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Visit <http://knowledgequest.aasl.org> to read this online exclusive.
[A]dvocacy must be constant, so when the issues do arise, we already have an established presence and decision makers already have an understanding of the role school librarians and effective school library programs play in student success.

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Starting the Conversation about School Libraries and ESSA

Audrey Church, 2016–2017 AASL President

With the implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) moving forward, it is critically important that our school boards and administrators understand what it takes to have an effective school library program (ESLP). AASL’s official position statement defining an effective school library program can help us explain to school boards and administrators the components that comprise an ESLP. As we advocate for our programs, we can emphasize that an ESLP is led by a certified school librarian who is a teacher and instructional leader. We can note the important role that school librarians play in instruction in various types of literacies and learning. In an effective school library program, students have equitable access to up-to-date print and digital resources. In addition, school librarians provide professional development for classroom teachers and, through collaboration with teachers, create meaningful, dynamic learning experiences for students, which lead to college, career, and community readiness.

If some of these components are missing, this position statement provides us the document with which to start a conversation.

School librarians transform student learning, and every child deserves the services of a certified school librarian and an effective school library program.

ESLP Position Statement Lays Foundation for ESSA Implementation

Sylvia Knight Norton, AASL Executive Director

AASL knew the advocacy work for school librarians had only just begun when the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was signed into law last December. The “Definition for an Effective School Library Program” is key to the dedicated efforts of AASL leadership, volunteer members, staff, and the ALA Washington Office to ensure all students have equitable access to school librarians and effective school library programs.

This position statement builds upon wording from the Strengthening Kids’ Interest in Learning and Libraries (SKILLS) Act with language to ensure the presence of highly qualified, state-certified school librarians and up-to-date resources in every school.

School libraries are just one consideration in the educational landscape for decision makers charged with implementing provisions in ESSA. The “Definition for an Effective School Library Program” provides a valuable foundation to answer the question when an administrator, parent, or legislator looks at the statute and asks what an “effective school library program” means. The components in the position statement inform and promote additional conversations about how school librarians and school libraries transform teaching and learning for students to succeed.

DEFINITION FOR EFFECTIVE SC

The American Association of School Librarians (AASL) supports the position that an effective school library program has a certified school librarian at the helm, provides personalized learning environments, and offers equitable access to resources to ensure a well-rounded education for every student.

As a fundamental component of college, career, and community readiness, the effective school library program:

1. is adequately staffed, including a state-certified school librarian who
   - is an instructional leader and teacher,
   - supports the development of digital learning, participatory learning, inquiry learning, technology literacies, and information literacy, and
   - supports, supplements, and elevates the literacy experience through guidance and motivational reading initiatives;

2. has up-to-date digital and print materials and technology, including curation of openly licensed educational resources; and

3. provides regular professional development and collaboration between classroom teachers and school librarians.

Effective school libraries are dynamic learning environments that bridge the gap between access and opportunity for all K–12 learners. Under the leadership of the school librarian, the school library provides students access to resources and technology, connecting classroom learning to real-world events. By providing access to an array of well-managed resources, school libraries enable academic knowledge to be linked to deeper, personalized learning. The expanded learning environment of the school library ensures the unique interests and needs of individual students are met. In this way,
effective school library programs prepare students for college, career, and community.

Under the leadership of a certified school librarian, the effective school library program delivers a well-rounded educational program (AASL 2009). This program focuses on accessing and evaluating information, providing digital learning training and experiences, and developing a culture of reading. The program uses a variety of engaging and relevant resources. Robust school libraries have high-quality, openly licensed digital and print resources, technology tools, and broadband access. This environment is essential to providing equitable learning opportunities for all students. More than 60 studies in two dozen states show that the “levels of library funding, staffing levels, collection size and range, and the instructional role of the librarian all have a direct impact on student achievement” (Gretes 2013).

In an effective school library program, the school librarian serves as an instructional leader, program administrator, teacher, collaborative partner, and information specialist (AASL 2009). Working with classroom teachers, the school librarian develops information literacy and digital literacy instruction for all students. Serving as an instructional leader, the school librarian contributes to curricular decisions and facilitates professional learning. Additionally, as the library program administrator, the school librarian oversees and manages the program and works with school and community partners. These partnerships result in expanded and improved resources and services for all students.

An effective school library program plays a crucial role in bridging digital and socioeconomic divides. School library programs staffed with state-certified professionals provide an approachable, equitable, personalized learning environment necessary for every student’s well-rounded education.

Disclaimer:
The position taken by the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) represents the organization and cannot be applied to individual members or groups affiliated with the association without their direct confirmation.
1951

Harry S. Truman was president of the United States; Nat King Cole’s “Too Young” was at the top of the Billboard charts (Billboard 2016); and All about Eve won the Academy Award for Best Motion Picture (Academy n.d.). We were six years away from the 1957 Soviet launch of Sputnik, and three years away from the landmark 1954 civil rights case Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas. Much has happened in the world around us in the past sixty-five years. Similarly, much has happened in the profession of school librarianship and in our professional association. Yes, in 2016 AASL turns sixty-five. This issue of KQ honors our past, celebrates the present, and looks to the future.

Looking Back

From its formation in December 1914 until attaining division status in 1951, the precursor of AASL existed as the School Libraries Section of the American Library Association and from 1941 to 1951 was situated within the ALA Division of Libraries for Children and Young People. In 1944 the section began using the name American Association of School Librarians and, in 1951, was officially granted division status (Pond 1976). At that time, the standards for the profession were School Libraries for Today and Tomorrow, published in 1945 by ALA. Standards for School Library Programs were published in 1960 and Standards for School Media Programs in 1969. Media Programs: District and School was published in 1975, and in 1980 the first AASL National Conference was held in Louisville, Kentucky, with the theme ‘80s and Beyond. When the National Commission on Excellence in Education issued A Nation at Risk in 1983, school librarians contributed to the 1984 response, Alliance for Excellence: Librarians Respond to “A Nation at Risk.”

In 1988 the revolutionary Information Power: Guidelines for School Library Media Programs declared that the mission of the school library media program was to “ensure that students and staff were effective users of ideas and information” (AASL and AECT 1988, 1). In 1998 Information Power: Building Partnerships for Learning reiterated this mission, defined our collaborative instructional role, and set forth nine information-literacy standards for student learning. Through the 2000s AASL worked to raise awareness of the critical role school librarians play in student learning by advocating for passage of the Strengthening Kids’ Interest in Learning and Libraries (SKILLs) Act (Legislation Introduced 2007).

Because of the school library language in ESSA and the leadership provided by AASL, we are poised to demonstrate the importance of effective school library programs in student learning.
Looking Around

Currently, student learning in the library is guided by AASL’s 2007 Standards for the 21st-Century Learner, and we build our library programs around the 2009 Empowering Learners: Guidelines for School Library Programs. According to Empowering Learners, “the mission of the school library program is to ensure that students and staff are effective users of ideas and information. The school librarian empowers students to be critical thinkers, enthusiastic readers, skillful researchers, and ethical users of information…” (AASL 2009, 18).

Guided by our mission, “The American Association of School Librarians empowers leaders to transform teaching and learning,” we are working to implement our current strategic plan, approved in 2014, which focuses on association relevance, membership development, and association governance and leadership (AASL 2016a). We celebrate the inclusion of school librarians and school library programs in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which President Obama signed into law in December 2015 as the updated reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (AASL 2016c).

Looking Forward

AASL has never rested on past accomplishments. Using feedback collected from surveys and focus groups held across the country, the Standards and Guidelines Editorial Board is evaluating and revising the current learning standards and program guidelines. Our Standards and Guidelines Implementation Task Force is developing a plan to support states, districts, and schools in the implementation of the new standards and guidelines, which will be launched at the 2017 AASL National Conference and Exhibition in Phoenix, Arizona.

Charged by participants in the 2014 Causality: School Libraries and Student Success (CLASS) national forum and authors of the resulting white paper, three research teams are in place for CLASS II, exploring foundational research “to move the national school library research agenda toward the causal analyses underlying the differences school librarians can make for students from diverse backgrounds, poverty, and special needs” (AASL Opens 2015).

Additionally, AASL is actively working to ensure that school libraries remain at the forefront as ESSA implementation moves to the state and local levels. Because of the school library language in ESSA and the leadership provided by AASL, we are poised to demonstrate the importance of effective school library programs in student learning.

I graduated from high school in 1976, our nation’s bicentennial year, and much was made of our country’s two-hundred-year history. In fact, my senior class motto was, “The past is our guide; the future, our goal.” As we remember and honor AASL’s past, we celebrate the present, and we look toward the future. It is an exciting time to be a school librarian and an exciting time to be a member of AASL, “the only national professional membership organization focused on school librarians and the school library community” (AASL 2016b). Happy birthday, AASL!

Audrey Church is a professor at Longwood University in Farmville, Virginia, where she is coordinator of the School Librarianship Program. In 2015 she received the Longwood University College of Graduate and Professional Studies Faculty Research Award and Longwood University’s Maria Bristow Stark Faculty Excellence Award. She is the author of “Performance-Based Evaluation and School Librarians,” published in School Library Research in May 2015. Her newest book is Tapping into the Skills of 21st-Century School Librarians: A Concise Handbook for Administrators (Rowman and Littlefield 2016).

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AASL has been on the forefront of issues that are important to the people most important to us: our students.

It Was a Very Good Year

Terri Grief

The year was 1951. Harry Truman was president, and Alben Barkley, who was from my hometown, was vice president. A postage stamp cost three cents; *I Love Lucy* premiered, and Audrey Hepburn and Grace Kelly were seen on the big screen for the first time. RCA developed the first portable video camera, which weighed a mere eight pounds but included a fifty-three-pound backpack transmitter. *Catcher in the Rye* was published (Remembering 2013). The University of Kentucky won the NCAA men’s basketball championship (News 2016). (Sorry, I’m from Kentucky so I had to include that one!)

Most importantly for us as school librarians, in 1951 AASL was created as its own division of ALA. According to the 1950 census, 22.8 million children were in U.S. elementary schools, and 7.2 million in secondary schools. This number had been increasing year to year due to the high birthrate after World War II (U.S. Dept. of Commerce 1953). While I couldn’t find authoritative data on the number of schools that were built during this time, I imagine that the construction of schools increased to keep up with the population. Libraries were beginning to become integral to schools, and a change from school libraries as study halls to active learning places was slowly taking place. AASL was instrumental in this transition (Craver 1986).

This issue celebrates AASL’s first sixty-five years. I asked former presidents of AASL to contribute because each of them has a unique perspective on the association and its contribution to effective school library programs and student success. I am so appreciative of the efforts of those who were able to take time from their busy schedules to write for this issue, and I think you will be informed and entertained as you read it. Our celebration will climax at the 2017 AASL National Conference and Exhibition in Phoenix, so be ready to party when you get there! At this same event, our updated standards and guidelines will be revealed. AASL is the only national association devoted to school librarians and school libraries. AASL has been on the forefront of issues that are important to the people most important to us: our students.

The changes in education over the past sixty-five years are mind boggling. When AASL pioneers were school librarians, print books were the only reference sources for students, although educational films were introduced during the 1950s. Technology...
was a typewriter. Now our students hold a powerful computer in their hands and have information constantly slamming them from every direction. School librarians were there to help students navigate the Reader’s Guide to Periodical Literature, and we are here today to help them navigate the world of information at their fingertips. AASL supported school librarians then and is here now to help us guide our students as they become better digital citizens and strive to make sense of the world. Please join me in wishing us a happy sixty-fifth birthday!

Terri Grief, AASL President 2014–2015 and current member of ALA Council, is a school librarian at McCracken County (KY) High School. She also serves as Leadership Development chair for the Kentucky Association of School Librarians, which, in 2001, named her Outstanding School Librarian of the Year. In 2015 she was awarded the Kentucky Library Association’s Lifetime Achievement Award.

Works Cited:


Celebrating 65 Years of a Dynamic Organization for School Librarians

Blanche Woolls | blanche.woolls@sjsu.edu
The American Association of School Librarians as an American Library Association division is sixty-five years young in 2016. It’s a birthday. Some of us like to ignore birthdays, hoping this tactic will, somehow, keep us ageless. But others of us, me included, love to celebrate a day that is uniquely ours.

For those of us who love a birthday, the question is not if we should be celebrating, but why and how? The how is covered in another article in this issue. The why begins with the opportunity to think back over the past and what happened earlier in our history as school librarians that allowed us to be in the position to celebrate our sixty-fifth birthday as a division of ALA.

We owe a great deal to the National Education Association (NEA). In 1896 NEA formed a library section (Cecil and Heaps 1940, 52), but there were no professional school librarians. It was not until Mary A. Kingsbury was appointed in 1900 as school librarian at Erasmus Hall High School in Brooklyn, New York, that we had a professional in place in a school library.

Our profession didn’t grow rapidly. In many locations, the public library placed branches in high schools, and elementary schools placed books in room libraries. When the high school library was funded by the school district, it was under the supervision of a teacher or, in some fortunate instances, a professional school librarian.

Early Days in ALA
ALA, in December 1914, “formed a School Library Section, ‘to further in every way possible the development of effective school libraries,’ and immediately set in operation two committees; the first, Secondary School Library Administration; and the second, Professional Training of the School Librarian” (Cecil and Heaps 1940, 64). In August of the next year, NEA joined with the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools to create C. C. Certain’s “Standard Library Organization and Equipment for Secondary Schools of Different Sizes,” and in 1920 the document was approved by ALA’s Committee of Education and published by ALA. In 1925 ALA also published a second report by Certain, “Elementary School Library Standards” (Cecil and Heaps 1940, 65).

Funding for schools was substantially reduced during the Great Depression, but by 1932 “Legal codes of 45 states provide organization to aid in the promotion and direction of school library service” (Cecil and Heaps 1940, 73). NEA published a chart showing the legal provision for the establishment of school libraries between 1935 and 1939. Three of the forty-eight states had no legal provision at all. Legal provisions were “permissive” for thirty states but mandatory for fifteen states. Contractual relations were also in place with existing public libraries in twenty-seven states; under these agreements some school libraries were operated as branches of public libraries (Cecil and Heaps 1940, 73).

In 1940 Henry J. Cecil and Willard A. Heaps reported that “The educational or teachers’ associations of thirty-four states have sections for school libraries” (131):

When school librarians are members of library sections within state educational associations they are generally considered as essentials in the school system, and the place of the school library is more readily acknowledged. Such affiliations also enhance the importance and status of the school librarian. (Cecil and Heaps 1940, 131)

School librarians also had a solid place in the world of librarianship. AASL had been poised to emerge, so to speak, for six years previously. Our name, AASL, has been in use since 1944 as a part of the Division of Libraries for Children and Young People (DLCYP). By 1950 school librarians were strongly advocating for division status. The October 1950 Top of the News periodical published by the DLCYP noted that Dr. Frances Henne was going to summarize a preconference held in Cleveland where the process of separating into a division was discussed. At that point 25 state departments of education and 125 cities provided library supervision, and AASL had 2,197 members, an increase from 1,492 members in 1948 (Highlights 1950, 30):


AASL as a Division
The ALA Midwinter Meeting 1951 was held in Chicago in “fifteen below zero weather” (Nicholson 1951, 16), and the board of the DLCYP noted:

The withdrawal of one section from the Division made surprisingly little change in
organization or operation necessary. Board members and councilors who had been elected from A.A.S.L. went with the new Division of American Association of School Librarians. The only officer of the Division elected from A.A.S.L. was the president. The Board unanimously requested that she continue in office until her term expires. (Nicholson 1951, 16)

Also in the March 1951 issue of Top of the News, Margaret Nicholson told of the “work done to produce such phenomenal growth [of A.A.S.L.]” and reported that, according to Lucile Vickers, the Planning School Library Quarters Committee had almost finished its work. In the same article, Nicholson also reported that the nominating committee that year included Eleanor Ahlers among others, and the “Proposed Constitution and By-Laws” document was printed as submitted by Rheta Clark, chair, and members Ruth Ersted, C. Elizabeth Johnson, and Margaret Rufsvold.1

Through the years AASL’s activities have enhanced school librarianship. Perhaps one of the most notable is that the concept of an assembly of state representatives existed from the beginning of AASL’s history as a division. The State Assembly created by our first constitution is now our Affiliate Assembly, and it continues to be made up of representatives from a school library organization in each state. These delegates meet at both the ALA Midwinter Meeting and ALA Annual Conference to bring concerns from their state associations to the attention of the AASL Board of Directors.

AASL has published standards for school libraries at intervals beginning in 1948. The association has also been responsible for major funding initiatives that helped school library programs meet those standards. In 1962 the Knapp Foundation awarded a grant of $1,130,000 to improve resources in school libraries and to demonstrate and publicize the value of school libraries. The project, guided by AASL’s 1960 learning standards and by AASL members, provided demonstration schools and publicized the value of effective school library programs. The project was so successful that the Knapp Foundation followed up with another grant ($1,163,718) that focused on school librarians’ roles, training, and recruitment (Bertram 2014). Also, from 1988–1998 the Dewitt Wallace Reader’s Digest Fund provided $40,000,000 that enabled nineteen communities, over the course of three years, to show how a school library that met standards would function and the positive effects of those school libraries on their learning communities (Stripling 1997).

AASL members are also part of the process for development of credentials for the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), which accredits programs in teacher education institutions. These programs are usually part of a college or department of education within a university, and in some states this accreditation is a part of the licensing process for school librarians as well as teachers.

AASL’s Future

That was then, this is now. The question for each of us is: What will members be doing to celebrate in 2081? Will our profession be surviving and thriving? Or will schools have returned to the situation almost 130 years previously, when there were no school librarians? In the next sixty-five years, will AASL’s influence decline or will the association be even stronger, supporting at least one school librarian in every school? AASL President (1998–1999) Sharon Coatney recently described the school librarian’s role as being essential to:

1 Eleanor Ahlers was David Loertscher’s professor at the University of Washington, and both he and I were students of Margaret Rufsvold at Indiana University.
• Enhance student achievement
• Protect student privacy
• Provide a safe place for all types of students
• Protect and promote students’ right to read and right to know
• Provide information-literacy instruction
• Furnish students with a window to the world now and in the future
• Enable students to dream
• Encourage students to become involved in things “beyond themselves”
• Provide instruction and exposure to new technologies and other new learning environments
• Encourage and promote collaboration with teachers to make the best learning environment possible for all types of students
• Encourage the love of reading
• Promote lifelong learning with all stakeholders
• Provide a model of learning to all patrons
• Provide a place to make, create, and inquire (Coatney 2016)

A few of us could be around in sixty-five years to celebrate what we have done in the twenty-first century to continue the legacy of those giants of the mid-twentieth century. Today our organization stands on the foundation they built. What can we do to continue to build on that legacy? If AASL is alive and well in 2081, what would the reasons be?

Some of the reasons AASL and our profession will continue to thrive are the same reasons we joined AASL in the first place. AASL:

• Supports school librarians as they provide open access to information for our teachers and students
• Helps members share and solve problems in the profession
• Advocates for the role of school libraries and school librarians in the continued provision of access to information
• Works for the common good of all school librarians and students
• Highlights excellence in school libraries by annually bestowing the National School Library Program of the Year Award
• Honors our outstanding colleagues through awards to individuals
• Develops standards for good practice
• Allows members to practice leadership skills leading groups within AASL
• Supports and protects members when parents or even teacher colleagues threaten students’ intellectual freedom. (Do you have the number of ALA’s Office for Intellectual Freedom in your desk drawer?)
• Provides representation and programming at ALA’s Midwinter Meeting and Annual Conference as well as at our own biannual AASL National Conference, allowing members to meet other school librarians, educators, and supervisors from across the nation
• Offers a forum for school librarians to communicate across state lines and to learn best practices
• Allows members to hone their public-speaking skills with presentations at AASL conferences
• Has sections for educators of school librarians, independent school librarians, and supervisors of school librarians
• Provides professional learning opportunities through webinars
• Joins in a collective effort of school librarians to support students in all schools—elementary, middle, high school, charter schools, private schools, and even home-schooled students—to open access to information resources essential to education in the twenty-first century
• Publishes Knowledge Quest and the research reported in our online peer-reviewed journal, School Library Research
• Supports a collective voice, a national voice that ties us together into a mighty force, to describe what we do in our schools, to help us reach lawmakers whose votes provide support to our programs
• Provides an office and staff members who not only manage the association but also help members with challenges to be met and answer queries about school librarians and libraries from persons both within the U.S. and internationally

When AASL is still a viable entity for sixty-five more years, it will be because each of us—all of us who are AASL—have in 2016 gone beyond simply considering that we have “done our duty” just by paying our membership dues. Association dues may seem a sizeable amount when writing that check or looking at that charge on a credit card statement. However, it doesn’t seem so much when you open your copy of Knowledge Quest, learn from a members-only webinar, read the latest School Library Research, or attend your state conference and hear the report of your delegate to the AASL Affiliate Assembly. AASL dues don’t seem so much when you know that, even though you are a single person in your school library, you are surrounded by colleagues who are ready and willing to help in times of stress, such as when intellectual freedom is challenged in your school,
or decision makers threaten to cut your job or budget.

You can add to your membership benefits by beginning or continuing your active participation in the governance structure of the association: join or chair a committee, work on a task force, allow your name to be submitted as a candidate for an AASL election as an officer or as representative to the ALA Council. You can participate in AASL’s continuing education activities and help plan future professional development opportunities. You can even teach other school librarians, sharing your knowledge. Ask your supervisor for permission (and funding, if at all possible) to attend AASL conferences, and even when you aren’t fully funded, make every effort to attend. You can submit a proposal for you and one of your teachers, or even your principal, to conduct a session at the AASL National Conference.

Perhaps most of all, you can recruit your colleagues to join AASL and join in the national voice for school librarians. You also need to recruit future school librarians from among your best teachers and students. Tell them about the university programs in your area where they can begin the process of learning how to manage and lead a school library program. Our recruiting efforts will ensure our having qualified people to follow in our footsteps and to blaze new paths in the profession.

Commemorating the Past by Paying It Forward

All of the above are reasons why you joined AASL and why you encourage others to join, thus guaranteeing the long-term existence of our association. At this time, our birthday celebration, we need a little more: your financial contributions to confirm your belief that AASL and school librarianship should be alive and well and thriving in 2081. Please read Carl Harvey’s article in this issue; it’s about the “It’s in Our Hands” campaign. Your donation will confirm your belief in our essential role in the lives of our students, our teachers, our schools, our districts, our cities, our states, and our nation. We know that with our contributions and through our continued work together, we will maintain our unique position of providing access to information to all the students, all the teachers, all the time. Future school librarians will be able to continue preparing students to seek the best information to solve problems in school and for the rest of their lives. School librarians will continue to be a strong force for helping prepare our students to use a variety of accurate, relevant resources to make decisions, to gather information to create new information, and—most important of all—to lead successful and fulfilling lives, preserving our democracy.

Your contributions of money, effort, and time show that you are as committed to our association as the visionaries who believed in school libraries as early as 1900 and continued to do so throughout the twentieth century—but especially in 1950 and 1951 as they worked to establish AASL as a full-fledged division of ALA. You will join those who are meeting this call for action. It is a time when we can stand up and be counted. We, members of AASL, need to support our association all of the time, but in 2016 we have an opportunity to give a real birthday gift to AASL and students in the future. Happy Birthday!

Blanche Woolls, AASL President 1993–1994, is a San Jose State University professor emerita and retired program director. An AASL member, she recently served on the 65th Celebration Task Force. She has received many honors, including the Pennsylvania School Librarians Association Outstanding Contributor Award, AASL’s Distinguished Service Award, and an Indiana University School of Library and Information Science Distinguished Alumna Award.
Responding to School Library Cuts

My 2010–2011 Presidential Initiative
“Union Objects to Cutting Librarians” — Wichita Eagle (KS), May 26, 2011

“Librarians Protest Beaverton School District Cuts” — Associated Press (OR), March 22, 2011

“100 Librarians Are Eliminated” — NBC News, Las Vegas (NV), March 3, 2011

“Bridgewater - Raynham Backs Decision to Cut Librarians - School Libraries Remain Open, Staff Won’t Return” — Taunton Daily Gazette (MA), September 7, 2010

These are just some of the headlines that appeared during my 2010–2011 term as AASL President. It’s not like I wasn’t prepared for the harsh reality facing school librarians—and the students they serve. During the previous year, the American Association of School Administrators said library staff were cut by 10 percent and another 19 percent cut was coming. Responding to school library closings, layoffs, and reassignments of school librarians took a great deal of my time during that school year.

Because I knew more cuts were coming, I developed a plan to showcase what an excellent school library program looks like so that school libraries and school librarians could escape the cuts. I asked each AASL state affiliate organization to provide the name of an outstanding school library in the state that I could visit and we could celebrate. Out of fifty states, thirty-five participated in what was named the “Vision Tour,” providing the general public with a vision of outstanding school libraries. Why didn’t every state participate? Some state leaders maintained they couldn’t choose only one school in their state. A number of sparsely populated states in the west didn’t have a full–time certified school librarian who was an AASL member (a requirement). And, unfortunately, some lost communications caused several more to miss out on the process.

When the school was chosen and the visit scheduled, the hosts arranged a program designed to let people know what school libraries are all about—and to show them what kids without school libraries are missing. Often these occasions included student performances of the Vision Tour theme song, appropriately titled “Check It Out.” I met with hundreds of librarians from all types of libraries, library educators, school administrators, government officials, and thousands of students. School libraries from across the country were celebrated with songs, skits, poems, videos, testimonials, and even racing sausages! These rallies, receptions, programs, and assemblies dedicated to celebrating school library programs gave the school librarians a good reason to invite people in. And in they came. Parents, principals, superintendents, school board members, area school and public librarians, state library personnel, mayors, state representatives, and other government officials. In honor of Portage Northern High School, Rep. Fred Upton (R–MI) had a commendation read into the Congressional Record. Some celebs participated in other ways; Robin Roberts, host of ABC-TV’s Good Morning America, sent video congratulations to Byrd Middle School in Richmond, Virginia—a tribute that was screened during a school–wide assembly. The attention seemed to work. In one instance, a school librarian who had her job reduced was reinstated to full time. In another district, school board members left the Vision Tour celebration noting that cuts they had been contemplating were not going to happen—and they’ve stuck to their position. I heard over and over again, “This is the first time my superintendent has been in my library.”

Intermingled with these inspiring visits were media interviews asking for official responses to what was going on throughout the country: elimination of school librarian positions. This purge was at its height when I was in Wisconsin in March 2011, just a few days after teachers had a sit-in and rally in the state capitol. I walked around the capitol building and downtown Madison with Wisconsin AASL members and observed the many passionate individuals and groups who organized a protest march to fight to keep what
Governor Scott Walker was threatening to eliminate. I even saw a librarian marching with a sign that read: “Please don’t shush me! Librarians won’t be silenced.” In conjunction with ALA President Roberta Stevens, I released a statement in Madison that said, in part, that school librarians, as educators, are being impacted along with teachers by sweeping policy changes. Despite this challenge, they are continuing to provide an excellent level of service and empower their students to be learners for life. In the statement we also highlighted the positive contributions school librarians make in their schools, particularly in the areas of reading and technology.

Observing what went on in all these great school libraries got me thinking. What if there weren’t school librarians and school libraries? By the time I reached the last stop on the Vision Tour in Merrimack, New Hampshire, I had a list of “100 Things Kids Will Miss If They Don’t Have a School Librarian in Their School.” Met there by the most recent president-elect, New Hampshireite Susan Ballard, we released the list, which was soon made into a colorful poster distributed by AASL and Florida State University. (You can view and download the poster at <www.al.org/aasl/sites/al.org.aasl/files/content/aaslissues/advocacy/100_Things_Poster.pdf>.)

Because I financed the Vision Tour mostly from my own funds, I wanted to leave a legacy for future AASL presidents to have the chance to implement a project of their own, even if their personal budgets couldn’t support the project. The AASL Board agreed to institute the AASL Presidential Initiative Fund of $5,000 annually to support future presidents in their efforts to champion a cause important to them. Two task forces I appointed, Retirees and Leadership Development, have gone on to become a Retiree Special Interest Group and the Leadership Development Committee, providing opportunities for AASL members at both ends of the age spectrum.

Through it all, I especially enjoyed hearing what students had to say. Three of the phrases students uttered that stood out and stuck with me were “I went to the library to solve problems,” “I had fun,” and “I use my imagination.” In the midst of what was surely the definition of “interesting times,” students were telling us what school libraries are for: to solve problems and to have fun, while stimulating students’ imaginations along the way. What a wonderful message for all of us. Yes, we have to solve problems. And they seem to change daily. But those of us in the school library world also have to remember the joy of childhood, the joy of exploration—whether it’s through the written word or the world of technology. And school librarians are the hope that springs eternal for today’s students. School librarians are the people who can help solve problems and show how to have fun along the way. Remember, too, to use your information skills to take care of yourself, solve your own problems, and have fun along the way.

Observing what went on in all these great school libraries got me thinking. What if there weren’t school librarians and school libraries? By the time I reached the last stop on the Vision Tour in Merrimack, New Hampshire, I had a list of “100 Things Kids Will Miss If They Don’t Have a School Librarian in Their School.”

Nancy Everhart, AASL President 2010–2011, is a professor at Florida State University’s School of Information (iSchool) in Tallahassee. In 2012 the International Association of School Librarianship honored her with the School Librarianship Award, recognizing her contribution to the national development of school libraries and services. Among her recent publications are “Project PALS: Ensuring Success in Libraries for Patrons with Autism,” a 2015 Teacher Librarian article she coauthored (with Amelia Anderson), and “Culture and Context in the Mandated Implementation of Digital Textbooks in Florida and South Korea,” a 2014 School Libraries Worldwide article she coauthored (with Ji Hei Kang).
Celebrating the Past and Transforming the Future

Carl A. Harvey II
Sixty-five years—780 months, or over 23,720 days, or 569,400 hours. Wow! In 2016 we celebrate the sixty-fifth anniversary of the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) as a full-fledged division of ALA. Our organization is the only national professional organization whose sole focus is on school libraries. Since 1951 AASL has been the leader at working to support and guide the future of our profession. It's a huge task, and as an AASL member since 1999, I hope I played some small role in helping AASL successfully support school librarians and their students.

Celebrating the Past
We have much to celebrate in 2016. AASL is in the process of our next standards revision and update. We have advocated for students and school libraries and been rewarded by seeing major strides forward with the passage of ESSA, the federal Every Student Succeeds Act. School librarians are active and involved so that AASL can continue to provide valuable professional development opportunities (both virtually and face to face) for our members and colleagues. Our network of school librarians—from the dedicated board of directors to all the dedicated volunteers on our committees and task forces—works together to support the many facets of the organization.

Transforming the Future
Yes, we have many accomplishments to celebrate, but we know our organization must continue to grow and evolve. We also recognize that AASL must be receptive to building the next generation of school librarians. School librarians who are just beginning their careers will build on the work of the generations of school librarians before them. AASL wants to make sure that the resources and services we provide are effective and essential to building effective school library programs all across the country. All school librarians can improve the lives of every student in their schools, and AASL wants to be ready to support librarians’ endeavors.

At the end of 2012 the Special Committee on the Financial Future of AASL was formed to look ahead. What kinds of things would our next generation of members need, and how could AASL be ready to help provide them? The work of that special committee inspired the 65th Celebration Task Force to look at ways AASL can celebrate our past and transform the future. We all know that the organization’s resources are limited. With all that AASL already does, the budget is stretched to the maximum. Any new initiatives would require new funding streams.

Therefore, at the 2015 AASL National Conference the 65th Anniversary Giving Campaign was launched. The campaign that started at the 2015 conference will run through the 2017 AASL National Conference. During those two years, we will raise money as a way to celebrate our sixty-five-year history and use those funds to transform our future. The campaign will work with our affiliates, our members, and our leadership (both past and present) to raise financial support for two specific programs that we believe will help transform the future of our field and the association.

Student Bridge Scholarship
When school librarians first enter the field, AASL will cover the cost difference between student membership and regular membership for three consecutive years. Why? Currently, many student members of AASL do not go on to rejoin AASL at the standard rate. While certainly some AASL student members decide to go into another specialty, some new school librarians find the dues increase from student membership to regular membership to be a financial hardship. By offering this scholarship program, AASL and ALA will bridge this increase in rates, giving
student members the opportunity to establish themselves both in their careers and financially before they are expected to pay the standard rate for working professionals.

**AASL Induction Program**

The AASL Induction Program, scheduled to launch at the 2017 AASL National Conference, will offer a systematic structure to assist future school library leaders in recognizing and developing their leadership abilities. This comprehensive program will ensure that members are prepared to actively shape the future of the K–12 education landscape as leaders within their schools and the association.

**Why Donate?**

As our committee worked to plan the giving campaign and the focus of the funding, it became clear that, if we are going to celebrate our past and transform our future, we have to focus on the word **our**. The slogan “It’s in Our Hands” became so important because we must take ownership of the future and focus on how we can help support that future.

Some of our donors shared their reasons for contributing to the campaign:

“Giving a gift to AASL is a little self-serving because we, members, are AASL, but it is our 65th birthday, and AASL is deserving of the gift even if we are buying it for ourselves.”
—Blanche Woolls, AASL President 1993–1994, professor, California

“I think each generation is responsible for doing what they can to help the next generation. I appreciate what the founders of AASL did to start it. I’ve benefited from their work and vision, and it is my turn to do what I can for the next generation. The contribution is one concrete way to do that.”
—Marge Cox, school librarian, Veterans Memorial Elementary, Florida

“AASL and I have grown up together; we are practically the same age! I don’t think that I would have been as effective a leader in the schools and districts where I have been a school librarian without the support and training that I received from AASL. This campaign is an opportunity for me to give back a little bit.”
—Cassandra Barnett, AASL President 2009–2010, consultant for state department of education, Arkansas

“If I can make a monthly payment for unbundled entertainment services and my favorite news coverage, then I can CERTAINLY make one in support of the profession I love so dearly!”
—Carolyn Vibbert, school librarian, Sudley Elementary School, Virginia

“As a member of AASL I have been exposed to many different experiences, some through the organization itself and the great leadership we have had, and some through the incredible networking that occurs. The main reason I contributed to the 65th anniversary campaign is to help the organization continue to provide opportunities for this type of networking for school librarians who will join in the future. I have received incredible and rewarding gifts through my associations with my AASL colleagues.”
—Jody Howard, member of AASL Board of Directors, Colorado

“AASL has supported school librarians since 1951. It’s the same age as I am, and I’m feeling ready to take on issues and challenges in new ways. We are strong—ready to be stronger with an endowment to support our

**All school librarians can improve the lives of every student in their schools, and AASL wants to be ready to support librarians’ endeavors.**
This comprehensive program will ensure that members are prepared to actively shape the future of the K–12 education landscape as leaders within their schools and the association.

many great new projects while we continue to offer strong standards and guidelines, leadership with legislators and boards of education, and a phenomenal network of practitioners always ready to answer questions and share ideas. The wisdom of our collective experience is a strength that needs to be maintained for K–12 students of the future, all of whom deserve great campus librarians.”
—Dorcas Hand, retired school librarian, Texas

"When I was growing up, there was a sampler in our family’s kitchen that read ‘Home is where the heart is.’ AASL is my professional home. I am happy to do my part to keep the home fires burning bright in order to welcome a whole new generation of family as they cross the threshold and shape the future for our great association.”
—Susan Ballard, AASL President 2012–2013, program director, New Hampshire

"Early in my career I thought of AASL as someone else—the staff, the officers, some mystical group in Chicago working and speaking for school librarians. I have realized now, though, that I am AASL and you are AASL. AASL is a strong and effective professional association because of what its members accomplish. The student bridge scholarships and induction program funded by the 65th anniversary campaign will help to keep both the association and the profession strong.”
—Audrey Church, AASL President 2016–2017, professor, Virginia

How Can You Help?
We all have different budgets and can afford to contribute different amounts. Those of us on the 65th Celebration Task Force know—and appreciate—that AASL members are already contributing to the association via their dues, and many members also contribute their time and talents on committees. So, it was important to set up the campaign so that no donation would be too small. Each little bit will help us reach our goal to provide these transformational activities for the next generation of school librarians.

If you go to <transform.aasl.org>, you can find more information about the campaign, some of the history of AASL, and a list of donors who have already joined the campaign. We’d like to add your name to the list. No amount is too small, but we wanted to offer a way to recognize those donors who donated $65 dollars or more. Donors at the $650 level and above will receive the 65th-anniversary lapel pin with a simulated diamond inset. Donors at the $65 to $649 level will receive the 65th-anniversary lapel pin with a simulated blue sapphire gemstone.

We appreciate all the work everyone does every day for the good of school libraries and students. In this year when we will celebrate the sixty-fifth anniversary of our professional organization, let’s remember that “It’s in Our Hands” as we celebrate our past and transform our future!

Carl A. Harvey, II, is an instructor of school librarianship at Longwood University in Farmville, Virginia, and the coeditor of School Library Connection. He was the 2011–2012 AASL President and chair of the 65th Celebration Task Force. He currently serves on the ALA Nominating Committee. Also active at the state level, he is past-president of the Indiana Library Federation and of the Association for Indiana School Library Educators.
AASL at 65: of Enduring C

Susan D. Ballard
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A Reflection on and Affirmation of Core Values that Sustain Us
Socrates is said to have noted that “the unexamined life is not worth living.” As AASL celebrates sixty-five years as a division of the American Library Association, it is wholly appropriate for us to examine the life of our organization as we contemplate what the future holds for school librarians. At the very heart of why we choose to cast our lot together are the understanding of our past and our abiding certainty and steadfast adherence to a set of guiding principles, core values, and beliefs. This adherence to core values also explains why AASL is the standard-bearer and undisputed leader in the ongoing commitment to excellence in school librarianship and school library programs.

What Are Professional Core Values?

Core values are those essential guiding principles that form the basis for how we go about conducting our personal and professional lives. Despite an ever-changing world, the influence and sway of socioeconomics, politics, culture, and technology, and the unrelenting nature of K–12 education, core values keep us grounded. For AASL, they serve as our organizational compass to ensure we are heading in the right direction. Our professional core values are the ever-present and unwavering foundational elements upon which librarianship is constructed—part of our professional DNA, so to speak—and we are defined and identified by them. They underlie our communications and interactions with one another and with our various constituencies. Our core values are the basic elements of how we go about our work. And though time may pass, they endure.

Core Values of Librarianship

In its online policy manual (2009) and as a separate webpage (2004) within its section on advocacy, the American Library Association, our parent organization, identifies the Core Values of Librarianship as follows:

The foundation of modern librarianship rests on an essential set of core values that define, inform, and guide our professional practice. These values reflect the history and ongoing development of the profession and have been advanced, expanded, and refined by numerous policy statements of the American Library Association. Among these are:

Access—All information resources that are provided directly or indirectly by the library, regardless of technology, format, or methods of delivery, should be readily, equally, and equitably accessible to all library users.

Confidentiality/Privacy—Protecting user privacy and confidentiality is necessary for intellectual freedom and fundamental to the ethics and practice of librarianship.

Democracy—A democracy presupposes an informed citizenry. The First Amendment mandates the right of all persons to free expression, and the corollary right to receive the constitutionally protected expression of others. The publicly supported library provides free and equal access to information for all people of the community the library serves.

Diversity—We value our nation’s diversity and strive to reflect that diversity by providing a full spectrum of resources and services to the communities we serve.

Education and Lifelong Learning—ALA promotes the creation, maintenance, and enhancement of a learning society, encouraging its members to work with educators, government officials, and organizations in coalitions to initiate and support comprehensive efforts to ensure that school, public, academic, and special libraries in every community cooperate to provide lifelong learning services to all.

Intellectual Freedom—We uphold the principles of intellectual freedom and resist all efforts to censor library resources.

The Public Good—ALA reaffirms the following fundamental values of libraries in the context of discussing outsourcing and privatization of library services. These values include that libraries are an essential public good and are fundamental institutions in democratic societies.

Preservation—The Association supports the preservation of information published in all media and formats. The association affirms that the preservation of information resources is central to libraries and librarianship.

Professionalism—The American Library Association supports the provision of library services by professionally qualified personnel who have been educated in graduate programs within institutions of higher education. It is of vital impor-
tance that there be professional education available to meet the social needs and goals of library services.

Service—We provide the highest level of service to all library users. We strive for excellence in the profession by maintaining and enhancing our own knowledge and skills, by encouraging the professional development of co-workers, and by fostering the aspirations of potential members of the profession.

Social Responsibility—ALA recognizes its broad social responsibilities. The broad social responsibilities of the American Library Association are defined in terms of the contribution that librarianship can make in ameliorating or solving the critical problems of society; support for efforts to help inform and educate the people of the United States on these problems and to encourage them to examine the many views on and the facts regarding each problem; and the willingness of ALA to take a position on current critical issues with the relationship to libraries and library service set forth in the position statement. (ALA 2004)

I think we would all agree that these values do form the raison d’être of the profession. However, among the ranks of youth-serving librarians—especially school librarians—additional core values are at the very heart of our endeavors. Despite the march of time and the passing of the baton from generation to generation of practitioners, these values continue to motivate us and have a profound influence on our day-to-day efforts and our collective vision for the future.

These additional core values include such areas as:
- instructional responsibilities
- collaboration
- design of meaningful and relevant learning opportunities
- continuous improvement through evaluation
- standards-based practice
- integration of new resources and technologies
- advocacy
- leadership
- research and evidence-based practice

Roots and Pioneers

“We understand now, we’ve been made to understand, and to embrace the understanding… that who we are is who we were.” These are lines from the 1997 movie Amistad, based on actual events surrounding the uprising by a group of Africans against their enslavement. These words represent the eloquent remarks of John Quincy Adams during his Supreme Court appearance in defense of the captives and underscore the importance of heritage and the contributions of those who have come before. The proposition that who we are is who we were is a compelling one as we reflect on how we came to be and how we intend to continue.

Looking back at our history as an association, four remarkable pioneers stand out, people who, early on, gifted us with their insight and intellect to articulate the theoretical base of what constitutes excellence in our field. It’s worth reviewing, remembering, and honoring the journey they embarked on to get us under way and to guide us as we have developed, grown, and prospered.

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Mary P. Douglas
As noted on the AASL website (2016), AASL had its early roots in the ALA School Libraries Section formed in 1914; in 1941 this section was incorporated into the Division of Libraries for Children and Young People. The name American Association of School Librarians was adopted in 1944. Shortly thereafter, in 1945 a major development in advancing the field occurred when Mary P. Douglas along with others, including the legendary Frances Henne, worked to establish the first set of national school library standards: *School Libraries for Today and Tomorrow* (Douglas 1945). These standards helped to delineate and distinguish the responsibilities of school librarians, and they encouraged school librarians to work with teachers “to include library skills education in the context of subject-based learning” (Kester and Jones 2004, 954). How many of us have felt the fervor and perhaps a bit of the fury that Douglas experienced in her quest to help educate the uninformed about our work? Quite a few, I suspect, and we can call upon her example to continue to inspire us when the going gets tough.

Frances Henne
After AASL achieved recognition as a separate division of ALA in 1951, Frances Henne coauthored *A Planning Guide for the High School Library Program*, the first evaluative guide for school library programs (Henne, Ersted, and Lohrer 1951). “The Planning Guide provided a pattern for developing school library evaluation materials, including those used for self-studies for regional accreditation of schools, that continued to be influential in the future” (Kester and Jones 2004, 955). Thereafter, Henne persisted in efforts to periodically update and revise standards to reflect research, best practice, and the importance of incorporating and integrating new and emerging resource formats and technologies into collections and instruction (Kester and Jones 2004).

Henne was also instrumental in establishing principles and criteria for the selection of materials, and *The Bulletin of the Center for Children’s Books*, which she founded in 1945, remains a leading review medium. It’s no wonder that the American Library Association’s publication *American Libraries* recognized her influence by including her in a list of the one hundred most important library leaders of the twentieth century (Kniffel, Sullivan, and McCormick 1999).

Henne’s aura continues to inspire, and when we follow her lead in seeking continuous improvement of our practice and revision of our standards, we know that such periodic evaluation and reflection lead to helping our students more effectively.

It’s worth reviewing, remembering, and honoring the journey they embarked on to get us under way and to guide us as we have developed, grown, and prospered.
Mary Virginia Gaver

Another force in advancing school librarianship and the concept of the school library as a unique innovation to empower learning was Mary Virginia Gaver. In 1958 when ALA published her groundbreaking work *Every Child Needs a School Library*, she established one of the fundamental core values that has sustained and guided the efforts of school librarians ever since: our belief in equity and access, both physical and intellectual. Like Henne, Gaver was an advocate for standards and, in fact, worked with Henne on the 1960 standards.

The *World Encyclopedia of Library and Information Services* notes that the enormous success and influence of these particular standards are directly attributable to a national promotion campaign conceived and executed by Gaver (Wedgeworth 1993). She provided us with an outstanding example of advocacy and leadership in action. Her study on the school library program’s positive impact on elementary reading scores (1963, 1964) remains a pivotal work in the evolution of evidence-based practice (Dickinson 2005).

She also stressed the importance of ongoing professional development and led early efforts to work with state affiliates to improve leadership capabilities among school librarians in the field.

Gaver exemplified the competencies and dispositions that our core values help us to develop. She also is an exemplar of the value of being strategic and planning accordingly.

How many of us have felt the fervor and perhaps a bit of the fury that Douglas experienced in her quest to help educate the uninformed about our work? Quite a few, I suspect, and we can call upon her example to continue to inspire us when the going gets tough.
Gaver exemplified the competencies and dispositions that our core values help us to develop. She also is an exemplar of the value of being strategic and planning accordingly.

Cora Paul Bomar

With the 2015 passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), at last school librarians and libraries are once again on the national radar because of their inclusion in a number of provisions in the legislation. We have longed for this recognition since 2002 when we were not mentioned and, therefore, by default left out of any consideration in No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Not since our inclusion in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) during the Johnson administration have we had such an opportunity to demonstrate that we make a positive impact on student achievement and on instructional design, delivery, and assessment. We owe a great debt to school library advocates like Cora Paul Bomar for their perseverance and dedication to ensuring a golden age of school library development.

In 1962 AASL received a grant from the Knapp Foundation to provide for school librarian education and support the development of model programs across the country. The first objective of the five-year project was ”to demonstrate the educational value of school library programs, services and resources” by upgrading their materials and developing qualified personnel. Grant funds were used to expand and renovate hundreds of school libraries across the United States. The project was guided by the AASL learning standards adopted in 1960. As the project developed, Bomar, then director of the Division of Educational Media for the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, ensured that significant progress and implementation in North Carolina led to the development of robust model programs and services and collected data to document impact.

As the Knapp project wound down, Bomar, working with the U.S. Office of Education (then in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare), testified in support of federal legislation before House and Senate committees on six occasions. This testimony was instrumental in the passage of dedicated funding for the creation and expansion of school libraries in Title II of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (Woolls and Loertscher 2013).

As we gear up for implementation of ESSA, Cora Paul Bomar’s legacy of determination, advocacy, and use of data looms large. As we strive to ensure the future of school library programs, we must follow Bomar’s example and demonstrate to stakeholders and decision makers that we are essential for student success.

Today’s Pathfinders

We certainly owe a debt to Douglas, Henne, Gaver, and Bomar as champions of the value of the work we do in empowering learning at every stage. They informed their practice with evidence and research. Throughout the succeeding years a whole corps of distinguished researchers have followed the path that pioneers established. These researchers have provided us with ample evidence of the need for access to inquiry opportunities, resources, programs, and services. Today’s pathfinders represent the scholarship that we connect to the development of a knowledge base that contributes to our understanding of why we do the things we do:

• Academic Achievement: Keith Curry Lance, Deb Kachel
• Action Research: Carol Gordon
• Advocacy: Ken Haycock
• Assessment: Violet Harada
• Causality: Gail Dickinson, Sue Kimmel, Jody Howard
• Collection Mapping: David Loertscher, Blanche Woolls
• Critical Thinking: David Loertscher
• Curation: Joyce Valenza
• Data Utilization: Marcia Mardis, Kristin Fontichiaro
• Digital Youth: Joyce Valenza
• Evidence-Based Practice: Ross Todd, Carol Kuhlthau, Carol Gordon
• Information Literacy/Problem Solving: Mike Eisenberg, Bob Berkowitz, Joyce Valenza
• Inquiry: Carol Kuhlthau, Barbara Stripling
• Instructional Intervention: Carol Kuhlthau, Violet Harada
• Knowledge Construction: Ross Todd
• Leadership: Ken Haycock, Nancy Everhart, Ann Carlson Weeks
• Learning Spaces: David Loertscher
• Management and Supervision: Blanche Woolls
• Motivation/Engagement: Ruth Small
• Multiple Literacies: Joyce Valenza
• Professional Development: Carol Gordon, Violet Harada

All have helped to move our work and our profession forward, and the list goes on, as do the continuing efforts of the next wave of researchers and the advocacy of emerging practitioners in our field. All are invaluable as they help us seize the opportunity to demonstrate that we make a difference and that the core values of school librarianship remain solid, relevant, and ready to sustain our profession in taking the next steps forward.

As we strive to ensure the future of school library programs, we must follow Bomar’s example and demonstrate to stakeholders and decision makers that we are essential for student success.

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AASL AND SCHOOL LIBRARIANS—STILL CHAMPIONS OF INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

Helen R. Adams
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The American Association of School Librarians and its members have always been champions of intellectual freedom. It is a core value of school librarians and has been—and remains—an integral part of AASL's culture. Intellectual freedom is deeply embedded in AASL's standards, position statements, member-focused publications, conferences, award criteria, and leaders. You can trace the deep roots of intellectual freedom in AASL in figure 1.

Librarians on the Front Lines
AASL's efforts in the area of intellectual freedom and privacy are just half the story. Although AASL and the ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom (OIF) provide guidance and support, it is school librarians who confront threats to students' right to read or their privacy.

What are school librarians facing? James LaRue, executive director of OIF, considers school libraries an intellectual freedom hotspot. His list of school-related perils to intellectual freedom includes:

• over-filtering because the filters are selected and installed by IT,
• direct attacks on minor's free speech through enforced speech codes and social media monitoring,
• fear of diversity influencing many challenges,
• growing pressure for parental notification of required English class readings according to a label (e.g., sexually explicit)...even when the students are 16 and 17,
• casual disregard of student confidentiality about circulation records, and
• continued disappearance of school librarians (2016).

Lack of Understanding by Administrators
Administrators are leaders in the educational community, and they influence every aspect of its climate and management. Kristin Pekoll, assistant director at OIF, says, "The number one problem school librarians share with me is administration. I don't want to malign an entire professional group, but we need to educate superintendents [and principals] about the role of the First Amendment in education and the principle of intellectual freedom. We need more librarians to publish and speak within the professional audience of school administrators" (2016).

Challenges to Library Resources
The threat of a challenge to a library book weighs heavily on the minds of many school library professionals. Although there have always been attempts at censorship, Malinda Lo’s analysis of a decade of the OIF’s most frequently challenged books showed 52 percent included diverse content, and the OIF staff’s analysis of the 2014 most frequently challenged books concluded that eight out of ten contained diverse content (ALA 2015, 15). Based on Lo’s research, the OIF defines “diverse content” as resources containing:

• non-white main and/or secondary characters;
• LGBT main and/or secondary characters;
• disabled main and/or secondary characters;
• issues about race or racism;
• LGBT issues;
• issues about religion, which encompass in this situation the Holocaust and terrorism;
• issues about disability and/or mental illness; and
• non-Western settings, in which the West is North America and Europe (ALA 2015, 15).

A quick look at the most frequently challenged books in 2015 reveals that diverse content is again heavily represented. LGBT-themed books for teens have been challenged with increasing frequency. However, Kristin Pekoll observes a change, "Now we’re seeing books that have a younger audience being targeted including: This Day in June, My
AASL’s Standards for the 21st-Century Learner contain the common belief that “Equitable access is a key component for education” (2007, 2), meaning a direct correlation exists between the education of youth to be knowledgeable, productive citizens and their First Amendment right to access information. Under Standard 3, one of learners’ responsibilities is found in 3.3.7: “Respect the principles of intellectual freedom” (2007, 6).

AASL Position Statements include “Confidentiality of Library Records” with its conviction that “children and youth have the same rights to privacy as adults” (AASL 2012) and “Labeling Books with Reading Levels” (AASL 2011), which promotes students’ free access to books and opposes restricting choice to an arbitrary reading level.

Knowledge Quest (KQ) and School Library Research (SLR) have spotlighted intellectual freedom in a variety of ways over the years.


- SLR, AASL’s open-access research journal, has included intellectual freedom, access, and equity-related research articles since its first volume in 1998.

- The KQ Blog regularly incorporates posts dedicated to intellectual freedom topics.

- Legislative advocacy efforts, such as encouraging passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015, are supported by AASL and members to ensure that every student has access to an effective school library program.

- To protect student data, in 2015 AASL joined forty other organizations to support the “Student Data Principles,” which you can read at <http://studentdataprininciples.org>.

- Informative conference sessions on intellectual freedom and student privacy are sprinkled through the program at every AASL National Conference.

- Intellectual freedom documents: The AASL “School Library Bill of Rights” was written in the 1950s and withdrawn by AASL in 1976 (ALA 2010, 94–95). In 1986 ALA created “Access to Resources and Services in the School Library Media Program: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights” specifically for school libraries. The interpretation charged school librarians with “assuming a leadership role in promoting the principles of intellectual freedom” (ALA 2014).

- Banned Websites Awareness Day, a member-initiated observance approved by the AASL Board of Directors in 2011, spotlights the overly restrictive Internet filtering in many schools.

- School Libraries Count! National Longitudinal Survey extra questions queried the school library community on topics such as social networking (2008), access to services and resources for English language learners (2009), and the level and effects of Internet filtering (2012).


- AASL Intellectual Freedom Award: First presented in 1982, the award recognizes individuals who have upheld the principles of intellectual freedom.

- AASL’s leaders and members are the true force behind all efforts to support students’ intellectual freedom and their First Amendment right to read and access information in school libraries.
“The number one problem school librarians share with me is administration. ...we need to educate superintendents [and principals] about the role of the First Amendment in education and the principle of intellectual freedom.” —Kristin Pekoll

Princess Boy, Jacob’s New Dress, and George.” Pekoll also sees a trend with religion becoming a lightning rod for challenges and provides these examples: “Students and parents are questioning whether it is a breach of the separation of church and state by having a Bible in the school library collection.... Parents’ fear that schools are indoctrinating their children with Islam because a children’s book [Nasreen’s Secret School] includes the phrase ‘Please Allah’” (2016). Not surprisingly, diverse books are the theme of the 2016 Banned Books Week observance September 25 through October 1.

Internet Filtering

The Internet provides access to a wealth of educational content, primary sources, and connections to experts, but fear-based misinterpretation of the Children’s Internet Protection Act (CIPA) and overly restrictive filtering have reduced the resource to a shadow of its potential for student learning. The effects of excessive filtering in schools were well documented in the 2014 ALA-initiated report “Fencing Out Knowledge: Impacts of the Children’s Internet Protection Act 10 Years Later” <http://connect.ala.org/files/cipa_report.pdf>.

For years school librarians have advocated for creating a balance between meeting CIPA requirements and ensuring student safety through digital citizenship instruction, thereby allowing educators and students to utilize the power of the Internet and Worldwide Web. Unfortunately, Internet filtering is the subject of a continuing battle in many schools—a battle with only minor victories for intellectual freedom.
Expanding Privacy Issues

School librarians are aware of the connection between students’ First Amendment right to read and receive information in a school library, and their need to feel confident that the topics they research or books they read will not be revealed. The recently approved ALA “Library Privacy Guidelines for Students in K–12 Schools” make clear the need for a strong library privacy policy approved by the school’s policy-making body. The guidelines assert, “Library privacy policies should define when school library records can be shared (and under what conditions) with parents or guardians, school staff and teachers, and third-parties such as online service providers” (ALA 2016).

Beyond the school library, there has been an explosion of data collection to monitor student progress and customize students’ learning experiences. As a result, school librarians need to advocate for protection of students’ data, its use, retention, and dissemination.

The Issues Keep Coming

One article cannot possibly review all the intellectual freedom issues facing school librarians. In addition to those already described, another heartbreaker for school librarians is seeing children’s reading choices restricted because of class requirements to select books only within their Accelerated Reader (or other computer-based program) reading level instead of books that pique students’ interest or curiosity.

Funding, of course, is a perennial issue. Although school library budgets increased an average of 20 percent for the 2015–2016 school year, funding still lags behind the larger budgets in 2010–2011. The upward trend is positive, but school librarians struggle to provide equitable access to resources for students with special needs such as English language learners and those with learning disabilities (Barack 2016).

Self-censorship and labeling and ratings systems continue to be concerns; however, the most serious issue is the shrinking number of school librarian positions in schools, reducing the number of voices protecting and advocating for students’ intellectual freedom and privacy.

ESSA and a Potential Opportunity

Sylvia Norton, AASL’s executive director, understands the enormous intellectual freedom issues facing school librarians, yet she also knows that they have always been protectors of students’ privacy. Looking back, she says, “Ethical use of information has long been a key foundation for the school library profession. The school librarians who used a black magic marker to remove student names from circulation cards led to considerations as those early technology innovators set up automated systems. When schools established websites, school librarians looked at the images and text and encouraged a process to safeguard students” (2016).

According to Norton, “AASL joined other educational organizations last year in supporting the Student Data Principles, ten fundamental values for safeguarding student personal information. They will inform educational policy as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) is implemented” (2016).

ESSA includes a lengthy list of provisions in Part A, Section 2101, for uses of formula grants to states; these uses include “to train teachers on the appropriate use of...”

“Intellectual freedom and the right to privacy have been with us throughout the history of school librarianship. The issues are the same, but the formats, the situations, and the contexts have grown.” —Audrey Church

student data...” (ESSA 2015, 116). Figure 2 contains the text for this part of the law. Norton sees an opportunity in ESSA for school librarians, stating, “Student data privacy has emerged as a major issue in education. The challenge of student data privacy has been heightened by an emphasis on assessment, accountability, and the increased use of technology. The security of software vendors or service providers often becomes the focus, yet it is personnel errors that are frequently the cause for concerns about privacy. The ESSA teacher training option provides a possible opportunity for school librarians to step forward to involve themselves through informal guidance and formal professional development for their colleagues. In this way, school librarians may have a chance to proactively affect change in student data practice” (2016).

The Big Question

Despite expanding challenges, will school librarians and AASL remain champions of students’ privacy protections and intellectual freedom? My answer is “Yes,” and 2016–2017 AASL President Audrey Church affirmed that opinion stating:

Intellectual freedom and the right to privacy have been with us throughout the history of
school librarianship. The issues are the same, but the formats, the situations, and the contexts have grown.

In the area of privacy, our challenges will be both instructional and professional. First, as we instruct students in the concepts of digital citizenship, we must continue to teach them that they have the right to privacy in this digital world, give them the skills to protect their own privacy, and help them to understand the importance of safeguarding their privacy. Secondly, as professionals, we must protect our students’ privacy in the context of library usage and library records: no one else has the right to know the questions they are asking, the topics they are researching, or the books they have checked out. A larger issue comes to us from student data which we do not directly control, data collected, for example, by vendors or by educational agencies. Here we must stand firmly as champions for students’ right to privacy.

In the realm of intellectual freedom, we will protect students’ right to read, of course, but beyond that, we will continue to advocate for students’ right to access to information of all types and in all formats. Access to information is not possible when sites are unnecessarily filtered in our schools. Access to information is limited for students in areas of the country with limited access to broadband. Access to information is not possible when students are not served by a certified school librarian.

Equity becomes an issue as these students are deprived of the information and services that they deserve. We must work to meet these challenges. (2016)

Historically, AASL and school librarians have met the challenge of protecting students’ intellectual freedom and privacy, and there is no doubt we will continue to champion these rights. Guided by the ALA Code of Ethics, standing up for students’ intellectual freedom is simply the right thing to do.

Helen R. Adams, AASL President 2001–2002, is an adjunct online instructor at Antioch University–Seattle. She serves on the American Libraries Advisory Committee, ALA’s Intellectual Freedom Committee (IFC), the IFC’s Privacy Subcommittee, and the Knowledge Quest Editorial Board. She recently served on AASL’s Distinguished Service Award Committee and as a trustee of the Freedom to Read Foundation, which in 2016 named her to its Roll of Honor. Among her recent publications are “Choose Privacy Week: Educate Your Students (and Yourself) about Privacy,” published in the March/April 2016 issue of Knowledge Quest, and “Internet Filtering: Are We Making Any Progress?” published in School Library Connection in April 2016.

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BUILDING the STRONG FOUNDATION

J. Linda Williams
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Looking back on my term as AASL President 2005–2006, I feel that particular year brought many things into focus for AASL and school library programs and laid the foundation on which AASL built for the next ten years. As school librarians, we have always faced critical issues, and they often seem to be the same ones; slowly, very slowly, if at all, did we get anywhere. We had achieved small successes, but not nationally and not sustainably. Almost twenty years after the publication of Information Power: Guidelines for School Library Media Programs (ALA 1988) and almost ten years after the second edition, Information Power: Building Partnerships for Learning (ALA 1998), we were still dealing with many of the same issues, in addition to new ones. Our standards and guidelines were not widely accepted by the educational community, and the role of school librarians was often misunderstood or given no credibility.

During the previous year, AASL had stepped back and had taken a serious look at the issues then facing us as we began working with a consultant to develop a strategic plan that would address our most-immediate concerns. The strategic plan was approved by the AASL Board of Directors at the 2005 ALA Annual Conference, just before my term began. The plan provided focus by identifying goals for the next three to five years. The goals were in five areas: Guidelines and Standards, Advocacy, Professional Development, Influence within ALA, and Community. Objectives within each goal area were established, and strategies for achieving each objective were identified. The AASL Board looked at the association’s current structure and determined how we needed to restructure committees, sections, and the Affiliate Assembly to best carry out the strategic plan. With renewed energy, the AASL Board had the determination and road map to address the critical issues facing our association and our profession.

What were those critical issues, and did the results of the efforts then accomplish a positive change and lead to future improvements?

AASL’s Guidelines and Standards

The school library profession will recognize AASL’s guidelines for school library media programs and information literacy standards for student learning as the model of excellence for the profession (AASL 2005, 7).

For several years, the currency and relevance of our national guidelines, Information Power: Building Partnerships for Learning and the “Information Literacy Standards for Student Learning,” contained within Information Power, had been sources of concern. The role of the school librarian was constantly changing. A task force studied both documents to determine their relevance and whether they reflected the current practices and vocabulary of the profession. No reference to technology had been included in those documents. Any updates, though, would need to address technology use, as effective use of technology was becoming a major part of our evolving role. The need for change also caused writers to reflect on new methods of instruction and their impact on school library programs.

The recommendation presented to the AASL Board was to rewrite—not just revise—the document. AASL took a completely new approach to developing our standards and guidelines. The new standards document, Standards for the 21st-Century Learner, published in 2007, shifted the focus from what school librarians and other educators should teach and do. Instead, the focus became the students and what they need to know and be able to do to be information literate. This fresh approach has evolved into the current AASL standards and guidelines, which can truly make a school library program a model of excellence.

Advocacy

All stakeholders will understand and recognize that the school librarian and school library programs are essential to teaching and learning (AASL 2005, 7).

The area of advocacy needed a lot of attention because overcoming some stakeholders’ outdated view of the value of school library programs was a major hurdle for school librarians. How could we change the education culture so everyone would understand and agree that the school library program and school librarian are an essential part of the instructional process?

The AASL Advocacy Committee addressed this issue by providing preconference and regional institutes on advocacy, training members on how to be involved in national, state, and local advocacy efforts and providing additional educational opportunities in this important area.

An effective, long-lasting strategy for advocacy has been to gather hard data to support a cause. In response to this need for data about the effectiveness of school library programs, the AASL Board approved a longitudinal survey that would create a process to collect, on an ongoing basis, relevant national data points that members could use in national, state, and local advocacy messages. The survey would be completed annually and provide...
continuing data on the same topics. This survey, in addition to specific state surveys done by leaders in the field, gave us the very valuable hard data we needed. The longitudinal survey also provided data for comparison within and between states and local districts. While the survey has been discontinued, it did bring to the forefront the need for data and research in the field and has sparked many of the current AASL research initiatives.

Legislative issues were also included within the Advocacy goal area in the strategic plan. Immediate and specific attention was needed; a number of issues within the school library community revolved around national policy and legislation. These included:

- The non-instructional classification of school librarians by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).
- The "65 percent solution": regulations that required schools to spend at least 65 percent of their funding on direct classroom instruction, which, under currently prevailing NCES definitions, did not include spending on school libraries.
- No Child Left Behind (NCLB), which did not include school librarians in the "highly qualified" teacher classification.
- The need for full funding for the Improving Literacy through School Libraries program.

These issues were interdependent. The National Center for Education Statistics classified school librarians as instructional support; therefore, as they were not identified as instructional, no funding for school libraries was available and school librarians were not included in the "highly qualified" teacher category in No Child Left Behind.

The new standards document, Standards for the 21st-Century Learner, published in 2007, shifted the focus from what school librarians and other educators should teach and do. Instead, the focus became the students and what they need to know and be able to do to be information literate.
The AASL Task Force on Instructional Classification was formed to develop a position statement in time for states to use before the legislative session ended. The statement clearly defined the issues and clarified AASL’s support for the inclusion of school librarians in the NCES “instructional” classification so that their purchases of library materials would be considered instructional expenditures. The task force also developed a toolkit for use by state affiliates to address the issue. Additional support for our concerns was expressed by the ALA Council through the Resolution on the Instructional Classification of School Librarians, passed at the ALA Midwinter Meeting in 2006.

With help from the ALA Washington Office, during the 2006 ALA Legislative Day the AASL President, the chair of the AASL Task Force on Instructional Classification, and the chair of the AASL Legislation Committee met with representatives of NCES and the Department of Education to begin a dialogue regarding the classification and definition of school librarians as instructional support staff, as identified in the NCES financial accounting structure. The reporting format in use at the time had required every state to spend at least 65 percent of operational budgets on instruction expenses. But, as libraries were not considered “instructional,” they could receive none of the money earmarked for instruction expenses. A proposed revised reporting format was presented by NCES; the revised format allowed instruction and instruction-related expenses to be in the same category. The proposed revised reporting format was included in a future edition of the financial accounting handbook, and school librarians were classified as instruction-related, but not before we battled these issues for several years after 2006.

The ALA Washington Office staff and the AASL President also met with the Deputy Secretary of Education and staff of the Improving Literacy through School Libraries program. An AASL-generated draft document was presented; it identified proposed amendments for the 2007 reauthorization of No Child Left Behind. The recommended changes would include school librarians in the “highly qualified” teacher classification. As the only federal funding specifically designated for school libraries was the Improving Literacy through School Libraries program, which was part of NCLB, the need for full funding of this program was also included in the AASL draft and discussed. Full funding was never achieved. However, we continued to work toward higher funding levels and increasing our advocacy efforts for school libraries and librarians.

As we all know, the NCLB movement evolved into the Common Core initiative with a separate set of concerns. Experience has shown that advocacy cannot take place only when an issue arises; advocacy must be constant, so when the issues do arise, we already have an established presence and decision makers already have an understanding of the role school librarians and effective school library programs play in student success. Without all the training, knowledge gained, and hard work, which began with advocacy for
these issues, and then used again to advocate for the 2015 SKILLs Act and continued for the 2015 ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act). ESSA would never have been passed. Maintaining the support and hard work took a lot of effort, but the effort certainly paid off.

Influence within ALA

ALA will understand and support the issues important to (school librarians) and school library... programs.

Our major concerns were:

• Low voter turnout in ALA elections
• Insufficient involvement of AASL members in ALA

In response to the AASL Board and Affiliate Assembly’s concern over the low voter turnout in ALA elections, AASL developed a “Get Out the Vote” campaign, designed in response to the strategic plan to increase the number of AASL members voting and AASL members’ involvement in ALA leadership.

There was a significant increase in the number of AASL members voting in the 2006 election: an increase of 39 percent from the previous year. Though voting percentages do vary by years, AASL members’ voting rate has remained better than it was prior to the campaign. Another result of the campaign was that, of the fifteen AASL members running for ALA Council in the 2006 election, eleven were elected.

At the 2006 ALA Midwinter Meeting, the AASL President, Immediate Past President, and President-Elect met with the ALA President-Elect to discuss our concerns regarding howALA committee appointments were made and the need to have a balanced representation of all types of libraries within ALA. Several very good strategies were discussed and taken back to the AASL Board for follow-up and implementation.

AASL began to track the involvement of its members in ALA through appointments to ALA committees, election to Council, and nominations for office. The AASL volunteer form was revised to include ALA committees to determine members’ interest, and a database was developed for the AASL President-Elect to use when suggesting people for appointment to ALA committees by the ALA President-Elect.

The AASL representative to ALA Council identified councilors who were school librarians and created an e-mail list to provide support and encourage the number of postings regarding school libraries on the ALA Council’s electronic discussion list. These efforts were intended to create an awareness and understanding of school library concerns and gain support for issues affecting school librarians and their students. The efforts succeeded.

AASL identified the three most-influential ALA committees to which we wanted an AASL member appointed. Within the first year we had a member appointed to two of those committees, and the following year a member was appointed to the third committee. It is no longer unusual to have an AASL member serve in any ALA capacity: on Council, an ALA committee, or the ALA Executive Board. Several times in the past ten years we have had three AASL members on the ALA Executive Board at the same time, and in the past eight years we have had three AASL members nominated to run for president of ALA. We have made our presence known and forged partnerships with the other divisions, roundtables, and ALA leaders, gaining their support and an understanding for our concerns.

Looking Forward

While these were critical challenges at the time, they do not seem so significant when compared to some of the challenges faced today. Twenty-first century students have an ever-increasing need for the skills that school librarians bring to the school setting. As always, to ensure that the school library remains an integral part of the educational process, school librarians must work collaboratively with teachers and administrators. School librarians must also continue to take action to further stakeholders’ understanding of school librarians’ roles, actively advocate for their profession within their school communities, as well as at the state and national level.

J. Linda Williams

was coordinator of school library services for Anne Arundel County (MD) Public Schools prior to her retirement. She served as AASL President 2005–2006 and has also been past president of the Maryland Association of School Librarians. Active in the University of Maryland Alumni Association, she is currently a member of its Board of Governors, has been president of the School Alumni Chapter, and continues to serve on the chapter’s board. She also previously served on the ALA Executive Board and ALA Council.

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FEATURE

A Ten-Year Reflection

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Five initiatives launched during my term as AASL President (2006–2007) continue to have an impact on school librarians ten years later. These initiatives include the rewriting of AASL’s learning standards, introduction of the SKILLs Act for which AASL advocated tirelessly, the presentation of the Crystal Apple Award to Scholastic Library Publishing for their first “School Libraries Work” reports, revitalizing School Library Month, and establishing the AASL Best Websites for Teaching and Learning Committee.

Updating Learning Standards
The first initiative was the rewriting of the AASL standards. The AASL Board of Directors and Executive Committee, knowing that updating of the standards was long overdue, decided in 2005 to put the project on the fast track to be ready for implementation in two years or less. The project began ten years ago with the formation of a visioning group made up of state leaders. The group spent a weekend working together and in small groups to create a vision of what the future would look like for school librarians, libraries, and patrons. Many of those attendees have gone on to be leaders for AASL in the roles of president and task force and committee chairs or members. The work from this talented group was then forwarded to a small committee made up of representatives and leaders in the realm of school libraries. One of the writers of the standards, Barbara Stripling, later became president of ALA. Many task forces and committees evolved to share and implement the new Standards for the 21st-Century Learner, published in 2007. School librarians then used the resulting publications by the committees to revise school library programs to implement the new standards and improve success for their students. Last year work began to update the standards to move school libraries and librarians forward once again.

SKILLs Act
In the summer of 2007 Senators Jack Reed (D–RI) and Thad Cochran (R–MS), and Representatives Raul Grijalva (D–AZ) and Vernon Ehlers (R–MI) introduced the Strengthening Kids’ Interest in Learning and Libraries (SKILLs) Act. This bipartisan effort was intended to ensure that students would have access to effective school library programs with higher staffing levels and led by certified school librarians, resources that studies had shown to be linked to higher student test scores. The act sought to increase the number of state-certified school librarians within a school district. It just so happened that the ALA Annual Conference was being held in Washington, DC, in 2007. Thanks to the coordination efforts of the ALA Washington Office, there was an outdoor demonstration of support on the Hill; from a podium, ALA President Leslie Burger and I spoke to the masses that had gathered. Supporters were adorned in red t-shirts encouraging a “Vote for School Libraries.” The sea of red was a sight to behold. People continually chanted “1, 2, 3 support school li-braries.”

The SKILLs Act was not passed in 2007 but evolved over the years as Senator Jack Reed kept the act alive by reintroducing the bill in subsequent years. In 2015 the long struggle to have school librarians and libraries recognized as vital to a strong school program was fulfilled by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Senator Reed had influenced the final edition of ESSA with his introduction of S.312, the 2015 SKILLs Act, drafted as an amendment to the 1965 ESEA. S.312 proposed amending the 1965 ESEA to include elements of effective school library programs in school improvement programs, to provide a definition of an effective school library program that includes staffing by a “state certified or licensed school librarian,” and to amend the name of part A of title II of ESEA (“Teacher and Principal Training and Recruiting Fund”) to include school librarians: “Teacher, School Librarian, and Principal Training and Recruiting Fund” (U.S. Senate 2015).

ESSA requires state and local education agencies to use funds under the program to train school librarians and recruit and retain highly effective school librarians. ESSA now includes new provisions that authorize—but do not require—school districts to include in their local plans how they will assist schools in developing effective school library programs to provide students with opportunities to develop digital literacy skills and improve academic achievement. Title I and Title II funds can be
used by school districts to improve their school library programs (U.S. Senate 2015b).

Crystal Apple Award

One of the perks of being AASL President is the opportunity to bestow the Crystal Apple Award. The award is given to an individual or group for having a significant impact on school libraries and students. The 2007 recipient was Scholastic Library Publishing. In 2004 Scholastic began producing “School Libraries Work: A Compendium of Research Supporting the Effectiveness of School Libraries,” an amalgamation of the results of state studies that documented the positive impact school library programs have on student achievement.

Many school librarians have used the four editions of this document to show their school administrators and parents the significance of having a certified school librarian and an effective school library program. The 2016 compendium builds upon the 2008 edition. Studies have now been conducted in twenty-five U.S. states and one Canadian province. Sharing this publication with parents and administrators helps school librarians advocate for the programs they have or the program changes they would like to implement for improving student performance. I’m happy to have had a small part in encouraging Scholastic to continue to generate the “School Libraries Work” reports.

School Library Month

At an Executive Committee meeting in 2006 we were brainstorming how to get our members more involved in AASL and to provide services that members would enthusiastically implement at their buildings. From that meeting two ideas emerged: revitalizing School Library Week and creating a process to identify Best Websites for Teaching and Learning. Both ideas evolved into new task forces that later became standing committees.

School Library Month now has an official spokesperson and promotional items such as bookmarks, posters, and infographics. Spokespersons have included authors and actresses. It has evolved from a program that was once promoted primarily in school libraries to a social media blitz that reaches everyone.

Best Websites for Teaching and Learning

The Best Websites for Teaching and Learning Task Force led by Pam Berger evolved into a standing committee once the task force defined the parameters for evaluating websites and making recommendations. In 2009 the committee presented their first list of the top twenty-five sites; the list was organized by categories tied to AASL’s Standards for the 21st-Century Learner. The categories were: Organizing and Managing, Content Collaboration, Curriculum Sharing, Media Sharing, Virtual Environments, and Social Networking and Communication. Some of the sites on that first list are no longer available but others, such as Twitter, are still going strong. The categories have been tweaked over the years, but the sites recommended remain vetted, high-quality, and mostly free for school librarians to use or promote in their schools.

An outgrowth of this project was the establishment of the Best Apps for Teaching and Learning that produced its first list of the top twenty-five in 2013, based on the categories of Books, STEM, Organization and Management, Social Sciences, and Content Creation. The lists’ benefit for school librarians is that the sites and apps are recognized, reliable, and researched resources that will enhance the work of school librarians, and the teachers and students they serve. Now when asked for a site or app to fill a need in the classroom, the school librarian can consult the lists instead of spending hours searching. The owners of the sites are given an official AASL seal to display so that visitors will know a national association representing school librarians recommends the site.

Looking Ahead

AASL is a vibrant and evolving association that works to meet the needs of its members in the present as well as into the future. Reflecting on how the above five activities from my presidential year have evolved and remained relevant in the past ten years amazes me. What will the next ten years bring?

Cyndi Phillip, AASL President 2006–2007, is a retired elementary media/technology teacher for the Grand Haven (MI) Area Public Schools. In 1992 she received the MAME (Michigan Association for Media in Education) Ruby Brown Award for Individual Excellence and in 2005 the MAME President’s Award.

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ACHIEVING THAT ELUSIVE LEADERSHIP ZONE

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Athletes strive to achieve “the zone.” “It is that realm of play in which everything—skill, training, and mental discipline—comes together, and players feel themselves lifted to a level of peak performance in which limits seem to fall away” (Cooper 2009). Reaching the “leadership zone” happens when librarians tap into the extraordinary skills lying within to overcome obstacles and transform sometimes-difficult situations into meaningful outcomes. Maturing into an experienced leader who stays in the leadership zone requires knowledge, training, and practice. This article provides tactical leadership tips to assist in developing school librarians as leaders who have the mental focus to guide their school library programs through today’s changing environment.

Embedded in the five leadership tips that follow are actions to practice. When an athlete is directed by a coach, trainer, or pro to smooth out rough spots in habits negatively impacting the athlete’s performance, the first homework assignment is to practice the new or refined technique. Leadership is no different. The desired change is for school librarians to make decisions and seamlessly implement focused actions with less stress and more success—and practicing leadership strategies makes these actions possible. As you read each section, self-assess your current status. Then take action by carrying out the suggested tips. Soon you, too, will develop the confidence, courage, and perseverance that define leaders who work in the leadership zone.

Tip #1. Stay Connected to Your National Professional Association

AASL members benefit from association leadership on issues related to intellectual freedom, information-technology policy, advocacy, and legislative lobbying. Resources such as the AASL Forum provide members a means for discussion of and action on problems that arise in school libraries. For example, when I needed to defend against a particularly contentious book challenge, comments and discussion on the AASL Forum suggested I contact the Office for Intellectual Freedom (OIF). This tip was valuable. The OIF provided me with legal cases and targeted terminology to defend the county review committee’s position to retain the material. The knowledge OIF provided me was immediate and effective. Association resources provide just-in-time information and assistance, enabling school librarians to lead their learning communities through sometimes-difficult situations with confidence. Confidence is an essential leadership trait.

Leaders benefit from networking with a community of professionals. AASL provides social networking and web-based connectivity for members to meet. Opportunities to participate in webinars and other professional development sessions bring professionals together to explore new ideas. AASL also solicits members to become part of teams that work on association initiatives. When members participate in virtual and face-to-face meetings, lasting ties with colleagues in the library profession develop. The interactions among librarians are a continual source of inspiration and creativity. Leaders are involved in their association, serve on committees, and work with colleagues virtually and face-to-face.

Federal and state agencies consider AASL the authority when it comes to learning standards and program standards for school libraries. Each review and revision of AASL standards is based on research with a nod to the future. School librarians who are leaders use these standards to set the baseline for school library programs. The well-developed implementation plans assist librarians in leading instructional change that positively impacts student achievement. Through relevant updates to standards and guidelines the association provides a solid framework for school librarians to be in the forefront of instructional trends and issues. Leaders integrate AASL guidelines and learning strategies into students’ learning experiences.

AASL provides many more resources to school librarians, including a journal of current issues in the field, professional development opportunities, guidelines for best practices, and research on library-related issues. Leaders seek information and guidance from AASL when planning for their library programs. The entire learning community ultimately benefits from a school librarian whose practices are grounded by association research.

Leadership Zone Actions to Practice

- Attain increased confidence by using association research and resources to become knowledgeable about school library initiatives.
- Volunteer for professional association task forces and committee work to develop a network of professional contacts.
- Implement the AASL learning standards and incorporate them into every instructional experience.
Tip #2. Articulate a Library Program Vision That Defines the Future

Leaders embrace a culture of innovation and recognize that adapting to societal changes helps the school library program remain relevant (Martin 2013, 155). To encourage acceptance of these concepts, school librarians must be willing to stand behind new ideas and methods. Since a direct relationship exists between words and actions, leaders understand that making improvements and updating the library program vision is a leader’s responsibility. Leaders create buy-in for a revised library vision each time they provide effective support for administrators, teachers, and students. Seasoned leaders have an eye for relevance and explain new initiatives in a language users understand.

Leaders seek information about emerging resources and update the library vision. AASL revises the standards and guidelines every ten years, and school librarians who implement these revisions have an edge over those who do not. The modifications are the result of committee members’ scanning the educational environment and considering many factors, including student values, educational methodology, and emerging resource formats. AASL taps members to serve on a committee to merge the research with evolving best practices. A leader incorporates these new initiatives developed by AASL into the library program vision. Leadership is immersing oneself in innovative language, processes, and programs through training via conferences, webinars, and professional articles. Often AASL training provides talking points to use when introducing an updated library vision to school leaders, teachers, students, and parents.

Once a leader is versed in the benchmarks for change, a plan can be developed to systematically embed innovative program improvements into the minds and hearts of the learning community. A good approach for assuring success includes outlining the vision, strategic goals, timeline, and budget in a one-page summary. A leader positions the proposal in such a way that implementation is achievable. If a major shift in funding is needed, then a leader figures out where that shift of dollars will come from. Providing thoughtful consideration to any concerns administrators, teachers, and students may have can be achieved by asking each group for input. Addressing the needs of each group will encourage acceptance of changes.

Effective leadership transforms current practices into a relevant future. General Eric K. Shinseki, a retired four-star United States Army general, stated, “If you don’t like change, you’re going to like irrelevance even less” (Dao and Shanker 2009). The gateway to acceptance of innovation is providing value and relevance to users. Using professional development, leaders focus on skills and competencies that need updating and then integrate changes into the school library program. “School librarians who are innovative understand the direct relationship between innovation and staying relevant” (Martin 2013, 153).

Leadership Zone Actions to Practice

- Use AASL research and implementation strategies for revised learning standards and guidelines to create a vision for the library program.
• Position the library vision in such a way that it is achievable.
• Create value for users when launching innovative changes to the library program vision.

Tip #3. Model the Skills and Practices of Effective Management

Modeling is a powerful tool. Every action, reaction, and communication is an opportunity to demonstrate best practices. Whether leaders are making decisions, connecting to people in the organization, or planning next steps they have the opportunity to make each end result more or less effective. A good leader tackles situations constructively to turn them into positive initiatives for the school library program.

Leaders model the thinking process that goes into decision making. Some requests are simple and require an immediate response. Other requests impact scheduling or programming and deserve more thoughtful consideration. A brief pause provides time for librarians who are leaders to analyze what is being said, by whom, and for what purpose. Leaders thrive on stepping back before jumping to conclusions. School librarians can practice pausing and giving themselves time to think through requests that impact their library programs. There is nothing wrong with saying, “Tell me about your need and let me get back to you by the end of the day.” The pause when answering programming requests is a decision-making skill that is critical for high-quality results.

Communication is critical when creating a unified organization. Leaders intentionally engage in conversations with people in the organization. A school librarian who talks candidly with teachers and students creates understanding as needs surface during discussions.
Understanding the perspective of users leads to mutually beneficial solutions since colleagues and students own part of the solution. When conveying information, leaders use the right tool among the many available—including e-mail, texting, blogs, memos, and formal documents—and then insert a human element into each communication (Martin 2013, 77). This human element may come through follow-up discussions or surveys to check for understanding.

Planning the next steps for the school library program is a wonderful opportunity for librarians to practice organizational skills. Just as librarians encourage students to self-assess their own work, leaders model how to analyze committee work to evaluate weaknesses and strengths. Leaders also insist that colleagues share ideas, provide opportunities for colleagues to work in groups, and help them manage and prioritize their time. “Leaders are coaches of a team of workers. They must display dispositions that they wish their colleagues to display. By instilling these same attitudes in colleagues, leaders create a foundation for an accomplished organization” (Martin 2013, 44). Effective management of the school library program results when librarians think before they act, communicate clearly, and provide efficient shared opportunities for others to be a part of library reform.

Leadership Zone Actions to Practice
- Before taking action pause to think through important requests that impact the library program.
- Understand the perspective of colleagues and students by talking with coworkers and students.
- Identify and refine personal dispositions such as emotional resiliency, persistence, productivity, creativity, and motivation.

Tip #4. Empower Others

The biggest detriment to empowerment is lack of trust. Reluctance to let go of control is a problem that leaders must overcome to be successful. School librarians who find it difficult to give tasks to colleagues need to determine why. Often leaders who are reluctant to turn over responsibility for tasks fear the job will be accomplished in a way that is unlike the way they would have tackled the work. If the task is accomplished, then what difference does it make if the path to success is unlike the leader’s path? Leaders respect results and trust colleagues’ skills, competencies, and knowledge base.

What if something goes wrong? Leaders use missteps as training opportunities. To keep the project moving forward, leaders take time to guide colleagues through an evaluation of the process and assist colleagues with reviewing the plan. One way to ensure successful progress is to hold colleagues accountable for the work they perform. Just as school librarians break research into steps for students, good leaders break down committee work and tasks into smaller goals with specific deadlines.

Successful leaders achieve empowerment by delegating responsibility gradually over time. Assigning work to others generates opportunities for those with specific skills to further the work of the library program. Effective leaders provide training and tools along with each increased responsibility. Leaders design templates, such as a form for committee reports, or develop a process for project management so that colleagues understand that their actions, results, and efficiency are sequential. Leaders know that group ownership is achieved when all members contribute their skills to projects. Empowerment is extremely important to teamwork and sustains the energy level in a library and learning community.

Leadership Zone Actions to Practice
- Develop respect and trust for colleagues’ skills and competencies.
- When delegating work to others, break tasks into smaller goals with deadlines.
- When entrusting others with tasks provide training in processes and give clear directions that are easily understood and doable.

Tip #5. Sharpen Job Skills

Honing in on skills needed to be an exemplary librarian requires continuous effort. School librarians are expected to be leaders, instructional partners, information specialists, teachers, and program administrators. Within each of these roles are responsibilities that must be adapted as the educational environment changes.

Effective school librarians enroll in professional development that targets emerging technologies, resources, and curriculum. Librarians need these skills when “guiding learners to become engaged and effective users of ideas and information, and to appreciate literature” (AASL 2010). Training enables leaders to remain in the forefront of new educational initiatives. Librarians are lifelong learners who embrace the intrinsic rewards that result when knowledge and skills are extended. Failure to update library-related job skills such as instructional methods, techniques for collaboration with other educators, and curriculum design results in stagnant leadership of any library program.
A major aspect of the school librarian's job is readers' advisory. To be a literacy leader, librarians must read new books from a diverse group of authors for the level of students they serve. It is amazing that librarians will offer students graphic novels without encouraging young readers to move into longer powerful literature. When I moved from an elementary school to a middle school I spent my first year bringing books home to read. Reading all those books enabled me to put the right book into the right students' hands. Being a librarian leader requires developing "strategic readers who can comprehend, analyze, and evaluate text in both print and digital formats" (AASL 2010). One way to foster this development is to be well versed in the literature and familiar with the work of authors currently writing for students. Students and parents expect the school librarian to be familiar with literature for their particular level and needs. In addition, knowing the collection avoids problems resulting from an accidental referral of questionable materials.

Analysis of the key competencies of a school librarians' job is essential to the future of the library program. Leaders self-assess their skills and make notes of the practices in which they are proficient and those skills that need improvement. Next, leaders find the best method to renew and update their skills and use their new knowledge to create a better library program.

Leadership Zone Actions to Practice

- Review the responsibilities of each of the roles of a school librarian and identify two skills to update within a targeted timeframe.
- Commit to reading books and getting to know diverse authors represented in the library collection.
- Examine your current technology competencies and update one skill by a specific milestone date.

Conclusion

AASL operates in the leadership zone because it is an organization that taps into members' extraordinary skills—skills that can transform the future of school libraries. If AASL is a model of leadership, then school librarians who practice leadership strategies are models for their learning communities. Being in the leadership zone means focusing in on the skills, practices, and actions that bring energy and strength to your day and, consequently, to your library program. As you concentrate on the many-faceted aspects of leadership and infuse the skills into your daily work you will achieve unity within. Your mind and your actions will become automatic and go beyond what you imagined possible. Keep track of the exceptional experiences, breakthrough occurrences, and personal revelations that just seem to happen, but in actuality, are the result of your efforts to work in the leadership zone.

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Supposing you lived in a town where even people who did not care for each other’s company came running—running!—to work together in time of genuine need.

How to Build a Bridge

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Matinicus Island, Maine, lies roughly twenty miles from the mainland. The small island, two miles end to end, is surrounded by open sea; weather sometimes makes transportation to and from the mainland—by boat or small airplane—impossible. The island supports its own tiny electric company, its own school district, and its own limited municipal government. Telephone and Internet are beamed across the waters of Penobscot Bay to telecommunications towers on the island.

Why on earth would anybody want to live there? Wouldn’t it be bordering on neglect for any parent to even consider raising children in such a place? No sports is bad enough—but no pediatrician? And how can a child from a one-room school with just a handful of other students, who may be siblings and cousins, be prepared to face the outside world?

Now, consider a community where, no matter what the emergency, everybody responds—where, in the event of a fire, a mariner in trouble, even just a car stuck in a snowdrift, nobody capable of assisting ever turns away and casually says, “Hey, it’s not my job.” Supposing you lived in a town where even people who did not care for each other’s company came running—running!—to work together in time of genuine need. Would you like your children to grow up surrounded by such an ethic of community and human obligation?

I would, and mine did.

In 1987 I took the position of sole kindergarten-through-eighth-grade one-room elementary school teacher on Matinicus Island. At that time, teachers often worked alone, without the support of a principal, educational technician/paraprofessional, or specialist instructors of any kind. Isolation, both physical and professional, was
the name of the game. On this island, it is customary to employ a new teacher frequently, so the job becomes nobody’s career. After my stint as teacher ended I remained on Matinicus, married, and with my husband raised two children. I assisted with the school in other ways, serving over time as substitute, art teacher, bookkeeper, and school board member.

These days, our offshore island feels considerably less remote.

Outer-island children grow up around fishing harbors, aboard work boats, in pickup trucks, and sometimes in four-seat airplanes. Despite the common but incorrect assumption that tiny rural schools are inevitably primitive and under-resourced, today’s island children also grow up with computers. The one-room schools of Maine now make heavy use of technology, and the Internet has allowed virtual bridges to be built. Isolated students and teachers work together, online as well as face to face, through the Outer Islands Teaching and Learning Collaborative, an organization formed by teachers to support peer mentoring, academic partnering, staff professional development, and social connection. For example, reading groups made up of students and led by teachers from several different islands meet online, using videoconferencing platforms to hold book discussions.

One thing has not changed. Islanders, with their lobster boats, and their one-room schools that you may think of as old-fashioned, learn early that when they need something done, they’d better get to work.

In that spirit, a few residents of Matinicus recently took up the task of forming the island’s new public library. I find myself the secretary and treasurer of the Matinicus Island Library Association, serving perhaps the smallest such institution in existence that is not actually on wheels. As I write, we haven’t even gotten the electricity connected yet, but the younger children are asking when we’ll be holding story hour. The sense that we are doing something good and creating something welcomed by the community is palpable—and wonderful.

With the nationwide pressure to consolidate neighborhood schools into one large school almost irresistible, and the tendency for district leaders and taxpayers alike to think “bigger is better,” perhaps the islands of Maine may set an example of how small is good, too.
In these schools, the best of the "old ways" can meet the best of the new. Older students still do help younger students, whether in the reading corner, on the playground, or with technology. All students can work at their own academic level in all subjects, without their advancement to another "grade" or their need for support parting them from friends and age-mates. Little time is wasted on procedure and bureaucracy required when crowds must be safely managed, and the student-teacher ratio is enviable. True isolation, in which children rarely leave the island and miss out on important experiences, is a thing of the past.

Still, it is not uncommon for island parents to be questioned or judged by mainland acquaintances. This questioning is usually gentle, beginning with the supposedly earnest query: "Don't you worry about how she'll manage in the real world?" Sometimes the criticism is more aggressive. Parents are told that they are damaging their child's prospects because Junior may get to high school without having learned the rules of soccer. What a disaster.

The suggestion is that the "real world" means things like soccer, while developing a sense of oneself as a valued community member and even a potential emergency responder is not the real world.

To be sure, technology has made a significant difference in the lives of offshore students and teachers—and librarians!—but "bridge-building" means so much more than videoconferencing. The emphasis placed on the importance of everybody’s help and on individual involvement in local affairs has not faded with the years. As a result, children grow up connected to their fellow humans in a deep, abstract way. No matter where they make their homes as adults, should somebody need help, the islanders will respond. The bridge has been built.

**Eva Murray** is a regular columnist for five Maine publications, a freelance writer, and the author of three books: *Well Out to Sea—Year-Round on Matinicus Island* (2010), *Island Schoolhouse—One Room for All* (2012), and *Island Birthday* (2015), the most recent a children’s book illustrated by Jamie Hogan, which won the esteemed Lupine Award for children’s literature. All were published by Tilbury House Publishers of Thomaston, Maine. A 1985 graduate of Bates College, Eva has made her home on Matinicus Island “full-time and year-round” since 1987, when she was the island school’s one teacher. Along with husband Paul Murray, she raised two children on Matinicus, both now college graduates. In addition to writing, Eva serves as an emergency medical technician, wilderness first responder, and search and rescue volunteer; she runs the municipal recycling and solid waste program in her community; she operates a small seasonal bakery, and she is deeply involved in the formation of the new island library. Although not currently teaching, she is a certified K–8 teacher and recently earned a graduate certificate in Gifted and Talented Education. At the time of this writing, Eva is a pilot, a truck driver, a ham radio enthusiast, a hand spinner, and a blacksmith.