influenced each of my subsequent lectures and seminars.”

New Possibilities for School Libraries

When I look at these examples I am filled with awe and admiration for the individuals who were able to look at a classroom, a map, or a scientific or creative challenge and rethink our old assumptions about the scope, scale, and speed of their work—about who the experts are, where the cognitive surplus could be found, and what the new relationship between organizations and audiences could be. Rethinking these old constraints opens up new possibilities for discovery, innovation, and personal fulfillment.

Now we must begin the process of evaluating all the challenges we face to see how they might yield to new ways of working, and what better place to start than a school library? AASL’s Standards for the 21st-Century Learner and AASL’s Learning4Life initiative can both be summarized as “think, create, share, and grow.” How fresh and challenging can those thoughts be? Who gets to be involved in creativity and sharing? And how much growing should we expect?

I think that when we look back at this moment one hundred years from now, we’ll recognize that the decisions we’re making today about what we choose to work on, how big our goals are, and the pace at which we move are among the most important decisions we ever made.
Michael Edson is the Smithsonian Institution’s director of web and new media strategy, and he has been involved in practically every aspect of technology and new media for museums. In addition to developing the Smithsonian’s first web and new media strategy, Michael helped create the Smithsonian’s first blog and the first alternative reality game to take place in a museum. He was a member of the National Endowment for the Arts “Art Works” task force, which mapped the relationship between the arts and the quality of life in American communities, and he was named a “Tech Titan 2011: Person to Watch” by Washingtonian magazine. He has a BA from Wesleyan University.

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Getting the Most out of
HARTFORD
CONNECTICUT
AASL’s biennial National Conference and Exhibition provides a professional development opportunity—whether or not you’re going. All that information in one place with all those school librarians is a recipe for rapid dissemination. Yet it’s a challenge to figure out if you’re getting everything you can out of those five days. Staying or going, you need a plan for getting the most out of a conference that many school librarians feel is the professional development highlight of alternate years.

On the Road

Woo-hoo! You’re headed to Hartford, and you need a plan for maximum success. I always feel an astonishingly great amount of pressure to get the most out of a conference because of the time away from work and the expense. How do I get my money’s worth? Read on.

Preconference workshops and tours are value adds. Obviously, you don’t have to do the preconferences; your conference registration fee will give you access to many great sessions that will keep you in ideas for years. But I often get even more out of the preconference sessions, and I get to spend more time with the same group of people for a few hours, allowing for great networking before the conference even starts. I particularly love the tours! The snacks are usually outstanding, and I’ve never attended a preconference event without coming away with a new program addition.

Milking the exhibit hall for all its worth. I’m going to be honest—I might be considered fun and helpful by my friends, but when it comes to the exhibit hall, get out of my way. Not only is this room a wonderful place to talk face to face with vendors, but it’s also a place to take advantage of outstanding vendor discounts, free trials, and awesome swag. Since I became a school librarian thirteen years ago, I don’t think I’ve bought a pen or tote bag. Don’t be afraid to take the freebies; vendors don’t want to ship them home, and they know the items provide great publicity for their products.

Yes, you can wander up and down the aisles in a random pattern (like you’ve just moved to a new town and are mapping the local grocery store), but the random approach is not the most efficient way to tackle this opportunity. Make a note of when the exhibit hall doors open (5:30 p.m. on Thursday) and get there early. Waiting can be both fun and productive; sit on the rug and take out the exhibit hall map in your program so you can look through the ads and coupons and circle the booths offering the giveaways. Pay a quick visit to the other vendors, promising to stop by later to chat. Putting names to faces is so important, and you’ll hear about new changes and improvements to products. If it’s ARCs (advance reader copies) you want, head to the publisher booths and stock up. I use my Goodreads account to find lists of the upcoming YA books, and I note which books are from which publishers so I can plan accordingly.

Speaking of books, publishers are often happy to let you call dibs on the pricey display copies they’re using (they don’t want to haul them back home, after all), and they may even give you a discount. You need to stick around until the exhibit hall is ready to close, but it’s a great way to get much-needed volumes at bargain prices. You need to have a way to indicate that you’ve claimed a book, so bring extra address labels!

If you drive to the conference, you won’t need to worry about anything except how much square footage your trunk has, but if you fly, you will have to face the dilemma of how to get your purchases home. The conference center usually has a post office or shipping store close to the exhibit hall. Some people find it more affordable to put a smaller suitcase inside a larger one and then use the extra bag to cart home their books and swag. I use a website like Airfare Watchdog (<www.airfar dowatchdog.com/blog/3801089/airline-baggage-fees-chart-updated>) to check the going rate for additional luggage to figure out what the cost-effective choice is.

Planning for meals. This is, interestingly enough, a huge issue for people. School librarians who can—with aplomb—handle thirty rowdy seventh-graders wilt in the face of heading out alone for a meal. If you’re enjoying a conversation with someone in a session or on your preconference trip, ask if he or she has meal plans. I’ve yet to meet the librarian who doesn’t offer an invitation if it’s in his or her power.
Before the conference, post something on your local library e-list to ask who is headed to the conference and if they want to meet up to trade impressions over a meal.

Registering for the conference puts your e-mail address on a list for vendors. You’ll be bombarded with offers for breakfasts, lunches, and dinner receptions, so sign up! Usually, great door prizes are associated with these parties (iPads and e-readers are common giveaways), and you just have to listen to someone from the company make a sales pitch. In Hartford these sponsored meals will be more plentiful than ever because the Connecticut Convention Center doesn’t have quite as many restaurants surrounding it as centers in some other cities do. So seize the opportunity for both a complimentary meal and the chance to sit next to a stranger—you’ll leave with a friend.

Worst-case scenario—you’re by yourself and hungry. Who cares? It’s a conference, and people eat alone all the time with no one batting an eyelash. Read one of your new ARCs, check your work e-mail, or open the Flipboard app on your tablet and catch up with the news. You’re a librarian reading. Who’s going to argue with that image?

Tuning in from Home

Budget realities are ugly. Many of us have been given budget numbers that would scandalize a cheapskate, and we cut the items our students and teachers don’t see, with professional development usually the first line axed (if we even had professional development funding to begin with). Luckily, proven strategies can help us experience the conference even if we aren’t enjoying the Nutmeg State up close and personal.

Delegate, delegate, delegate. You might not be going, but it’s very likely someone you know is. It might be another librarian in the district or someone in your area who has found the money to attend. Talk about her plans. Look over the schedule and talk about a session or two you are interested in; the lucky attendee might have already put those sessions on her schedule or be happy to go for you. I’ve ducked into sessions for other people to, at least, get the handouts (luckily, they’re all online now, which makes things easier!). Ask the friend attending if she’d be willing to do a presentation when she gets back or to share impressions over lunch or coffee. I’ve yet to meet the school librarian who says no or isn’t happy to photocopy/share information and freebies.

Stay glued to the blog posts. You’re already following the AASLBlog and you know it will have regular coverage, but following other school librarians’ blogs is also crucial at conference time. Heavy-hitting bloggers often put out detailed posts on the sessions they attend (or better yet, run) with great links, pictures, and often slideshows of the presentations. You’ll get the gist with none of the expense and travel. Plus, bloggers love to respond to questions and comments, so feel free to interact online with attendees and presenters.

Twitter is your friend. Even if you only dabble in Twitter, this is the time to have TweetDeck or HootSuite open on your computer (or smartphone) with a column devoted to the conference hashtag #AASL13. Research the sessions, the authors, and even the featured schools, and see if they have Twitter handles. Following them will result in hearing their views of the conference and feeling as if you’re there as it’s happening.

Are You Ready Yet?

Whether you experience the conference in the Connecticut Convention Center or at home wearing your fuzzy slippers, AASL gives you access to great information. Good professional development is always energizing, and a conference should make you feel plugged into an electrical socket. By networking with colleagues, finding great information, and making new connections—either in person or virtually—you can be assured that you’re “rising to the challenge” of getting the most out of what will surely be a terrific collection of great ideas.

Courtney Lewis is the director of libraries at Wyoming Seminary College Preparatory School, a K–12 day/boarding school in Kingston, Pennsylvania. She’ll be headed to Hartford in November, so say “Hi” if you see her, but also feel free to follow her impressions of the conference on her blog at <http://thesassylibrarian.blogspot.com>.
One of my education heroes, Tony Wagner will be the AASL keynote speaker during the AASL 16th National Conference and Exhibition. As I reflected on my multiyear interest in Tony’s work and his message, a couple of questions arose. What is a keynote speaker? And why is a keynote speaker important? The list of competencies requisite for an individual to be called upon to “keynote” an event can be extensive.

For argument’s sake, I want to look at Tony’s keynote-appropriateness rating (on the “Chuck” rating scale) in light of the following four criteria for keynote speakers:

1) Have a wealth of knowledge to share, which has been accrued over a long period of time.

2) Are sage.

3) Can inspire.

4) Offer a glimpse into the future.

I’m happy to say that Tony Wagner meets all four.

First off, Tony Wagner’s background positions him firmly in the experienced educator, leader, scholar category and, therefore, should provide him with plenty of material. He has been a high school English and social studies teacher, school principal, nonprofit manager, change leadership guru, and has a Harvard doctorate. He was founder and codirector of the Change Leadership Group at Harvard and recently accepted a position as the first Innovation Education Fellow at the Technology and Entrepreneurship Center at Harvard. It is safe to say that he measures up on my first criterion.

Second, according to the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) online, “sage” pertains to a person who is wise, discreet, and judicious by experience (Oxford University Press 2013b). Tony’s sagacity stems from his research interests and data analysis from many years of interviews with students, teachers, and industry leaders. Based on his research and data analysis, he has distilled seven survival skills that all students must master to compete for and keep jobs in our globally connected world:

- Critical thinking and problem solving
• Collaboration across networks and leading by influence

• Agility and adaptability

• Initiative and entrepreneurialism

• Effective oral and written communication

• Accessing and analyzing information

• Curiosity and imagination (Wagner 2013)

Third, “inspire” has multiple definitions, again from the OED: “to infuse into the mind; to kindle, arouse, awaken in the mind or heart (a feeling, idea, impulse, purpose, etc.)” (Oxford University Press 2013a). The inspirational speaker has his or her place within the pantheon of motivational presenters. Any number of inspirational keynote speakers could fill Tony’s time slot in November. They come with a wealth of experience, speaking with sagacity as our fingers fly across our keyboards or screens, attempting to capture their pearls of wisdom; they bring us to the edge of our seats and offer us a glimpse into the future. Yet hours, weeks, or months later we may be able to recall where the pearl was stored for safekeeping, but the keynote’s name has faded and the message judged as timely rather than timeless. Tony is the type of speaker who inspires while subtly planting a seed that germinates and eventually takes on a life of its own.

To me, what moves Tony from the good to great keynote speaker category comes from his ability to synthesize the answers to these types of questions, distill the logic models that govern different types of strategies and interactions, and then take the listener to the next level. He explains to his audience what is necessary for students to know and do in preparation for their futures, and guides us in getting them there.

He has not developed the latest fad that will be the end-all solution for a certain specific educational malady. Rather, his focus is on why schools must change and what students must know and be able to do to be globally competitive and college- and career-ready.

Lastly, what of the futurist? A speaker’s experience and wisdom, shared with and enhanced by an inspirational tone, are part and parcel of a good keynote. I am a very polite and respectful listener when it comes to these types of presenters, but I am also a curious guy. I want to know what is happening in the classroom next door, the neighboring school, in Arkansas or Mumbai. What are current best practices? Who is leading and in what area? Where do I need to go programmatically to maximize the utility of my library space, teaching, and management of increasingly scarce resources, and how do I develop the partnerships—within and without my building—with students, parents, staff, and administrators?

At the end of the day, I want to know that what I do daily will make a difference—now and in the future—in the life of a child.

Tony should easily meet his end of the bargain and fulfill the highest levels of appropriateness (on the “Chuck” rating scale) for keynoting the conference. I plan to “rise to the challenge” of being an informed keynote consumer, gather enough pearls from the presentation to make a difference in my practice, and then nurture the seeds he sows in my mind so that I can bring them to fruition.

Charles O’Bryan is the library director at the State University of New York, College at Oneonta. In 2008 he had the great fortune to travel abroad as a Japan Fulbright Memorial Fund Scholar. In the fall of 2012 Charles rode his bike from Lebanon to the Red Sea. He recently was accepted into the MLIP PhD program at Simmons College.

Works Cited:


Conference themes

READING
26 Connecting Authors to Readers through the School Library
Karyn N. Silverman

LEADERSHIP
30 The Solo Act
Managing the School Library with an Army of One and Learning from One Another
Laura Bishop

TEACHING & LEARNING
36 Creating Virtual Spaces
Shannon Hyman

LITERACY
40 Lost in Transliteracy
How to Expand Student Learning across a Variety of Platforms
Barbara Gogan and Adam Marcus

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS
46 Flying High with the Information Fluency Continuum
Ana Canino-Fluit

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS
52 Information Superheroes
School Librarians Have a Responsibility to Implement Common Core State Standards
Sara Frey

Karyn N. Silverman
ksilverman@lrei.org
On one side of books are the authors and, on the other, the readers. Two passionate, invested parties, who want to connect—but creating those connections for our readers is not always a simple task.

Moreover, connection takes many different forms and can range from mostly passive to highly interactive. At one end of the spectrum, readers absorb books or sit in the audience while an author speaks, and authors read online reviews. At the other end of the spectrum readers and authors actively engage with one another, sometimes in person (at the AASL National Conference, for example!), but more often by means of blogs, Twitter, forums like writing site Figment, book review networks like Goodreads, and microblogging platform Tumblr.

What almost all of these connection points have in common is that they are digital; the one exception is the author visit, but these days even that can be done via Skype. The Skype visit is a huge boon to schools and libraries outside major metropolitan areas! In the past several years, more and more authors have made themselves at home on the Internet, and, as a result, readers have more and more ways to connect with authors. But how do school librarians facilitate those connections?

Bring Authors to Your Library

The author visit is the basic backbone of building connections between readers (actual or potential) and writers. Some of us are lucky enough to be in areas rich in authors, which makes arranging these visits...
easier. For several years, I had a lunchtime author visit program, where authors (often debut authors for whom the publishers wanted to create buzz) came and spoke to a small group of excited readers. I hosted two or three of these visits each year, booktalking the book to generate buzz and sharing the ARC (advance reader copy) as widely as possible. (Sometimes I had several copies.) What I loved most was seeing the reader–writer connections that happened over the small things: for example, an author might mention having a dog, and one student would excitedly ask what breed. Or the author would say something nice to a student—maybe a compliment on a piece of jewelry (during what was, I confess, a paranormal romance–heavy series of visits with mostly female attendees)—and the student became a fan for life.

We try to host at least one major author visit each year, with an assembly and classroom visits, because the best visits are the ones where the author gets to connect with smaller groups of students. The real magic is in the handful of kids who drift up to the stage at the end and ask the questions they were too shy to ask at the Q&A or that were too specific for that forum (“In the last chapter, when she said...”). Classroom visits with rich conversation and writing exercises are perhaps the best venues for true engagement between readers and writer.

I realize these visits are part of the privilege of being in New York City, but there are ways to create this kind of program using local resources. Authors are everywhere. Contact the school and library marketing folks at the publishing houses and find out who is in your neck of the woods. Many authors—especially those invested in building a reputation and readership by word of mouth—are willing to do school and library visits for cheap or free. Whoever they are, try to bring them in, although reading their books first is always a good idea! Schools and public libraries can also team up to cover costs when they do exist or to share spaces and audiences. When I worked in a public library, I recruited local schools for author visits all the time, and now that I am in a school, I love being on the other side of that partnership.

And of course, even distant authors can visit via Skype. You’ll want an enthusiastic group for a Skype visit, where the artifice of the connection can be awkward. All author visits are better when some students have read at least part of the author’s work, but this familiarity with the author’s work is even more important for an author’s digital visit. And make sure you have a good set-up; speakers and a projection screen do wonders for a Skype visit!

Allow Yourself to Be a Fangirl or Fanboy

For many teens, connecting to authors is just one facet of a complex fandom (and fandom has gone from being geeky to mainstream). Teens might be drawing pictures of favorite characters (I have so many students who do this that we have featured their fan art on a bulletin board in the school library), writing fanfiction, sharing quotes on Tumblr, creating or buying t-shirts on CafePress or Redbubble—even dressing as a character or in ways that evoke a character. Students might be obsessively reading and rereading an author’s works long after the last visit.

When the adults who give teens books model this kind of genuine, passionate connection rooted in love for the books, we model an interaction with literature and its creators that can inspire teen readers.
work and finding meaning in it. Their enthusiasm and passion sometimes look strange to our jaded adult eyes, but as school librarians we can encourage our teens by letting ourselves be fans of books—and of their creators.

When the adults who give teens books model this kind of genuine, passionate connection rooted in love for the books, we model an interaction with literature and its creators that can inspire teen readers. Be excited when authors share exciting news on their websites or when you come across news in Publishers Weekly or on YALSA’s The Hub. Share the news when an author replies to you on Twitter. Had a book signed, maybe at ALA, and interacted with an author? Tell your kids. Better yet, stop having books signed to you (we’ve all done it!) and get some signed to give away. Whenever possible, I try to give really passionate senior readers a graduation gift of a signed ARC from a favored author. (This is easier for me now that BookExpo America is almost always in NYC.) Even unsigned ARCs can help create or encourage fans, and that fandom is the impetus for connection.

Connect Yourself

Every author seems to have a different online hangout. Some use their own names and are easily found with a Google search; others are harder to find, or have common names, or hang out in places like Tumblr, which is notoriously difficult to search effectively. If you want your students to find the authors, you need to know where the authors are. If you have this information, sometimes connecting a reader becomes part of the information you share in response to a question about when an author’s next book is coming out. Instead of finding the information, try leading the teen to the author’s website or blog and take a minute to talk about how much great content will be there.

For many teens, connecting with an author whose work they admire (or adore) is intimidating. Model those connections. Take the time to visit author websites and, if possible, create some sort of finding guide to enable self-discovery by interested readers. Talk to students about the connections you’ve made, whether as an audience member (“Did you read that thing Maureen Johnson wrote on her blog? No? Hang on, let me pull it up for you.”) or an active conversationalist (“I asked John Green about that on Twitter the other day, and he said...”).

Know the tools for connection. Does this author respond mostly on Twitter? Be prepared to teach Twitter to your teens. I use Goodreads in our ninth-grade curriculum largely because of the connections to readers and writers it offers, and while we don’t require it beyond ninth grade, many students remain active because they want to stay connected.

Use these tools, teach them, create programs around them. School librarians, like the books we promote, can stand in the center of the reader-writer relationship; use that central position to bring the two ends closer together.

Karyn Silverman is the high school librarian and Educational Technology Department chair at LREI (Little Red School House and Elisabeth Irwin High School). In addition to promoting reading and author connections at the school, she reviews for Kirkus and is one of the coauthors of Someday My Printz Will Come (<http://blogs.slj.com/printzblog>, a hotbed of Printz speculation and reviews).
Two years as a solo—and counting.

Approximately two years ago I assumed my current position as the upper school librarian for a brand-new school library. My situation was exciting; I would be the inaugural librarian in a gorgeous, brand-new facility in a very new upper school division of a very new school. Vision was essential, and I had it! My situation was also daunting; I would be the only librarian responsible for building a school library program—and this was my first formal school library position, having come from public libraries and a maternity leave placement! I was a bundle of mixed emotions: enthusiastic and filled with the hope that comes with a new beginning, yet completely overwhelmed about the task that I had been entrusted with...alone.

It is safe to say that my first year could be summed up thusly: treading water while integrating myself into the fabric of our school community. The most important accomplishments of that year were the fact that I established positive collegial bonds with faculty members and won their trust and that I did not give up, despite some very challenging circumstances. No mean feat, really; however, I was disappointed that I had not been able to accomplish more of the curriculum and collection development goals I’d set for myself.

What I’ve Learned

Be realistic. Looking back now, I realize that a number of circumstances—well beyond my control—limited me. Now, I am comfortable with the idea of limitations, whereas before I was not. A perfectionist with a lofty vision, I am now able to acknowledge and accept my limits, as long as it is not for lack of trying or taking at least a few baby steps in the right direction.

Every school is different. Each school is a little country unto itself with a unique culture, procedures, traditions, demographics, etc. This reality is important to recognize; take the experience of others into account—for sure—but with the understanding that your school is a different animal and certain ideas may not be such a good fit—or, at least, not for the time being.

At the annual New York State Association of Independent Schools Education and Information Technology Conference in 2010, a group of school librarians and technologists Skyped with Joyce Valenza. She had an interesting comment for educators weary of the idea that we had to be all things to all people in our school community: “Focus on what’s coming through the door.” This advice has echoed through my thoughts on numerous occasions. I’ve taken it to heart with two other pieces of advice from friends and colleagues (both clichés, but not insubstantial): “Rome was not built in a day” and “Pace yourself.”

When I get lost in the myriad tasks I must attend to and start to feel overwhelmed, all three of these statements have a palliative effect and seem to right me. I can stop, reflect, and focus on the most immediate of needs and steps I need to take toward my goals.

Have the right kind of goals. Most goals work only when they are accompanied by a clear plan or system for measuring and
checking one’s progress. This process involves a great deal of strategizing—sometimes down to the most minute levels. Each goal can be broken down into many steps (something I failed to do at first) so that you create your own benchmarks toward realizing the goal. Often referred to as “S.M.A.R.T.” goals, this type of goal is specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound (Doran 1981). The S.M.A.R.T. system provides a framework for creating realistic goals and measuring your progress. It is sometimes difficult to step back and realize I have actually been moving forward, one step at a time, slowly, but steadily.

Celebrate yourself! It is not often that others in our schools will give us the recognition we deserve for our commitment and hard work. Whenever I do get a compliment from a faculty member, I am over the moon! Of course I know when I’m doing a good job, but having my efforts recognized by teachers means a great deal; people are noticing what I do, and, what’s more, they appreciate it! However, many times I’ve had to be the one patting myself on the back and offering myself encouragement and “gold stars”—even if they were for disasters avoided. The point is, I took the time to celebrate my own achievements, and, in doing so, I tended to my need for recognition and took true pride in my work.

Get connected to other library professionals locally, regionally, or virtually. I cannot emphasize enough the importance of getting and staying connected to other librarians, especially school librarians. Active engagement within library associations diminishes feelings of professional isolation. No doubt, time and funding can be factors that impede this engagement, but connecting virtually is free!

Connect through the literature. I’d like to loosen up the definition of what we consider “networking” and include regularly reading the professional literature out there. In doing so, you will feel less alone, and you will gain inspiration. I guarantee it.

If you’ve read any school library news in the past few years you will be very familiar with the trend: Flying solo is fast becoming the norm for school librarians. Take the recent case of Pennsylvania librarians that was recently brought before Pennsylvania’s state legislators (Staino 2012). Citing results from the study Creating 21st Century Learners: A Report on Pennsylvania’s Public School Libraries (PA School Library Project 2012), Mary Kay Biagini pointed out both disturbing and compelling findings.

Disturbing: In Philadelphia, 103 public schools don’t have school libraries. Statewide, over half of Pennsylvania’s students do not have access to a full-time librarian. Compelling: Students with access to both a school library and a full-time school librarian score higher on state reading and writing tests (PA School Library Project 2012, 3, 7–8).

A number of existing Philadelphia school librarians must divide their time among several schools, simultaneously juggling responsibilities for administration, instruction, and development for multiple schools. The current state of public school librarians in Pennsylvania was cast in a particularly dismal light when Sandra Zelno, a representative from the Education Law Center, testified that the state had no mandate for librarians in K–12 public schools, yet mandates them for private schools, prisons, and hospitals, among other institutions.

Pennsylvania’s state representatives are slated to bring results of these studies and testimony heard at the informational hearings to the table during state budget discussions for 2013–2014 (Staino 2012). Meanwhile, the position of school library advisor at the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of State Library, Division of School Library Media Services, is being
I've Learned

1. Be realistic
2. Focus on what's coming through the door
3. Have the right kind of goals and celebrate yourself
4. Every school is different
5. Get connected
An information literacy curriculum is currently being written to be embedded in the state’s Common Core State Standards, and annual assessments of school library programs are planned (PA State Board of Ed. 2011).

We’ve all read of at least one instance that echoes the experiences of public school librarians in Philadelphia. Though the Pennsylvania report focused on public K–12 schools, in this time of recession-era budgeting and politics, independent schools are not immune to this trend. Many in the independent school world know at least one school librarian in a private school who is the sole librarian in the building (without clerical support). Even more problematic is the fact that few charter schools even have a librarian—or a library!

In 2011 Knowledge Quest published an entire issue focused on “The Solo Librarian” (Volume 40, Number 2). All school librarians—not just solos—should take a gander; the librarians featured in that issue have shared valuable strategies to maximize time and resources. Overall, their experiences have shown them to be extremely creative and resilient. I urge you to keep this issue close by. Even if you’re working as part of a library team, the ideas are invaluable.

Do also check out the November/December 2011 installment of AASL’s 30 Second Thought Leadership (<www.ala.org/aasl/aaslpubsandjournals/knowledgequest/aboutkq/30second>). It presents interesting responses from leaders in our national professional community who were asked: “What one traditional activity should school librarians stop doing in order to increase time for strategic activities (collaboration, co-teaching, professional development, advocacy)?”

Getting Connected and Staying Connected

It is difficult to get time out of school—or time away from the responsibilities we have to our loved ones—to attend conferences, and tricky for many of us to gain access to the funding necessary to do so. Attendance must be given a high priority, though, as the resulting experiences pay dividends down the line, dividends that can sometimes turn out to be invaluable. If attending in person isn’t doable, explore possibilities for virtual attendance.

At the macro level, national and regional library associations provide membership in professional learning communities that offer support and resources for practicing school librarians. Many associations offer virtual connection through e-list access and committee work, in addition to roundtable experiences and annual conferences with their opportunities for face time with colleagues.

At the micro level, your local library associations can provide face-to-face interaction between professional development conferences or act as a perfectly suitable surrogate for the larger associations. Establishing a professional learning community could be accomplished through organizing regionally specific groups such as within a district or region or among alumni of particular ILS programs. Alternatively, focus-specific groups may also be set up: librarians at International Baccalaureate (IB) schools, charter school librarians, or librarians working in schools for students with special needs.

No time for a recurring commitment? How about attending one-off workshops specifically designed for school librarians focused on developing one particular skill, or meeting with an author, or hearing a master librarian lecture on a specific, timely issue?

Quite recently, I had the opportunity to travel to Los Angeles to receive training for librarians in IB as my school is an IB candidate. While I am the current membership coordinator for a regional librarians’ association (Hudson Valley Library Association) and participate regularly on our e-list, we actually meet as a whole group only three times a year. This IB training experience was the first face time I’d had with other school librarians in almost two months, and it was truly refreshing. For several days we shared resources, best practices, and our experiences. Not only did attending the training afford me the chance to establish some professional connections I will have and nurture for some time to come, it also granted me a feeling of solidarity that is missing in my daily life at school.

Visit <www.ala.org/aasl/about/community> to connect with other librarians through AASL’s various social and professional networking sites.
Supporting Ourselves and Future School Librarians in a World Gone Solo

Addressing the growing trend of solo librarianship, Patti McCall, writing for the LISjobs.com blog, suggested a number of tips to keep connected professionally, most notably finding a mentor (2004). I think this piece of advice is particularly compelling. Being a self-described verbal processor, I find it extremely helpful to have someone I can simply think out loud with or bounce ideas off. Some of my best strategies and ideas have come about this way. Besides getting an experienced colleague’s valuable feedback on ideas, interacting with a mentor can also provide reassuring affirmation about your decisions.

McCall rightly notes that some organizations will formally arrange mentorships. It is also something you can (and should) pursue on your own. Pursuing a mentor is something I wish I had done upon assuming my current position. Though it is not too late, having a mentor would surely have helped me during my overwhelming—and often tumultuous—first year as a solo.

Sadly, the reality is that systems for mentoring are not provided as often as they should be in graduate programs; this applies not only to school librarians and support staff, but also for teachers, as well. The best way to establish successful mentor-mentee relationships would be for both ILS programs and library associations to provide their students and members with mentoring programs. While ILS programs will assign and require an advisor for their students, this assignment is usually done arbitrarily and without a mentoring component. Failing to create opportunities that would help provide support and cultivate professional growth is a disservice—not just to the solos among us—but to the newbies and recent ILS grads.

Matching mentors and mentees is a simple thing to offer as it requires no budget, and little in the way of legwork; our professional societies have members, constituencies at the ready. Moreover, facilitating mentorship is an investment in the future of our profession. After all, the knock-on effect is inevitable, and paying it forward is the natural order of things, considering that the nature of librarianship is helping others.

Naturally, formally constructed mentoring “set-ups” may not necessarily be as successful as those that grow organically from consistent dialogue and recurring contact with our colleagues via professional association meetings, conferences, and events. However, professional association meetings—and conferences, in particular—can be infrequent, and the infusion of creative energy and camaraderie they offer is often trampled by the grind of everyday activities. At the least, we can offer mentoring set-ups for our members who are interested in either role. I liken these set-ups to blind dates; things may not work out, but there is always the chance that they could…and how wonderful it is when they do!

Facing and Changing Our Solo State

Sadly, solo school librarianship is fast becoming the norm, but we should strive to change that situation. Advocacy is essential, but possible only through collaborative solidarity. By consistently connecting with each other in any way possible, we can strengthen our professional solidarity. Maybe, someday, all schools will have a school librarian—ideally, one who isn’t working alone. Meanwhile, we must be realistic about our current circumstances. Arming ourselves and our colleagues with information and support by establishing regular contact, sharing our knowledge and wisdom gained through experience, and creating mentoring opportunities is vital to our success—and the success of the 21st-century learners in our schools—and will safeguard our future.

Laura Bishop began her career in librarianship as a children’s librarian for the New York Public Library. A long-time Brooklynite, she is currently the upper school librarian at Léman Manhattan Preparatory School in New York City.

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Laura Bishop

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CREATING VIRTUAL SPACES

Shannon Hyman
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“What were you thinking the first time you saw my face?”

Imagine a student posing this simple, yet intensely personal question to his mother as he researches the elements of his life that shape his identity. The assignment requires students to read closely and synthesize their learning about family influences and origins in their study of the novel *All the Broken Pieces* by Ann Burg, generating questions and discoveries through the innovative approach of personal interviews.

Now imagine the student recording the conversation with his mother using free, open-source software like Audacity <http://audacity.sourceforge.net> and then posting his recorded interview to a class blog modeled after the National Public Radio StoryCorps concept <http://storycorps.org/listen>. StoryCorps describes itself as a place where people are invited to “record, share, and preserve the stories of our lives.” The class blog *What’s Your Story?* <www.smore.com/6yqy> echoes this purpose as it takes the individual sound bite and combines it with other students’ stories to become part of something much bigger, a collection of threads that create the fabric of a generation. The result is shared with the intention of encouraging others to connect with family, ask the right questions, listen deeply, and then discover and document the pieces that make up their own lives. This process, as well as the act of listening to the stories of others, asks blog visitors to consider how these stories can continue to define the people we are yet to become.

As school librarians we know that powerful learning and teaching experiences are not so much about the tools we use, as they are about the information we discover and how we communicate this new knowledge to others. AASL’s *Standards for the 21st-Century Learner* remind us that learning is enhanced by a combination of face-to-face situations as well as virtual
experiences. A blog platform can provide a solid, slick forum for sharing information to a global audience, instantly offering street cred to the assignment and justifying work involved. The lines that separate teaching and learning become blurred, and we find that these are no longer categorical roles, but are, instead, essential elements of the flexible process that leads to growth.

On Robert Byrne’s blog, Free Technology for Teachers, he explains that school-related blogs have three basic purposes: distribution, discussion, and demonstration (2011). Digital newsletters in the form of school library blogs provide an easy, flexible source for accessible distribution of information. Powered by WordPress through Henrico County Public School’s portal <http://blogs.henrico.k12.va.us/byrdlibrary>, our school library blog allows moderated comments, a feature that welcomes discussion and encourages the information to flow both ways. Blogs can also yield a successful, stress-free experience for all those wishing to demonstrate their new knowledge and share their ideas. They allow us to move from being simply consumers of information to creators of information, engaging and interacting with each other in the twenty-first century.

Smore <www.smore.com> delivers a free, versatile, and virtual communication stage for students over the age of thirteen, as well as for teachers who are looking for an easy way to compile, house, and share student work outside the walls of the classroom. The learning curve is practically nonexistent for new users, and the final effect is stunning. We are currently working with our fourteen-year-old Education for Employment (EFE) students to create and share information through professional digital portfolios. (Information about the EFE program is available at <http://teachers.henrico.k12.va.us/CTE/EFE_Home.htm>.)

The initial purpose of the portfolio is to create a comprehensive overview of the student with the intention that he or she will be hired for a paid work-study job at the school level for the second semester. Students will self-evaluate throughout the process and use the journaling element of the blog to reflect on their work experiences. The extended purpose will be a digital portfolio that can be continually updated as a living document and used as part of the application process for employment outside of the school, as well as for future programs or college applications. Because the tool is simple and web-based, our students can focus on developing their content, creating a sleek, highly accessible professional digital portfolio. Portfolio elements are curated and crafted thoughtfully and monitored consistently by peer and adult editors to ensure accuracy and quality. Measureable growth is evidenced as students tackle issues and skills of digital literacy on a daily basis. Some examples can be found at <http://smore.com/srvz>, <http://smore.com/0j9r>, and <http://smore.com/6qpv>.

Like Smore, Striking.ly <http://strikingly.com> offers users a free, versatile service to share one-page portfolios, projects, event flyers, and more. The intuitive interface offers a variety of templates that can be customized with the user’s content. Editing
is easy with a hover-and-click function to make changes a breeze.

Recently, I used Striking.ly to create this digital resume to apply for a new position <www.strikingly.com/shannonhyman>. Guess what? I got the job.

Last fall I tackled the challenge of developing training for school librarians in our district that would enable them to create a virtual school library space and open a discussion about the innovative uses of these tools for students and staff. The expertise of fellow librarian Anita Tarbox and instructional technology resource teacher Doug Saunders were tapped to develop this session. We decided to focus on two district-supported platforms: WordPress and Google Sites. We developed a training module using a blog format <https://sites.google.com/a/henrico.k12.va.us/cvs> that could be introduced in one 45-minute session. Participants could then continue to use the training blog as a resource and forum for additional innovative applications. By using Google Sites as the platform to create the training module, we allowed participants to experience the ease and versatility first-hand and begin to explore and consider new possibilities for communication tools.

By harnessing the power of Google Drive, students can compose and link documents and portfolio elements to their Google Site that can be updated efficiently and reflected in real time. This functionality is a huge relief for anyone who has ever felt the pressure of trying to remember everything to include in an application, knowing that once it was submitted, changes could not be made. Google Sites can house audio, video, text, and image files using existing templates and also allows for free creative designing of virtual spaces. Training for this platform can be done by targeting a group with similar interests and purposes (e.g., rising juniors and seniors), or individually at point of need for students exploring appropriate communication tools for tasks as they arise.

Students, parents, and staff will also appreciate the flexibility and easy user interface of Google Sites. Sites remain accessible and editable by the student indefinitely whether students wish to continue to use the Google Apps for Education school account or transfer their ownership to their own personal Gmail accounts. A great example of this tool in action can be seen in this student’s recruitment site <https://sites.google.com/site/colehymanbaseball/home>. The site was created collaboratively by a parent (me!) and son as an alternative and effective way to share athletic and academic information with prospective universities’ admissions and coaching staffs.

As it is with any tools, the power of blogs lies in the innovation and purpose of their use. Communication in its purest, most effective form is found in the unexpected impact of the relationship that results when more than one person interacts with significant information. Remember how powerful that first simple question was at the beginning of this article? It turns out this assignment provided that young man’s mother with the opportunity to share the sweet details of their adoption story, revealing pieces of his personal story that have shaped him to be the amazing young man he is today.

Powerful teaching and learning experiences like this give a voice to the stories we long to tell, and a chance to interact with the stories of others.

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Shannon Hyman has taught and administered in public and private schools for the last twenty-three years while working in almost every content area with students ranging in age from pre-school through middle school. After completing her master’s degree through Longwood University’s School Library Media Program, she became a librarian at Byrd Middle School in Henrico, Virginia, where her team’s library program was honored in 2010 as Virginia’s Library of the Year. Shannon has been selected as the planning librarian for the newest elementary school in Henrico County, Kaechele Elementary, where she is already working to develop a virtual space. Her recent publications include an essay “You Had Me at ‘Hello’” featured in School Libraries: What’s Now, What’s Next, What’s Yet to Come, Buffy Hamilton and Kristen Fontichiaro’s crowd-sourced e-book <http://smashwords.com/books/view/96705>. Shannon believes she finds her most innovative and engaging ideas in the lives and imaginations of her amazing students. She loves to laugh, listen to all kinds of music, and she has developed an internal Starbucks radar.

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Work Cited:
IN TRANSLITERACY
HOW TO EXPAND STUDENT LEARNING ACROSS A VARIETY OF PLATFORMS
Picture a library, softly lit by the glow of warm incandescent bulbs, with the soothing white noise created by a thumb sliding across the page and meeting the index finger against the opposing side, a turn, and then a return to silence. Listen, perhaps, to the hushed dyadic whispers between a patron and a librarian across the circulation desk, discussing a book or a research project. Maybe even the flit of fingers cavorting through the card catalog, or the microfilm reel spinning. In this library there is a uniformity in both content and process among all patrons.

Now return to the twenty-first century, entering a space lit by the glow of computer screens, iPads, and environmentally friendly energy-efficient bulbs. Hear the trebled escape of sounds emanating from earbuds, the rapid tapping of fingers on keyboards, and the clicking of mice. Perhaps take notice of the digitally generated shutter.
AT A TIME WHEN TECHNOLOGIES CHANGE AT A RAPID PACE, THE ABILITY TO CREATE A SPACE WHERE STUDENTS CAN ACQUIRE MEANING IS THE CHARGE OF THE TRANSLITERATE SCHOOL LIBRARIAN.

sound from a camera. Some patrons text, some type, some write. Reading is happening through the printed page, online via RSS feeds and digital readers, as well as via audio. At a time when technologies change at a rapid pace, the ability to create a space where students can acquire meaning is the charge of the transliterate school librarian. Adaptation, flexibility, and an open mind are some of the tools we will need to promote learning that will accommodate our transliterate students, allowing them to construct and convey meaning in their world.

A transliteracy conversation includes these terms:

• **Multimedia creations:** These use more than one medium in the product, such as painting and video.

• **Transmedia creations:** The viewer becomes part of the creation. As one Hollywood executive involved in the creation of transmedia entertainment explained, “Transmedia... must utilize different media to create a single universe in which multiple storylines and characters can exist and evolve for an interactive audience experience” (Carman 2011).

• **Transliteracy:** “Transliteracy is the ability to read, write and interact across a range of platforms, tools, and media from signing and orality through handwriting, print, TV, radio and film, to digital social networks” (Newman et al. 2011).

How should the skills of transliteracy be addressed in the school library? Tom Ipri (2010) has addressed some of the problems we face as school librarians, pointing out that we do not yet have scope and sequence for transliteracy, nor are we ever likely to have them. Instead, students need to become transliterate by doing. They need opportunities to move between media as they demonstrate their understanding of science, mathematics, history, etc. The specific skills needed will evolve along with the technology employed, so the school librarian must keep up to date with this ever-changing landscape.

The experience of Mark McBride at SUNY Buffalo illustrates the potential and the problems with introducing transliteracy into the learning process. He redesigned his college-level Information Literacy class to reflect the idea that, to navigate life today, transliteracy is a necessary skill; his approach

Figure 1. At School Library Journal Leadership Summit 2011, Buffy Hamilton, learning strategist for the Cleveland (OH) Public Library, and others explained how school libraries can connect with learners through the use of transliteracies (Hamilton et al. 2010).
could be used at the K–12 level as well. While some of his students eagerly took to learning across many media and ended the experience feeling better prepared to conduct and present the results of research in the future, others were unable to collaborate with their fellow students and were unable to produce a cohesive project (2011). Clearly, scaffolding will be needed to ensure that all students are able to become literate across multiple platforms.

For specific ideas on how to incorporate transliteracy in middle and high school library programs, look at Gwyneth Jones’s The Daring Librarian blog <www.thedaringlibrarian.com>, which contains many. For instance, in her post “Livescribe Pencast Book Reviews & More!” from December 2, 2010, Jones described how students can pick up books and listen to a booktalk on a pen just by tapping it on a piece of paper taped in the book. They are then inspired to create booktalks of their own that can be accessed by other students (2010b). She also shared from a presentation she made to the Connecticut Association of School Librarians on how school librarians can keep up with the latest in transliteracy by sharing our experiences using social media and appropriate hashtags (2010a).

We should look at transliteracy as an opportunity to see student learning more holistically (see figure 2). Transliteracy “does not replace, but rather contains ‘media literacy’ and also ‘digital literacy’…transliteracy calls for a change of perspective away from the battles over print versus digital, and a move instead towards a unifying ecology not just of media, but of all literacies relevant to reading, writing, interaction and culture, both past and present. It is, we hope, an opportunity to cross some very obstructive divides” (Newman et al. 2011)

The Accidental Transliterist

You’re probably incorporating transliteracy practices into your school library program without knowing it. This past summer I (Adam) convinced my principal to let me add a new element to our usual public library summer reading program: collaboration. To engage our students in reading and bring them deep within the story, we needed to equip them with resources beyond the text. This addition of collaboration would allow students to experience a shift in their reading similar to how my own way of reading has evolved. What I noticed about my own reading habits is that, with the advent of the iPad, WiFi, and sites like YouTube, I began to merge my connection with the text (whether print or digital, be it fiction or nonfiction) with the wealth of information available in cyberspace.

What if a seamless link existed between the book and the resources available to bring the page to life? What if students were able to share their enhanced reading experience in a social media arena?

I titled the new program “One Summer, One Book to Remember.” I created a school-wide book club where every staff member and K–5 student would receive and read the same book. VoiceThread accounts were set up for the school, and I created a VoiceThread <www.voicethread.com> site to act as our virtual meeting place. The site consisted of slides that were carefully aligned to the content and scope of the book. (We read Claudia Mills’ How Oliver Olson Changed the World.) This fictional story encompasses a wealth of informational content, much of which would be unfamiliar to the students at my school.

Figure 2. Visual example of some of the tools of transmedia (Hamilton et al. 2011, slide 22).
The purpose of using VoiceThread was to allow our book club not only to meet and communicate but also to provide readers with “real-time prior knowledge” to gain deeper understanding and a greater appreciation of the book.

The virtual space allowed us to take part in conversations, formulate ideas, and share higher-order thinking through a variety of media channels: video, audio, text, images, and music. Students were able to interact with the book’s author through links to her blog and website and directly as a club participant. (Claudia Mills graciously agreed to join our VoiceThread, and I gave her an account!) Multiple modes of media allowed students to understand potentially difficult vocabulary through an audio-video glossary, explore Web links and a variety of media related to the informational aspects of the text, listen to music that the characters in the book listened to, and even gain access to our state senator as the characters in the book did. (I got the state senator from our school’s district to agree to participate, although this has yet to happen.) All of this was to take place in a forum that was available wherever the student and an Internet connection met. Upon reflection, I realize that I can improve the program by promoting the program more and having a workshop for the parents and staff on best ways to participate and support the children.

Drawing children in to love of story, having them garner new information, learning, thinking, wondering, and discovering should be the universal goals of good teaching. Using multimedia and the skills of transliteracy to engage students to meet these goals is an opportunity never before available to teachers or librarians. When I decided to merge media and text for our summer reading program, I didn’t know that there was a name for it (and I pompously thought that I was on the cutting edge of a new theory on reading and literacy), but as stated in Tom Ipri’s article, “The lack of familiarity with the terminology does not mean that transliteracy is not integrated in the practice of…professionals” (2010, 532–33). Unknowingly, I was providing my students with direct experience with transliteracy practices.
Giving students the kind of teaching and experiences that will shape their lives as literate learning beings can easily be achieved with the social media and tech resources that school librarians so ably bring to the table. The use of transliteracy practices will positively affect teaching and the school library program if, as Henry Jenkins suggests, we “[em]brace the potentials and challenges of this [participatory] emerging culture not as a replacement for existing print practice[s] but as an expansion of them” (quoted in Hamilton 2011). Fostered accidentally or deliberately, transliteracy means competence with multiple literacies, and school librarians are perfectly positioned to expand their students’ learning—and their worlds.

Works Cited:


Visit <www.ala.org/aasl/ecollab/fallforum-2012> to view presentations from AASL’s 2012 Fall Forum on Transliteracy and the School Library Program, including keynote Henry Jenkins.
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FLYING HIGH
WITH
THE INFORMATION
FLUENCY CONTINUUM
As an educator, all one ever seems to hear about right now is the Common Core State Standards, (CCSS) with colleagues debating the merits, debating the rollout, and debating how best to “do” the CCSS. New textbooks, no textbooks, align old lessons to the new standards or start from scratch? Everyone is trying to make decisions, but no one is quite sure what the right choices are.

In the midst of this tumult, school librarians must find the best way to be heard above the din. Sometimes, they must tactfully dissuade principals who want to order all the exemplar titles; at other times, they must forcefully (yet courteously!) talk their way into their schools’ discussions of how to implement the CCSS.

Last year the New York Library Association’s Section of School Librarians (NYLA SSL) printed up t-shirts that proclaimed “Your Library IS the Common Core!” These shirts are worn proudly by many of the school librarians in New York state who have proactively taken up the mantle of Common Core State Standards expert in their schools, rightly claiming that the skills at the center of the CCSS are the very information literacy skills school librarians try to teach every day.

Like them, I was looking for a tool I could use to connect the CCSS to the work I do in my school library, beyond ordering more informational books. The tool for me is the New York City Information Fluency Continuum (IFC), now the Empire State Information Fluency Continuum, supported state-wide by all the school library systems <http://schools.nyc.gov/Academics/LibraryServices/StandardsandCurriculum/default.htm>.

The IFC was developed by the New York City’s Department of Education, Office of Library Services School Library System, under the leadership of Dr. Barbara Stripling. Built around the Stripling Model of Inquiry, the IFC lays out the skills students need to develop to become independent thinkers and readers. But the IFC is not merely a scope and sequence, as it provides a collection of assessment materials that facilitate skill instruction. The assessments are the most valuable part of the IFC and are central to its usefulness in connecting to the CCSS. These assessments, when used in CCSS-aligned lessons, can become the foundation of process portfolios by creating a paper trail of students’ thinking and research processes, allowing the teacher and school librarian to monitor and evaluate each student’s acquisition of the IFC Benchmark Skills needed to meet the Common Core State Standards.

Last summer I had the opportunity to attend the NYLA SSL’s Leadership Institute to learn more about the IFC from Olga Nesi and Dr. Stripling. Olga Nesi is a coordinator of the NYC School Library System, New York City Department of Education; she has spent the last year and a half leading workshops on CCSS unit planning and the IFC.

At the leadership institute, Olga Nesi introduced the IFC and walked us through the process of creating unit plans that were
aligned to both the CCSS and IFC. Armed with two heavy binders and a flash drive filled with the IFC, I went back to my small private school in western New York and started working with the IFC.

My school is just starting to work with the CCSS, and this year each teacher was required to create and teach one CCSS unit. During our in-service days before the school year started, our small faculty (less than a dozen teachers) received a basic introduction to the CCSS from our principal. As a group, we then looked over several exemplar lessons available from the New York State Education Department and debated whether or not implementing the CCSS was really going to change how we taught. Thus armed, the teachers were turned loose to develop CCSS units. Most looked at the binder of Common Core State Standards they had been handed and, frankly, didn’t know where to start, but were ready to head off on their own to figure it out.

As I looked around during that in-service session, I knew this was my moment to expand on my initial collaborative efforts with English language arts teachers and really break through and connect to the whole faculty. Beyond telling my fellow teachers, “The library IS the Common Core,” I could look at the teachers faced with the prospect of trying to figure out just what a CCSS lesson would look like, and say, “I can help you with that.”

The process of moving highly self-reliant teachers into collaborators hasn’t always been smooth, though.

Flying Solo

I started the school year using the IFC in my library lesson planning. Like most elementary school librarians, I am on a fixed schedule, without planning periods in common with my classroom teachers. When I am unable to pin someone down in the hallway between classes, I end up planning units and research projects on my own. Even in this less-than-ideal context, the IFC is still a wonderful tool, as it is a comprehensive library curriculum that provides a systematic approach to library skill instruction.

Fly-By Collaboration

As I grew comfortable with the IFC and its assessments, I started approaching teachers with my ideas for using the IFC assessments in connection with their own content areas. One morning by the copier I was able to corner our second-and-third-grade teacher and work out a plan for a research unit on the Civil War. The teacher provided
the content in the classroom; I provided an enrichment unit, in which I identified and taught IFC benchmark skills to her students using that content when the class was brought to the library.

While my unit met CCSS RI 2.1, it fell short of my goal of creating and presenting a truly collaboratively planned CCSS unit, but I had opened a door. This teacher had been initially hesitant to discuss collaboratively planning her CCSS unit. However, observing my work with her students helped the teacher see the connection between the IFC and the CCSS. Through teaching this unit I have also started building a collection of student work that I can use to show that the information literacy skills taught in my library are consistent with the Common Core State Standards.

Mrs. Selvaggio, middle school ELA teacher at Rochester Christian School, provides guidance to sixth-graders trying to decide the focus of their inquiry research project using IFC assessment 1.1, “What Do You Already Know about Your Topic?”

Flying Higher Together

In the fall, my area Board of Cooperative Education’s School Library System invited Olga Nesi to conduct a series of two-day workshops on CCSS/IFC unit planning. With my principal’s enthusiastic approval, I chose to target two different kinds of teachers to attend the workshops with me. First, I targeted the teachers I knew were having the hardest time wrapping their heads around the Common Core State Standards, but who would be open to an opportunity to find a foothold in the CCSS and showing them how partnering with me and using the IFC would help them, I knew I could build new relationships. Both these teachers were raving about CCSS/IFC when they returned from the workshops. They felt like they hadn’t really understood what the CCSS would mean to their instruction and students until the teachers started planning a CCSS/IFC unit at the workshop. The emphasis on planning to teach process not content was particularly eye opening to science and history teachers who live and breathe content.

These two types of teachers are central to my strategy of making sure the IFC is deployed jointly with CCSS at our school. By connecting to the teachers who most need to find a foothold in the CCSS and showing them how partnering with me and using the IFC would help them, I knew I could build new relationships.
Surprisingly, my "resident expert" teachers came away with nearly the same realizations. They realized why shifting to the CCSS had seemed so right for them. As English language arts teachers, they already spend a great deal of time working on "process" lessons and units, so that aspect of the CCSS/IFC was easy to adopt. However, for them, the best part of the IFC was the assessments that provided graphic organizers for many information literacy skills embedded within the Common Core State Standards, such as identifying facts and details to support main ideas and using appropriate organizational patterns to present information.

The enthusiasm shown by these classroom teachers resulted in an invitation from my principal to do a presentation on the IFC and the CCSS for the whole staff during our winter in-service day. We have decided as a faculty to follow NYC’s lead and focus on creating CCSS unit plans, centered on RI and RL standards 1 and 10 and W standard 1. That these are the standards that best align with the IFC is no coincidence, and neither was my principal’s encouraging all staff members to create units that were not simply CCSS units but were collaboratively planned CCSS/IFC units!

I am incredibly thankful for the work of Olga Nesi and the NYC School Library System for their efforts in aligning the IFC to the CCSS and for providing such excellent resources to other school librarians. The IFC may be just the tool your teachers need; you, too, can "rise to the challenge," leading your school to a solid footing with the Common Core State Standards.

Second- and third-graders use IFC assessment 1.4, "Using Facts to Answer Questions," to help them organize information about the Civil War, part of a collaborative unit on how to use informational books.

Ana Canino-Fluit is a former history/English double major who discovered she loved research and reading more than she loved writing. She eventually decided to formalize her love of libraries by obtaining an MLIS at Syracuse University in 2010, where she unexpectedly discovered that she loves teaching information literacy skills to students of all ages. She has been the librarian and information technology teacher at Rochester Christian School since 2011.

By connecting to the teachers who most need to find a foothold in the CCSS and showing them how partnering with me and using the IFC would help them, I knew I could build new relationships.
School Librarians Have a Responsibility to Implement Common Core State Standards

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For more CCSSS resources, visit <www.ala.org/aasl/guidelinesandstandards/commoncorecrosswalk> to review AASL’s Crosswalks of the Common Core State Standards and the Standards for 21st-Century Learner.
In education there are no innocent bystanders.

Now, more than ever, school librarians must reveal their true identities as information superheroes. We are fast, strong, and always ready to save the day when it seems as though all hope is lost.
Although nearly three years have passed since the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) were adopted, many teachers, parents, and, yes, even school librarians feel overwhelmed by the CCSS (available at <www.corestandards.org>). If you do not already consider yourself a CCSS expert, become one now. Don’t push them aside and half-heartedly agree to read up on them later. AASL’s position statement on the CCSS identifies your role in “building 21st-century skills by collaborating with classroom teachers...” (2010).

If you’re still a bit apprehensive about donning your cape and cool superhero pseudonym, grab your copy of Information Power. You’ll find that the key points you highlighted in it as an LIS student are nearly identical to what’s in the CCSS (Jaeger 2012). AASL’s Crosswalk of the Common Core State Standards and the Standards for the 21st-Century Learner shows how AASL’s Standards for the 21st-Century Learner and the CCSS align (2013). You may also be able to find crosswalk documents that align both the AASL and Common Core State Standards with your state-specific library and information standards. Without even knowing it, you have been preparing for your role as your school’s CCSS expert/ambassador and all-around school librarian superhero.

**CCSS and Collaboration**

Once you’ve mastered the CCSS, you need to share your knowledge with everyone around you.

As Marc Aronson, founder of the Uncommon Corps blog (more on that later) has said, “the third C in Common Core is collaboration” (Corsaro 2012). The CCSS’s attention toward literacy across the entire curriculum makes it necessary for teachers to collaborate.

When the CCSS were introduced, I was finishing up my MLS. My primary role in my small rural middle school was as a social studies teacher, but I also headed the curriculum committee and served as what I jokingly called the “B-team” librarian. Our school librarian was part time, so I made the most of my schedule to increase the library’s hours of operation. While our English language arts (ELA) teachers dove right in, many of our content-area teachers felt unprepared to deal with the CCSS. Just as you’ve probably heard in your building, I had teachers come to me with many questions, all starting with “I’m not a reading teacher; what do I do?”

Content-area teachers who have had few, if any, reading instruction courses in their teacher preparation are now expected to design and implement instruction that allows for growth in all areas of literacy. School librarians have long been the literacy and media experts in their schools; sharing their knowledge and skills with these content-area teachers will not only relieve some of the librarians’ burden, this sharing will also ensure that students are receiving quality instruction across all content areas. Luckily, content-area teachers are helping to spread the word. One of the many literacy-themed sessions at the 2012 National Council for the Social Studies Conference was devoted to partnering with school librarians to use picture books to teach social values (Parrott and Gray 2012). The National Science Teachers Association encouraged members to turn to their school librarians, pointing out our skills in finding resources, integrating technology into instruction, using library class to extend learning, and much more (Shapiro 2011). By continuing to reach out to teachers, as individuals and as a collective group of professionals, school librarians will increase their impact on instructional practices and student achievement.

**Join Forces with Faculty**

Regardless of how your colleagues feel about CCSS or your previous experiences with collaboration, find new ways to reach out to teachers, encouraging them to implement the CCSS in their instruction.

- Attend as many curriculum-planning meetings as you can. Joining in on content-area, team, and grade-level meetings not only makes you more aware of your colleagues’ instructional plans, but your participation allows for more sharing of ideas. If your schedule prevents you from showing up, politely ask to receive the minutes or notes from such meetings so you can follow up with teachers about key tasks and projects you can help them with.

- Maintain routine communication with everybody. Monthly correspondence delivered to every member of the faculty allows even those teachers who never venture into the school library at least some contact with you on a regular basis. Send out an

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**Table 1. Percentage distribution of literary and informational passages (National Assessment Board 2008)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GRADE</th>
<th>LITERARY</th>
<th>INFORMATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
e-mail or slip a newsletter into mailboxes to inform all teachers of:

- New and noteworthy additions to the collection; include ideas for using the new resources in the classroom
- Tricks and tips for using your online catalog and subscription databases
- Programs or instructional activities you’re hosting in the library
- Webinars or online professional development opportunities you can help staff members take part in
- Instead of telling a teacher “let me know if you need anything,” provide specific connections to their instruction. Even if what you’re sharing is not relevant to what they’re teaching, your actions may spark an “I don’t need this, but I could use…” conversation. Share magazine articles, TV listings for documentaries, nonfiction and the common core.
- Post grade- and interest-level-appropriate articles from popular periodicals in the teachers’ workspace; also post a reminder that magazines and newspapers can be a source for informational texts. And your databases are full of them!
- Add the Uncommon Corps <http://nonfictionandthecommoncore.blogspot.com> to your blogroll and encourage your colleagues to do so, as well. The Uncommon Corps blog is updated regularly with reviews of nonfiction books, news and legislation updates regarding the CCSS, and links to opportunities for professional development across the nation.

Because you’re now a CCSS expert you know that the ELA standards emphasize informational texts. To remind yourself and your colleagues of the appropriate balance between literary and information texts, refer to table 1, which shows recommendations from Reading Framework for the 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress.

To promote the use of more informational texts—in creative ways—try one of these ideas:

- Leave a few content-related nonfiction books in the teachers’ workspace with notes mentioning the relevant CCSS that could be used with the texts.
- At a faculty meeting give a quick refresher on using online databases so teachers can easily access primary and secondary sources to use with their students.
- Post grade- and interest-level-appropriate articles from popular periodicals in the teachers’ workspace; also post a reminder that magazines and newspapers can be a source for informational texts. And your databases are full of them!
- Add the Uncommon Corps <http://nonfictionandthecommoncore.blogspot.com> to your blogroll and encourage your colleagues to do so, as well. The Uncommon Corps blog is updated regularly with reviews of nonfiction books, news and legislation updates regarding the CCSS, and links to opportunities for professional development across the nation.

School librarians are superheroes. Just remember, as Uncle Ben told Peter Parker in Spider-Man, “With great power comes great responsibility” (2002). You have the responsibility to master the CCSS and assist your colleagues with their implementation of the standards so that, as a team, you can provide students with the education they need to be college- and career-ready.

Sara Frey is a school librarian for grades 6–12 in Fort Covington, New York. She enjoys reading YA nonfiction, taking long walks, and cheering for the University of Kentucky basketball team.

Works Cited:


Committee articles

56  Rise to the Challenge at the AASL National Conference in Hartford
Terri Kirk and Ken W. Stewart

60  IDEAxCCHANGE and AASL Preconference Workshops Offer Unique Forums for Best Practices
Rebecca Morris

64  Authors and Illustrators Shine at AASL's National Conference
Mary Ann Scheuer and Rocco Staino

68  Welcome to Hartford: A Tour of the 2013 National Conference City
Jacqueline Galante and Sara Kelley-Mudie

71  Continue the Conversation in Hartford on AASL's eCOLLAB
Steven D. Yates

72  Where Planning Meets Reality: Rising to the Challenge
Alice Bryant and Heather Jankowski

76  Social Networking at the Conference
Carolyn Foote
RISE TO THE Challenge
at the AASL National Conference in Hartford

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A re any of us in the school library business not feeling the stress of the many, many challenges that face us every day? Never fear! We have a solution for you. The AASL 16th National Conference and Exhibition in Hartford, Connecticut, has the answers. Preconference workshops, the IDEAxCHANGE, our opening general session featuring innovative speaker Tony Wagner, concurrent sessions featuring your colleagues from across the nation, a fantastic array of vendors in the exhibit hall, the thought-provoking closing session by Peter Bregman—all are sure to provide new ideas, new solutions to old problems, and a strong dose of rekindled enthusiasm for our profession. “Rising to the challenge” will be a habit by the time you get home!

Why Hartford? That question comes up with every conference. AASL likes to move around the country to affordable, easy-to-get-to places that give members from each region of the country a chance to have a national conference in their area. Minneapolis was a great city and will be hard to beat… but wait! So were Charlotte and Reno and Pittsburgh and Kansas City! Hartford is an easy drive for people in the Northeast, and Hartford’s Bradley International Airport is served by Air Canada, American Airlines, American Eagle, Delta, Jet Blue, Southwest, United, US Airways, and US Airways Express. You can get there from any place, and the conference is going to be great!

Not only will the conference itself inspire us, but the city of Hartford can’t wait to welcome us and share its culture, history, and fun. The city has a free bus service, the Star Shuttle, which loops the downtown area. The area is also comfortably walkable so you can enjoy historic Hartford by foot. The conference hotels are reasonably priced, and all are close to the convention center. The downtown area is bustling with lots of restaurants and nightlife in historic old buildings with interesting architecture and a wide variety of food and drink choices.

The educational tours to the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art (www.thewadsworth.org), the Mark Twain House and Museum (www.marktwainhouse.org), the Harriet Beecher Stowe Center (www.harrietbeecherstowecenter.org), and historic Mystic Seaport (plus unique shopping opportunities at Olde Mistick Village) (http://mystic.org) will be fun and educational. They are also reasonably priced and will be a sure hit with our attendees.

The preconference offerings are amazing; each of them is designed to help meet challenges currently faced by school librarians across the country. See the lineup at <http://national.aasl.org/preconferences> and preregister for your favorites. Remember to look at the school tours as well. Visiting excellent school libraries is a great way to learn. These tours are limited, so register early!

Thursday will open with the newly named best-practice showcase IDEAxCHANGE. Formerly the “Exploratorium,” this is the place to quickly get ideas from your fellow librarians. (Think of it as a super science fair with the best and brightest showing their stuff and eager to talk...)

Our national conference will be an amazing experience that will help you become an even better school librarian. It will encourage, invigorate, teach, and help the students and community that you serve.
This is the perfect way to get started!

What follows will be some of the most exciting and thought-provoking sessions that you’ll ever experience. And, if you want a preview of the beginning keynote session, try this video on YouTube <www.youtube.com/watch?v=NS2PtQ1TxFFc&feature=youtu.be>. Tony Wagner will inspire us! For more inspiration, read the "One Book, One Conference" selection, 18 Minutes: Find Your Focus, Master Distraction, and Get the Right Things Done by Peter Bregman, speaker at the closing general session. He is famous for his track record of helping individuals and organizations improve performance while nurturing talent. We’re sure his talk will contain significant take-away messages.

It is always fun to see and hear authors, and we have two special food events that will include them. The Author Banquet features Libba Bray, whose new book, The Diviners, is really generating buzz among high school students, and Shane W. Evans, winner of the 2012 Coretta Scott King Illustrator Award for his work for younger readers Underground: Finding the Light to Freedom. The Author Breakfast is all about graphic novels and will feature a panel discussion with Faith Erin Hicks, Matt and Jenni Holm, Jarrett Krosoczka, and Raina Telgemeier. Another event in the works is a meet and greet with several authors. Stay tuned for more information about that fun, informal event!

Another wonderful aspect of the national conference is that you get to spend time with other people who are just like you. It is so nice to be able to talk about an issue without having to explain what you are talking about! The planned opportunities for networking are both formal and informal, but we guess that you also might learn something on the shuttle or at breakfast just by making a new friend. The Closing Celebration on Saturday night is an event that attendees won’t want to miss! What better way to celebrate an intense and focused few days of learning—and to wind down—than to join peers for food, dancing, and networking? The Author Breakfast Sunday morning begins at 9 a.m. and will be the treat that wraps up your conference experience.

So, hop into your hot air balloon, plane, train, bus, car, or onto your bike, and come to Hartford! Our national conference will be an amazing experience that will help you become an even better school librarian. It will encourage, invigorate, teach, and help you help the students and community that you serve. And, if you can’t come or want to extend your conference experience, remember that select sessions will be recorded and available on eCOLLAB; the details of this will be available soon, so keep this option in mind.

We want you to have an experience that will help you “rise to the challenges” in this critical time.

Terri Kirk
has been a high school librarian for over twenty years and still loves to come to work every day. She is active in AASL and ALA and currently serves as the chapter councilor for Kentucky on the ALA Council.

Ken W. Stewart
is a school librarian at Blue Valley High School in Stilwell, Kansas, and has been attending AASL national conferences since 1997 in Portland. For over twenty-two years he has taught information literacy skills, English, business, and journalism to students with various behavioral issues and economic backgrounds. Ken is always striving to find new methods to prepare students for post-secondary education. He currently serves as Director-Elect for Region IX and sits on the AASL/ACRL Interdivisional Committee on Information Literacy.
IDEAxCHANGE
AND AASL
PRECONFERENCE WORKSHOPS
OFFER UNIQUE FORUMS FOR BEST PRACTICES

Rebecca Morris,
National Conference Preconference/Best Practices Showcase Chair
rmorris1855@gmail.com
Discover strategies for teaching and collaborating, promoting reading, and integrating standards in your school library program, and connect with others who are "rising to the challenge" in their libraries!

**Full-Day Workshops**

**WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 13**
**8:30 A.M. – 4:30 P.M.**

**Friction: Teaching Slow Thinking and Intentionality in Research**

Presented by Debbie Abilock, consultant, NoodleTools; Tasha Bergson-Michelson, search educator, Google; and Jole Seroff, director of library and information services, Castilleja School.

Most online research is fast, intuitive, and emotional. However, at key points in the process, slower, more deliberative and logical thinking is possible. Presenters will identify points of friction, opportunities for teaching at key decision-making moments at which researchers can learn expert strategies and develop thinking routines. This hands-on session walks through typical research scenarios, exploring how to design learning for students and provide professional development that cultivates intentionality in online research. WiFi-enabled device recommended.

**Playing a Story: Creative Writing for Students through Non-Digital Interactive Text Game Design**

Author and game designer Brian Mayer leads a hands-on session into how game design engages students with the writing process in a meaningful way while meeting the needs of the new Common Core State Standards as well as AASL’s Standards for the 21st-Century Learner. Come explore interactive text and the design process, and walk away knowing how to integrate these concepts into collaborative projects that have students designing playable stories of their own.

**Preconference Workshops**

To start off your conference experience, choose from two full-day workshops, six half-day workshops, and a research symposium! Dig deep into the topics that matter to you.
Half-Day Workshops

What can you learn in a matter of hours? How about leadership, collaboration, cloud and mobile computing, advocacy, and research-into-practice?

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 13
1:00 P.M. – 4:30 P.M.

Rise to the Challenge: Empowering Teachers and Learners through School Librarians’ Professional Practice

Participants will gain practical experience using the websites recognized as AASL Best Websites for Teaching and Learning. Committee members will work with participants through multiple activities that will have attendees actively collaborating as they investigate, use, and share ideas for integrating a wide variety of award-winning websites as resources in their professional practice. Each participant will leave with ideas ready to implement with teachers and learners.

Libraries in the Cloud

Discover how school libraries can benefit by moving to the network cloud and what role librarians can play when staff and student applications become hosted. Presenter Doug Johnson discusses the implications for school library programs when hosted computer applications and resources are adopted and the role of the school librarian. Specific examples of programs, projects, and uses of cloud computing will be shared and practiced throughout the session. Be sure to bring your own device.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 14
8:30 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.

Instructional Partnerships That Deliver Success: Meeting the Leadership Challenge

Rise to the leadership challenge! Instructional partnerships are pathways to leadership. What are the skills, dispositions, and responsibilities of school librarians who lead through their work as instructional partners? Practicing instructional partners will share their success stories. This preconference will provide strategies for demonstrating the school librarian’s central role in the academic program by practicing instructional partnerships to ensure success for K–12 students, teachers, administrators, librarians, and for the school librarian profession, too. This session is presented by Judi Moreillon, Suzanna Panter, Christina Russo, and Gloria Voutos.

Rising to the Leadership Challenge: School Librarians Take Charge

Empowering Learners: Guidelines for School Library Programs placed a spotlight on leadership as an essential element of a school library program. Although decades of leadership study and theory are available, practical application for school librarians is just developing. At this preconference, Carl Harvey and Ann Martin will help participants shift from theory to practical application using the AASL learning standards as the framework for developing leadership. Participants will leave with an action plan to begin implementation upon returning to their schools.
A Library in Every Pocket: Virtualizing Your Library for Mobile Learning

Not if, but when your school turns to mobile learning, will your library be ready? Information technology presents school librarians with an opportunity to facilitate the transition to mobile learning. Facilitators Gwyneth Jones, Michelle Luhtala, Shannon Miller, and Joyce Valenza, and students Molly James and Charles Sosnick offer this hands-on, BYOD session that highlights strategies to virtualize library services for tiny screens. Participants will practice using tools for building virtual, handheld libraries and will leave this session with a toolkit to expand virtual library services.

ESLS Research Symposium

The Educators of School Librarians Section (ESLS) of AASL presents its third research symposium. As educators, scholars, and researchers, ESLS members create new knowledge about the school library field, impart that knowledge to the profession’s newest members, and share that knowledge with practitioners in the field. The peer-reviewed papers presented at this session by ESLS members will explore conceptualizations of how the school library can become an integral and indispensable part of every child’s education.

Rebecca Morris is an assistant professor of library and information science at Simmons College, Graduate School of Library and Information Science, in Boston. She is a former middle school librarian and first-grade teacher. She now teaches courses in curriculum, young adult and children’s literature, and school library practicum to graduate and post-master’s students. Her current research and writing projects relate to the education of school librarians, digital storytelling, and school library advocacy. She is a member of the AASL National Conference Committee, the AASL Advocacy Committee, and the YALSA Research Committee.

REGISTRATION FEES:

Full-Day Workshop:
- AASL Member: $189
- ALA Member: $239
- Non-Member: $304

Half-Day Workshop:
- AASL Member: $109
- ALA Member: $159
- Non-Member: $224

Research Symposium:
- AASL Member: $75
- ALA Member: $125
- Non-Member: $190
Come to Hartford and connect with a multitude of authors and illustrators at the AASL 16th National Conference and Exhibition in November 2013.

The Author Banquet, Sunday’s Author Breakfast, Author Meet and Greet, author panels, and the autographing alley are some of the many opportunities to be inspired by authors and illustrators.

Even as we think deeply about our teaching and work with students, our members have consistently asked for more time with authors, and you will not be disappointed with the lineup in Hartford.

Libba Bray and Shane W. Evans, two dynamic authors, take the stage at the Author Banquet on Friday, November 15, from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. Register now to make sure you can join the fun.

Shane W. Evans won the Coretta Scott King Illustrator Award in 2012 for his stirring picture book *Underground* (Roaring Brook 2011) and entertained crowds at the 2012 Coretta Scott King Breakfast with his singing, guitar playing, and inspiring speech. His illustrations bring depth to important topics for young children. Evans effectively wove together dark and light in his illustrations for *Underground*, representing both the fear and hope that escaping slaves felt on their journeys to the North. As his friend and collaborator Taye Diggs wrote in the *Horn Book*,

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Shane is a "renaissance man. A true artist, in every sense of the word. Illustrator, painter, sculptor, photographer, singer, songwriter, musician, composer...the list goes on. He’s the type of cat who just randomly picks up a guitar, and next thing you know, he’s teaching you how to play" (2012). Come and be inspired by Shane’s spirit and art, as he reflects on how we can all be true to ourselves.

Libba Bray definitely knows how to travel—at least in her books. Whether she’s on a deserted island with a gaggle of Beauty Queens, on a cross-country road trip Going Bovine with a dying teenage boy, or solving murder mysteries with The Diviners in 1920s New York City, this woman knows how to have a good time. Bray’s 2012 book, The Diviners (Little, Brown), is a mix of crime thriller, paranormal fantasy, and historical drama and mixes the occult, the uppercrust, and the underworld. It follows young Evie, who comes to New York to live with her uncle and finds herself investigating a rash of occult-based murders. Come find out answers to your burning questions, such as how to order a drink in a speakeasy, which superpowers might help an author (or librarian) today, and what’s the spookiest place in New York City. Bray brings laughs as well as provocative topics wherever she goes, whether it’s at the 2010 Printz Awards Program and Reception, to a roomful of high school students, or to our banquet. Come solo and meet new friends, or make plans to join a group at the banquet—it’s the centerpiece of the conference. You won’t want to miss it!
Hear their thoughts on why graphic novels and comics draw kids to them again and again, how we can design Common Core State Standards lessons that leverage kids’ passion for reading graphic fiction, and how these authors and artists use their experiences growing up to create stories that stay with us long after reading.

Jarrett J. Krosoczka has been passionate about storytelling through words and pictures since he was a kid. His Lunch Lady series (Random House) has twice won a Children’s Choice Book Award and was nominated for a Will Eisner Comic Industry Award. Both the Punk Farm and Lunch Lady series are currently in development as feature films! While Krosoczka awaits his work’s silver-screen debut, he can be heard on “The Book Report with JJK,” his radio segment on Sirius XM’s Kids Place Live channel.

Did you love reading the Sunday comics as a kid? Do your students read graphic novels again and again? Do you wish you understood the comic book obsession shared by the guys on The Big Bang Theory? Then don’t sleep late on Sunday, November 17; join the fun at the Author Breakfast featuring five of the most popular comics and graphic novel creators today. Jarrett J. Krosoczka will moderate a lively panel with Jennifer and Matt Holm (creators of the Babymouse series), Raina Telgemeier (Smile and Drama), and Faith Erin Hicks (Friends with Boys). Hear their thoughts on why graphic novels and comics draw kids to them again and again, how we can design Common Core State Standards lessons that leverage kids’ passion for reading graphic fiction, and how these authors and artists use their experiences growing up to create stories that stay with us long after reading.
Jennifer and Matt Holm draw elementary kids by the buckets to their bestselling Babymouse and Squish series (Random House). Deftly combining fantasy and a keen sense of real-life struggles kids experience, the Holm siblings keep the laughs coming in both of their best-selling series. Babymouse for President was just nominated for a 2013 Eisner Award. Raina Telgemeier is the author and illustrator of the bestselling graphic novels Drama and Smile (Scholastic). Telgemeier grew up in San Francisco, but made her way to New York City when she was twenty-two to attend the School of Visual Arts as an illustration and cartooning student. Smile, her graphic memoir about dental drama growing up, won the prestigious Eisner Award for Best Publication for Teens and was a 2010 Boston Globe-Horn Book Honor recipient.

Faith Erin Hicks has come to prominence with several long-running webcomics for teens, including her latest, Friends with Boys (First Second). Hicks started drawing comics and putting them on the Internet way back in 1999 and has since developed a strong teenage following for her webcomics, released serially over several years. She writes, “At first I did comics because I enjoyed writing stories, and I wanted drawings to go with the stories” (n.d.). It is fascinating learning about the transition from webcomics to print graphic novels.

Patricia McCormick, David Levithan, Eliot Schrefer, A.S. King, Jon Scieszka, Andrea Davis Pinkney, Neal Shusterman, Melissa Sweet, Jen Bryant, Pamela S. Turner, Doreen Rappaport, Laurel Snyder, and Adam Gidwitz are just some of the confirmed authors who will be giving insights into their craft in several concurrent sessions. Yes, we said “some”! This conference will be packed with authors who are favorites with readers of all ages. It’s a Who’s Who of talented authors and illustrators. What an opportunity to better help your students be more engaged in reading for the love of it!

Mary Ann Scheuer is the librarian at Emerson School, a diverse, thriving public elementary school in Berkeley, California. She passionately believes in connecting children with books that speak to them and in 2008 started the blog Great Kid Books <http://greatkidbooks.blogspot.com>. She is also a member of AASL’s task force for Best Apps for Teaching and Learning. Follow her on Twitter @MaryAnnScheuer.

Rocco Staino is the retired director of the Mary I. Keefe Library at the North Salem School District in New York. He is currently a contributing editor for School Library Journal and also writes for the Huffington Post. Since retiring he has become the director of the Empire State Center for the Book, the New York affiliate of the Library of Congress Center for the Book.

Works Cited:


This conference will be packed with authors who are favorites with readers of all ages.
Hartford, also known as “the Insurance Capital of the World,” was first established as a Connecticut River trading post in 1633 and grew to become the state capital. Rich in history, Hartford is also home to the nation’s oldest public art museum, the Wadsworth Atheneum; the oldest publicly funded park, Bushnell Park; and the oldest continuously published newspaper, Hartford Courant. Conference attendees will also be impressed by Hartford’s additional historical attractions, revitalized riverfront, and beautiful parks and public gardens. Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer were “born” here in the imagination of author Mark Twain.

Transportation around the city is extremely easy. Many historic landmarks, museums, and restaurants are within walking distance of the Convention Center. Hartford’s free Star Shuttle bus service, a continuous downtown circulation system, provides weekday passengers quick access to venues all across the city.

Hartford Walking Tours allow you to experience the sites, stories, and people that created Hartford’s history. This ninety-minute walk through Hartford’s history includes Connecticut’s Old State House, Wadsworth Atheneum, State Capitol, Stone Field, Alexander Calder’s “Stegosaurus,” Bushnell Park, and the stories of Israel Putnam, Thomas Hooker, the Fundamental Orders, A. Everett “Chick” Austin, the Charter Oak incident, and Alexander Calder. More information about the tours can be found at <www.hartfordwalkingtours.com>.

We can “insure” you’ll have a great time in Hartford!

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Hartford Walking Tours

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We can “insure” you’ll have a great time in Hartford!
Riverfront Recapture was created to restore public access to the Connecticut River in Hartford. Come to the river where you can stroll miles of trails and walkways. Walkways connect both banks of the river, and paved lighted riverwalks connect most of the parks. Parks include the Mortensen Riverfront Plaza, Riverside Park, Charter Oak Landing in Hartford, and Great River Park in East Hartford. For more on the riverfront, visit [www.riverfront.org](http://www.riverfront.org).

Hartford offers conference attendees and visitors many historic venues. The State Capitol and Legislative Building, opened in 1878, houses displays that include a replica of the Liberty Bell, a statue of Revolutionary War hero Nathan Hale, and the battle flags of Connecticut regiments from the Civil War.

The Hartford History Center [http://hhc.hplct.org](http://hhc.hplct.org) is home to the Hartford Collection, a non-circulating, multimedia collection of more than fifty thousand books, trade publications, postcards, photographs, and memorabilia spanning nearly three hundred years.

Connecticut's Old State House [http://ctoldstatehouse.org](http://ctoldstatehouse.org) is a must for history buffs! Walk the floors where major historical events occurred, including the beginning of the Amistad trial. This landmark building also offers visitors some unexpected surprises, including a museum of oddities.

The Museum of Connecticut History at the Connecticut State Library [www.museumofchistory.org](http://www.museumofchistory.org) houses collections that focus on Connecticut’s government, military, and industrial history. Exhibits trace the growth of the state and its role in the development of the nation from the Colonial era to the present.

The Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art [www.thewadsworth.org](http://www.thewadsworth.org) is the oldest public art museum in the United States. Founded by Daniel Wadsworth, its collections contain nearly fifty thousand works of art and span five thousand years of human history. The museum features Greek and Roman antiquities and European decorative arts, world-renowned baroque and surrealist paintings, European and American Impressionist paintings, modernist masterpieces, American colonial furniture and decorative arts, the Samuel Colt firearms collection, African
American art and artifacts, and contemporary art. The Amistad Center for Art and Culture [<http://amistadartandculture.org>], located at the Wadsworth Atheneum, showcases nearly seven thousand items of art, artifacts, and popular culture objects that document the experience, expressions, and history of people of African descent in America.

The Amistad Center for the Performing Arts [<www.amistadarts.org>] presents major Broadway tours, off-Broadway plays, symphony orchestras, family presentations, children’s theater, and an eclectic offering of jazz, blues, and world music. The Center is the performance home of Hartford Symphony Orchestra and the Connecticut Forum. Theater buffs may enjoy the ninety-minute tour highlighting the center’s early history, the artistic interior, and past performances.

The Mark Twain House and Museum [<www.marktwainhouse.org>], a National Historic Landmark, was the home of one of America’s greatest authors Samuel Clemens (a.k.a. Mark Twain) and his family from 1874 to 1891. It is where Twain lived when he wrote his most enduring works, including Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, The Prince and the Pauper, and A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court.

Just next door to Mark Twain House is the Harriet Beecher Stowe Center [<www.harrietbeecherstowecenter.org>], where revolutionary author Harriet Beecher Stowe lived after the publication of her bestseller Uncle Tom’s Cabin. The research library inside the center includes letters, documents, and other items owned by the family, and the tour of Stowe’s home includes the “Behind the Stacks Tour,” which includes the opportunity to explore the research library of 12,000 books, 4,000 pamphlets, 180,000 manuscripts, and 12,000 images.

The Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts [<www.bushnell.org>] presents major Broadway tours, off-Broadway plays, symphony orchestras, family presentations, children’s theater, and an eclectic offering of jazz, blues, and world music. The Center is the performance home of Hartford Symphony Orchestra and the Connecticut Forum. Theater buffs may enjoy the ninety-minute tour highlighting the center’s early history, the artistic interior, and past performances.

The Connecticut Science Center [<www.ctsciencecenter.org>], right next door to the Convention Center and housed in an architectural gem, provides fun learning experiences for all ages. Visitors can explore more than 150 hands-on and minds-on exhibits in ten galleries. The 3-D digital theater features the most advanced digital and audio technologies. Don’t miss the Café, which features locally grown food.

Just next door to Mark Twain House is the Harriet Beecher Stowe Center [<www.harrietbeecherstowecenter.org>] where revolutionary author Harriet Beecher Stowe lived after the publication of her bestseller Uncle Tom’s Cabin. The research library inside the center includes letters, documents, and other items owned by the family, and the tour of Stowe’s home includes the "Behind the Stacks Tour," which includes the opportunity to explore the research library of 12,000 books, 4,000 pamphlets, 180,000 manuscripts, and 12,000 images.

The Local Arrangements Committee is excited to offer fabulous organized tours to the Wadsworth Atheneum, Mystic Seaport, and the Mark Twain House and Museum and the Harriet Beecher Stowe Center. At <http://national.aasl.org/tours> you can find more details about the educational and school tours. We look forward to seeing all of you at the AASL 16th National Conference and Exhibition. While you’re here, we hope you’ll find time to enjoy Hartford’s abundance of culture, history, and entertainment.

Jacqueline Galante is the library media specialist at Fairfield Woods Middle School in Fairfield, Connecticut, and past president of the Connecticut Association of School Librarians. Jackie has worked as a library media specialist for nineteen years in Georgia and Connecticut and still loves going to work each day.

Sara Kelley-Mudie is the librarian and educational technology facilitator at the Forman School and also serves on the boards of the Connecticut Association of School Librarians and the Connecticut Library Consortium. She was selected as one of the American Library Association’s Emerging Leaders in 2011. She is passionate about working with students and teachers to help them become independent learners with the confidence and skill to navigate an ever-changing world of information and knowledge.
Are you having trouble deciding what to attend after looking at the bevy of concurrent sessions being offered in Hartford? Or maybe you remember months after Hartford that a topic was covered in the conference program and wish you could access the presentation from your personal learning platform at home or work? You’re in luck!

The AASL 16th National Conference can still be at your fingertips with a fantastic new feature of AASL membership. The conference committee will offer a vibrant professional development experience this year through AASL’s eCOLLAB <www.al.org/aasl/ecollab>!

The learning and excitement of seventy national conference concurrent sessions will be captured in Hartford and placed on eCOLLAB soon after the conference concludes.

AASL’s eCOLLAB, your eLearning Laboratory, is a valuable feature of your AASL membership; you can tailor your professional development options regardless of budget and geography. Through the AASL website, those who are not AASL members may subscribe to eCOLLAB for only $199. Nonmembers who attend the 2013 national conference are eligible for a discounted $99 subscription rate for eCOLLAB.

By continuing the conversation from Hartford through eCOLLAB, attendees will have the opportunity to access high-quality professional development from their homes or offices. Also, the presenters who are recorded will have innovative evidence of a national conference presentation to include in their teacher evaluation dossiers.

The sharing and networking opportunities to continue the conversation are limited only by the number of hours in the day, so start making your plans today to be a part of the conversation in Hartford and on eCOLLAB. It is now possible to be two—or more—places at once!

Steven D. Yates
is a school librarian at
Mountain Brook High School in Birmingham, Alabama. He is an adjunct faculty member at the University of Alabama’s School of Library and Information Studies as well as a past president of the Alabama Library Association. He is also an AASL committee member for Knowledge Quest, National Conference, and ALA Annual Conference.
WHERE PLANNING MEETS REALITY:
RISING TO THE CHALLENGE

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Heather Jankowski, National Conference Program Co-Chair | hjbook@swbell.net
"Rising to the Challenge"—what an excellent theme for a conference designed for professionals who want to think, create, share, and grow more than the average person!

Librarians, teacher-librarians, media specialists, cybrarians, collaborators, technology gurus—all names for the school librarian who daily rises above the mundane and takes on the challenge of equipping an entire school for lifelong learning.

Members of AASL’s 2013 Conference Committee took on the challenge of soliciting proposals in the hopes of making this year’s conference essential for all AASL members. As we started planning for the national conference, we discovered that the process was going to take patience and optimism. Working with the AASL staff liaison, we contacted members through the press, our listservs, and ALA Connect. As the deadline approached, the AASL staff liaison kept us up to date on submissions and informed us that more and more people were submitting proposals. We felt optimistic and excited to see so many of our peers willing to share their expertise!
Then, on October 25, 2012, the perilous storm Hurricane Sandy engulfed the northeastern part of the United States. Sandy’s devastation affected schools and businesses for days. As we began to see the impact the storm had on the communities of the northeast, we made a request to change the final submission date to allow those who had started proposals but had not completed them extra time. Our request was granted, and the new submission date was approved.

The decision to extend the submission deadline greatly affected planning. With a conference the size of AASL’s, with up to 3,500 attendees and as many as 140 sessions, the plan to organize the threads, review submissions, and make final decisions for presentations was delayed until February.

We enlisted a group of thirty willing volunteers to review proposals. Our proposal training was held in late October, and our volunteers were ready to begin the decision-making process. Each volunteer scored up to seventeen proposals by mid-February. The proposals were given to reviewers blind—meaning names, locations, and school information were eliminated from each proposal to fairly select presenters and achieve the goal of a balanced program reflecting conference themes.

After volunteers completed their reviews, the next task involved further analysis to ensure the proposals chosen would emulate best practices in the conference threads: leadership, teaching and learning, literacy and reading, and the Common Core State Standards. We specifically wanted to ensure that our members would benefit from a wide variety of presentations that were unique, engaging, and appealing. Our goal was to make certain that all ages and stages of our students’ lives were represented. Most specifically we wanted to ensure that AASL members would walk away from the conference feeling renewed, refreshed, and empowered.

For the conference we specifically asked our volunteer reviewers to look for proposals that utilized a variety of presentation styles and
were more than just lecture. We know our students do not respond optimally to content that is delivered via lecture alone, and we emphasized with our reviewers that engagement of our adult learners was a strong goal guiding our decisions.

After proposals are approved and presenters notified, we will spend time at ALA Annual Conference in Chicago creating a logistical plan for our selected concurrent sessions that will create an optimum schedule, blending ideas from the various parts of the conference threads.

We are greatly encouraged by the wealth and variety of proposals that were received, despite the obstacles Hurricane Sandy presented. We have great confidence in our reviewers’ strong sense of what is important to their lives in the classroom/library and beyond. As we move closer to November, we can already look back and reflect that our journey with this conference is an exact model of our theme. We are rising to the challenge of many obstacles and opportunities—Mother Nature, time, and collaboration.

We have high hopes that the AASL 16th National Conference and Exhibition will be a refreshing boost for those school librarians who need a lift! Let us help you discover how to rise to the challenges you face in your daily professional life. We look ahead with confidence in our programs and in our profession. We hope to see you in Hartford November 14–17, 2013.

Alice Bryant is the middle school instructional librarian at the Harpeth Hall School in Nashville, Tennessee. Harpeth Hall is a grade 5–12 all-girls, college preparatory school. Alice has worked as a school librarian in public and private schools. She focuses the majority of her work on instruction and has created, along with her technology peers, an information literacy matrix for students in grades 5–8 for lifelong literacy. Alice has a heart for at-risk students and for the past two years has worked in the summer as a director of Time-to-Rise, a Nashville-based program for students with potential sponsored at Harpeth Hall.

Heather Jankowski is the school librarian at M. Robinson Elementary School, a pre-K–5th grade public school near Houston, Texas. Heather has worked as a teacher and school librarian in Texas for sixteen years. She has a passion for integrating technology and literature to help students find their next favorite book. In addition to her service to AASL, she serves on a variety of committees for the Texas Library Association and her school district.
SOCIAL NETWORKING

at the Conference

Carolyn Foote,
National Conference
Social Media Chair
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Technology is increasingly integrated into our work as school librarians, yet it is difficult to stay current or to find time to learn new tools. The AASL Conference Social Media Committee is ready to help you get started. Interested in using Twitter for your library or creating a Goodreads page? Wondering how to use Pinterest in your library? Want to meet other techie librarians from around the country? This fall the AASL National Conference will feature a social networking area, near the exhibit hall entrance, to support your "techie" needs; the area will be the site of technology-learning events before and during the conference.

Here you will find informal how-to sessions where participants can learn how to use tech tools like Twitter, Google+, Edmodo, and more. These sessions will be scheduled for times both before and during the conference, giving participants a chance to get started with tech tools they are interested in learning and time to ask important questions.

And to further your professional learning, the social networking area will also be the site of "meetups" for librarians to talk with like-minded, curious colleagues about technology issues of concern to them. Those who want to learn more about how other librarians are using iPads in their school libraries or would like to discuss how librarians are handling Internet filtering in their schools should drop by during the scheduled "meetup." Schedules will be posted in the social networking area and on Facebook. (Find us on Facebook at <www.facebook.com/aaslala>.)

Presenters Needed
Interested in helping your colleagues get started with online tools? Have information to share about successes with apps or Web 2.0 tools? We need you! Sign up on our wiki <http://aaslsocialmedia.wikispaces.com> to offer to host a session. These sessions can be:

- How-to sessions—How to use social media or other Web 2.0 tools, tailored for school librarians
- How-to gadget sessions—How to use a particular gadget in the school library or for professional development
- Meetups—A discussion group around a particular topic of interest relating to technology and school library programs

And if you can’t attend these sessions in person, check the wiki after the conference to find materials from the speakers for your 24/7 learning opportunities.

Get Connected
This year, AASL will again launch a conference Ning that will bring together attendees and those watching from afar. Watch for an announcement on the national conference website. Until then, you can watch the conference happenings on other social media avenues.

"Like" the AASL Facebook page and meet colleagues from around the country who will be attending the conference! Find us on Facebook at <www.facebook.com/aaslala>. Also, as the conference draws closer, watch for updates on the AASL Twitter feed @aasl and read the AASL blog <www.aasl.ala.org/aaslblog>, or follow AASL on Google+. Closer to November, look for events to be posted on both Facebook and Google+. Even if you are unable to attend the conference, you can participate by following the conversations on one of AASL’s social networking pages.

Follow the hashtag #aasl13 throughout the conference to find tweets, Facebook posts, or Flickr images. If you upload photos, write blog posts, or share on Google+, tag your items with #aasl13 and share them with your colleagues.

In the weeks to come, look for more information delivered via Twitter, Facebook, and Google+. Join the community, and plan and share your conference experience!

Carolyn Foote, a high school and district librarian at Westlake High School in Austin, Texas, is fascinated by the convergence of libraries and technology, and is part of a 1:1 iPad initiative. Her blog can be found at <www.futura.edublogs.org>. On Twitter and other social networks she is @technolibrary.
Nurturing the Pursuit of Learning

Tanya Lee Stone
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I am a person in fierce pursuit of learning, and I come by it naturally.

My mother was an elementary school librarian. My father is a professor of education and a writer. These are my roots. They have everything to do with who I am personally and professionally—a writer of narrative nonfiction for kids and teens, as well as some fiction. I have developed a lifelong passion for reading and writing, but the intensity of that passion was not always as strong as it is now. First, and critically important, my curiosity was recognized and validated. Equally necessary, it was then nurtured. Yes, by my parents, but also by the many teachers and librarians who, one by one, helped shape a person who believes that reading and writing and thinking and learning are huge parts of what it means to live a successful life.

I write to figure out what I think—about the world, my place in it, my view of it, how others see and experience it. I write to figure out not only who I am, but also who we—humankind—are, and have been. Understanding where we have been helps direct where we are going.

The first phase of my life in publishing was as an editor of nonfiction for kids. After developing and editing hundreds of library-market nonfiction series books, I moved to Vermont and wrote many books in that genre. My focus was content. That was the second phase of my life in publishing. The third phase came when I began to get too comfortable with the books I was writing. I decided to try to write for the trade. I had a sense this new direction would allow me to look at nonfiction from angles I hadn’t yet found and explore writing that didn’t have to adhere to structure or format or have to fit into a series—not that there’s anything wrong with that!

The first book I wrote during this time was Elizabeth Leads the Way. It was empowering to embrace not only thinking about what topic was speaking to me, but why—something I had not consciously done before. This change in perspective was a revelation. From that moment on, my point of view shifted to put story ahead of content, consider what I had to say on a topic, take research farther than I ever had before, and search for new truths. My intensity for learning was increasing.
Now what drives me is finding a story I am as excited to learn about as I am to share with readers. If I hear myself telling everyone I meet, “Wait until you hear this!” I know I’m on to something intriguing. More often than not, this “something” falls into the category of people’s life stories that impact our world—otherwise known as history. If this history also serves to fill in any of the many missing gaps in our history books, even better.

Both of my newest books—Courage Has No Color and Who Says Women Can’t Be Doctors?—fit this description. Who Says Women Can’t Be Doctors? is a picture book (illustrated by Marjorie Price-man) about Elizabeth Blackwell, the first woman doctor in America. Her sheer determination to be accepted into medical school when every school she applied to came back with “no women allowed” was enough for me! The more I learned about her, the more determined I became to introduce this spunky young woman to young readers.

Courage Has No Color is another story you won’t find in any social studies book (although I am hoping that circumstance will now change). This is the untold story of the Triple Nickles, the first black paratroopers in World War II. Like the female fliers in my Almost Astronauts who never were allowed into the space program, these brave men of the 555th Parachute Infantry Battalion ultimately did not get the “win” for themselves; they were never sent into combat overseas. But what they did do is almost more important; they broke down barriers, helped change how the military viewed African American soldiers, and paved the way for others who came after them. (They also stood ready to defend the U.S. against a little-known Japanese attack on the American West during the war!)

Courage Has No Color has two narratives woven together, as I could not tell the story of the Triple Nickles without discussing what life was like for African Americans at the time of World War II and just before. These two stories had to go hand in hand so readers had the context they needed to take in all aspects of the story and think about it. The visual layer of storytelling I did in that book also encourages readers to think more deeply about prejudice and discrimination and the power of people to overcome such gargantuan obstacles.

First, and critically important, my curiosity was recognized and validated. Equally necessary, it was then nurtured. Yes, by my parents, but also by the many teachers and librarians who, one by one, helped shape a person who believes that reading and writing and thinking and learning are huge parts of what it means to live a successful life.
For example, the Charles Alston cartoons I included, with detailed caption information, offer a fascinating opportunity for readers to think more about the meanings and implications of those cartoons. They might inspire readers to think further about why Alston was asked to draw these images for the War Department, how they were (or weren’t) distributed, what the different reactions to them were, and why. For me, provoking critical thinking is the greatest aspect of the kind of nonfiction my colleagues and I write—we are up-front about the fact that our books are not the answers to all questions, but instead an invitation to ask questions.

If I could speak to readers, I would say this: I have put this true story together as accurately and as unbiasedly as I possibly could, but always remember that history is written by human beings and that we all see the world in our own unique ways. So feel free to question for yourself what I have written, and if there is anything you want to know more about, please go forth and discover your own answers.

As the grown-ups in my life encouraged me to probe and question what I was learning and reading, I hope my books do the same for young readers. I am grateful that my own children have wonderful teachers and librarians in their lives, educators who appreciate learners’ inquisitiveness and hand them book after book that nurtures their love of learning. This is how we help children rise to the challenge of finding their own way in the world—and that is what I call success.

Tanya Lee Stone has received numerous awards for her work, including the Robert F. Sibert Medal, Boston Globe–Horn Book Honor, Golden Kite Award, YALSA Award for Excellence in Nonfiction, and Bankstreet College of Education’s Flora Stieglitz Straus Award. In addition to her books, she has written pieces for School Library Journal, VOYA, Horn Book, and the New York Times. Learn more about Tanya and her books at <www.tanyastone.com>. 

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**Statement of Ownership and Management**

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