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Visit <www.ala.org/aasl/kq> to read these online exclusives.
“The stories that resonate with each individual are personal and unique; the reading level of those stories is just one factor in a complicated equation.”

The Story Is More Important Than the Words — pg. 22
Another school year has begun. Some of you have just started school, while those of us in the South have been going strong since early August. Every school year begins with an excitement and eagerness to learn and grow. Many of us start the year by attending professional development sessions sponsored by our schools. This year at my school we learned about the new teacher evaluation system that the state is implementing. Some anxiety surrounds this implementation as we all learn something new. As I reflect over my career, I remember many years that began with this same kind of anxiety. New policies and programs are constantly being instituted across our nation as we attempt to get our students up to the same level as students in other countries. It seems things change in education as often as the seasons.

The field of school librarianship hasn’t been immune to those changes. I have been a school librarian for twenty-five years. When I was in college, I learned things like mending filmstrips and typing catalog cards. Some of you reading this have probably never even seen a filmstrip or used a card catalog! Things have certainly changed. However, much has stayed the same.

Core Values of School Librarianship

Our core values remain the same even though some of the vehicles have radically changed. We have always been the information people. In the past, we used the Readers’ Guide to Periodical Literature and, in little boxes in the back room, had the physical magazines for our students to use. Now, we have databases—we never lose issues of magazines, and students can easily search and access hundreds of periodicals. No matter how or where learners access information, we are still the ones to help them evaluate, integrate, and process the information.

Our collections have always been full of nonfiction books, reference works, and other materials for research and informational reading. A few years ago I weeded my reference area extensively and moved what was left to the circulating collection because much of that material can be found much more easily on the Web. Remember the Occupational Outlook Handbook that was out of date almost as soon as you put it on the shelf? Now, we go to <www.bls.gov/ooh> and have a free, always up-to-date version of the handbook. Just because I no longer have a reference section doesn’t mean that I don’t love that part of the library. Well,

We are bombarded with change. How do we know what to grab on to, and how do we know what to let pass by? AASL can help!

The Constancy of Change

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Developing students’ love of reading will affect their lives in profound and powerful ways.
okay, maybe I never did love that part of the library, but I do love going after information!

We have always been the reading people. I am pretty sure that most of us came to librarianship because we loved to read. Our core value of promoting reading hasn’t changed. The public wonders if books are being replaced by e-books and whether, in the future, kids will still have opportunities to wander through rooms full of books to browse. I can’t see the future, but when new books are pulled out of boxes at school, I do see my students light up in a way that I don’t see happening when they download new e-books.

Promoting reading is not just so students will do well on a test. Developing students’ love of reading will affect their lives in profound and powerful ways. This love will help them become better citizens and adults. According to Donald Howard in a 2006 series of articles titled “The Power of Reading,” reading enriches the human experience. Mark Edwards, author of Every Child, Every Day (Pearson 2013) and the superintendent of Mooresville (NC) Graded School District, recently addressed AASL’s Board of Directors. He said, “When students learn to love reading, 90 percent of everything else goes right.” When we foster students’ love of reading we change the world. This emphasis on the value of reading hasn’t changed. It doesn’t matter if students are reading a book, an e-book, or whatever else the future holds. It just matters that they are reading.

Collection development was another thing that I learned in college. Browsing through book catalogs and H.W. Wilson’s Senior High Core Collection for secondary schools took hours. Preparing the book order took almost as long. Every time I prepare a book order now, I marvel at the ease of going online at my book company and reading reviews while I order. But the reasoning behind what I select hasn’t changed. That core value of selecting the right books for my community is still at the heart of what I do. Using selection aides is still appropriate and vital for me so I can build the collection that meets the needs of my students. I want to make sure that intellectual freedom is upheld.

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**Relying on the Power of Our Association**

We are bombarded with change. How do we know what to grab on to, and how do we know what to let pass by? AASL can help! Our association is made up of almost eight thousand experts—YOU! Several hundred of you serve on AASL committees that help the rest of us manage the glut of information that we face. If you need an answer to almost any question, someone in our association will have the answer.

I want to encourage you to join AASL Forum. It is impressive that a question that comes up on the forum will be answered in a matter of hours by people across the nation. The staff at AASL is awesome, and they can put you in touch with another member. The power of our association is amazing. Thank you for being a part of it.

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**Constant Change but Enduring Values**

Policies change. Programs come and go. Our core values are here to stay. What we do, in my opinion, is the most vital part of a child’s education. We help kids in ways that will stay with them through life. Finding information, sorting information, and using information are skills that will make them more successful as adults. Reading for pleasure is a habit that enriches lives. Ensuring intellectual freedom for kids will help ensure intellectual freedom for adults. We can’t imagine what changes will take place in the next twenty-five years, but our core values are timeless and will carry us through.

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**Terri Grief** is president of the American Association of School Librarians. She is one of the school librarians at McCracken County High School in Paducah, Kentucky. In 2013 she received the Barby Hardy Lifetime Achievement Award from the Kentucky Association of School Librarians. She also authored the chapter “Big Games at Reidland High School” in Teen Games Rule! A Librarian’s Guide to Platforms and Programs (Libraries Unlimited 2014).

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**Work Cited:**

We don’t expect everyone to agree with every point made in this issue. We hope, though, that readers will experience the kind of discomfort that raises questions, invites a dialogue, and provokes new thinking.

Reflecting on a Diverse Set of Ideas

Beth Friese and Melissa Techman

Sociologist C. Wright Mills called it “making the familiar strange” (quoted in Conley 2011).

Reflection is necessary, but hard to come by, in today’s “do more with less” environment. This issue of Knowledge Quest is meant as a pause to reflect. It is a pause to look at new trends, as well as tried-and-true foundations of our profession, in ways that may make some of us uncomfortable. Certainly, we know that it can be uncomfortable to stop and look, to step off the conveyor belt, and question its direction, and yet the effort must be made.

We invited authors to write about topics and trends in our profession that are either overlooked or need to be revisited. Many of these topics include concerns related to the tension between private rights and corporate interests, highlighting the need to take action to defend our users’ access, privacy, and freedom to choose. Some views expressed in this issue may make you mad or spark disagreement. We don’t expect everyone to agree with every point made in this issue. We hope, though, that readers will experience the kind of discomfort that raises questions, invites a dialogue, and provokes new thinking.

In This Issue

The term “grit” has turned up in many publishing and media venues. In Kevin Hodgson’s online exclusive on local advocacy, he tells how views on grit in the context of education sparked high school teacher Michele Turner Bernhard’s need to communicate her thoughts on the topic; she used a unique publishing partnership with a local newspaper, the Daily Hampshire Gazette. His article highlights ways in which the “write a letter to the editor” impulse can be extended to inform and advocate.

Ira Socol extends the discussion of grit with questions like these: Who is primarily responsible for change of the kind needed to support individual success? Shouldn’t we first look at our systems (of education, of social support, of privilege and access)? Is what children really need abundance?

Chad Sansing, discussing net neutrality, points to key issues at the intersection of ed-tech, bandwidth, and schools. If we cannot count on open and equitable access to content and bandwidth, how can we do the kind of work students deserve? Sansing is a leader in the arena of working openly and in a connected fashion with his students.

Via his Infodocket column for the Digital Shift, Gary Price writes about library and information issues for a large audience. In his online exclusive, Price takes a closer look at the recent newsworthy “right to be forgotten” law and puts it in the larger context of our obligation to teach students to use social media and Web 2.0 tools responsibly.

Ed-tech expert and writer Audrey Watters examines the business and politics of educational products that purport to meet administrative and curricular needs. She also looks at ways implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) is reshaping reading and takes a much-needed closer look at Lexile levels.
Susan Grigsby’s article extends this discussion of the problems with levels and reading. She offers an antidote to the impulse to categorize and restrict certain texts by reminding us where our focus should begin and end: with the readers themselves.

The many costs of online testing—especially in the context of CCSS implementation—are critically addressed by Wendy Stephens. Her analysis and stories from the trenches bring into sharp focus what testing means for those with limited access to technology. Stephens reminds us that the testing push takes a toll on funding for other programs and reduces availability and time for authentic and productive use of technology in schools.

Lucy Santos Green’s article analyzes popular technology models SAMR and TPACK, explaining some of her research and concerns about them. Green cautions us to remember our standard evaluative questions and encourages us to ask them of these models. (We’d add “Who profits?” to her checklist.) Her analysis is part of a bigger discussion about our roles as leaders and professional development providers.

In their article “Update on Ebooks: Changes and Challenges,” Shannon Acedo and Cathy Leverkus give us a helpful look at changes in the ebook publishing terrain and how libraries are dealing with critical issues of access and rights. They compare vendors’ histories and practices and show us that, although ebooks acquisition and management are not always straightforward, school librarians can move forward on making ebooks available to their students.

In an honest look at some hard topics around the essence of our profession, Kristin Fontichiaro and Buffy Hamilton ask questions that should trouble all of us. How do we navigate collaborative relationships when schedules work against us and when “in many schools, the vision is not unfolding”? How do we work with harried teachers who just don’t have time for inquiry learning? The key question: What do school librarians do that classroom teachers cannot? They invite us to bring these concerns into open and honest dialogue with colleagues.

Finally, in a piece that reflects recent calls for more diversity in texts, Amy Price Azano encourages us to consider what she calls a “neglected R” in education: rurality. Azano provides helpful suggestions for making the school library an environment where students can actively interrogate the idea of place, no matter where they live.

This issue represents a diverse selection of ideas, which only touches on the many roles we fulfill and communities we serve. We hope these pieces encourage you to reflect on aspects of your own practice that may have fallen by the wayside in times of rapid change. We also hope that these pieces will spark conversations with colleagues inside and outside the school library sphere.

We invite you to join the conversation! If you aren’t already a participant, please consider joining the online discussion at AASLForum <www.alala.org/aasl/about/community/lists/forum>. And speaking of forums, please read Steven Yates’s description of this year’s AASL Fall Forum, “School Librarians in the Anytime Anywhere Learning Landscape,” scheduled for October 17–18 in St. Louis and other locations. Registration is still open!

Elizabeth Friese is the school library media specialist at Anderson–Lissey Elementary School in Snellville, Georgia. A National Writing Project Teacher Consultant, she received her PhD in Language and Literacy Education from the University of Georgia in 2012. Her work has been featured in School Libraries Worldwide, Voices from the Middle, and other publications in literacy and school librarianship. She is a member of AASL and is currently serving as co-chair of the 2015 AASL Annual Conference Committee. You can find her on Twitter @librarybeth.

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TAKING A CLOSER LOOK AT THE GRIT NARRATIVES

Ira Socol
In a series of 2013 blog posts on the topic of “grit,” author Ira Socol delved into the “questions beneath the questions”: the meaning of entrenched stances on education and what students really deserve. He took on the views of Angela Lee Duckworth (famous for her “grit” TED talk) and asked what it means to impose her narrow view of how to measure students and how to support them. He closely analyzed Paul Tough’s book How Children Succeed: Grit, Curiosity, and the Hidden Power of Character (Houghton Mifflin 2012) and what is meant by “character.”

I’ve attempted to stitch together and condense the five in-depth posts that comprise his series, and, in the process, I may have left out some very worthy and elucidating passages. Please read the originals, and follow the links and references to the many voices that took part in this wide-ranging discussion.

As Socol said recently in “Summarizing Grit: The Abundance Narratives” <http://speedchange.blogspot.com/2014/02/summarizing-grit-abundance-narratives.html>: “I cannot tell you how to read Tough’s book, or how to consider Duckworth finding most of her inspiration in the work of ‘the father of eugenics’ [Francis Galton]. But I do hope you will wonder about, and perhaps challenge, the current pop psychology of ‘grit’ education.

“I hope you will ask, if we do not go after the causes of the pathologies of poverty, how can we ever ‘cure’ children fast enough to keep up with the damage we are doing?”

To read the original series on Socol’s blog, start with Part 1, “Paul Tough v. Peter Høeg—or—the Advantages and Limits of ‘Research’ or, How Children Succeed v. Borderliners” <http://speedchange.blogspot.com/2013/12/paul-tough-v-peter-heg-or-advantages.html>. Links to the other four parts are on the right of that page.

Thanks to Ira Socol for allowing me to highlight critical parts of his series for Knowledge Quest readers.
ACTUALLY, WHAT TOUGH AND HIS FRIENDS WANT THESE KIDS TO POSSESS IS WILLING COMPLIANCE, NOT “GRIT” NOR “CHARACTER.”

A Child’s Voice, in Contrast to Paul Tough’s Clinician’s

Paul Tough’s *How Children Succeed: Grit, Curiosity, and the Hidden Power of Character* is an important book. As Tough told Valerie Strauss, “The book is about two things: first, an emerging body of research that shows the importance of so-called non-cognitive skills in children’s success; and second, a new set of experimental interventions that are trying to use that research to help improve outcomes for children, especially children growing up in disadvantage. Some of this research is decades old; some is very new. Part of what I’m trying to do in the book is to show the connections between fields of research that are generally kept quite separate, including various branches of economics, neuroscience, pediatrics, and psychology” (Strauss 2012).

It is an important debunking of much of the so-called “research” behind the work of thirty-five years of “educational reformers,” going back to the start of the Reagan Administration.

And it’s an important book because of its investigation of allostatic load [Editor’s note: Allostatic load is the body’s response to many kinds of stress; see <www.macses.ucsf.edu/research/allostatic/allostatic.php>] and what that concept requires of educators. All this is good, and all of that offsets Tough’s depressing unquestioning trust in the powerful: from the University of Chicago to Arne Duncan, from Harvard researchers to those who run elite schools, to those elites who run schools for those in poverty. That Tough never asks the questions beneath his questions is no more reason not to read his book than it is not to read the *New York Times*.

But it is a dangerous book because Tough continues to look for simple answers that will make life comfortable for his social class. It is a dangerous book because it never really asks tough questions. It is a dangerous book because it holds out those old New England Calvinist ideals—grit and hard work, the “by your own bootstraps” way to the top—as the path for the poor, without ever really acknowledging that the rich need none of that.

The fact that quantifiable research can tell you only about what you already know is a critical problem for people of Paul Tough’s class, people with Data Over-Acceptance Disorder. And it’s a disaster in education—blocking real change from ever being considered “What Works” by those in power.

As I have struggled with Tough’s clinical prose, I have found my mind inserting the voice of the young Peter in Barbara Haveland’s translation of Peter Høeg’s *Borderliners* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux 1994). A unique voice. A literary voice. *Borderliners*, in many ways what I consider the most important book available about education, is all about allostatic load, but it also understands that high allostatic load factors do not mean that a child comes to school “disadvantaged.” Rather, their advantages are simply not respected nor exploited by the school.

The damaged children described by ”young Peter’s” narration are all brilliant, all gifted observers of their worlds, and are all incredibly capable. They sound—in Høeg’s storytelling—quite unlike the way any of Tough’s children “sound.” And perhaps this is because Høeg can do something none of Tough’s numbers and none of the researcher/storytellers in *How Children Succeed* can do—that is, use one’s own unique observational skills to channel the actual voices of these children. Tough and his friends begin from the point of view of what these kids cannot do. Høeg, on the other hand, starts with everything his three—or four—heroes can do.

And that makes all the difference in the world. Tough and friends want to teach “grit” to the “grittiest” kids in America, because none of them has any idea who these kids are.

Actually, what Tough and his friends want these kids to possess is willing
What Children Need Is Not “Grit” but Abundance—and Slack

Children need the support, time, resources, and love which make persistence possible.

It is not “falling down” which makes you stronger, it is the people who help you up after you’ve fallen, who teach you to get up after you’ve fallen, who tend your wounds, and who supply resources which allow you to keep trying with a growing expectation of success.

I don’t know if I’ve been a good father or not—as a long-term single dad I kind of object to the #becauseofmom meme; I bought the Tide for our house—for that analysis you’d have to ask the kid. But despite real money struggles, real resource issues, I tried to offer abundance when I could: musical instruments he played, soccer equipment he used (for which I often traded work), the drives to a distant high school which met his needs, access to the computers he learned to build and control. But for the ability to do that I am grateful for the abundance I received as a child. My parents rarely had any money, but they had essential things. They both had university educations; they had wide-ranging interests in the world; they talked—in front of us—about anything and everything. They offered us a home in a place where everything from high culture to the fascinations of the natural world were easily accessible from very early ages. They lived in a place with a high school that brought all kinds of children—all socioeconomic classes—together so I could see choices and opportunities. And they knew how to stand up for me, to prevent huge problems from becoming a death sentence.

Let’s go to Dr. Paul Thomas (2013):

Children in poverty line up at the starting line with a bear trap on one leg; middle-class children start at the 20-, 30-, and 40-meter marks; and the affluent stand at the 70-, 80-, and 90-meter marks.

And while gazing at education as a stratified sprint, “no excuses” reformers shout to the children in poverty: “Run twice as fast! Ignore the bear trap! And if you have real grit, gnaw off your foot, and run twice as fast with one leg!”

These “no excuses” advocates turn to the public and shrug, “There’s nothing we can do about the trap. Sorry.”

“What is also revealed in this staggered 100-meter race is that all the children living and learning in relative affluence are afforded slack by the accidents of their birth: “Slack” is the term identified by [Sendhil Mullainathan and [Eldar] Shafir [authors of Scarcity: Why Having Too Little Means So Much (New York Times Books 2013)] as the space created by abundance that allows any person access to more of her/his cognitive and emotional resources.

“Slack”: the moments when necessity is not the sole driver. “The cost [of “scarcity,” the primary element in “grit theory”] is an undue focus on the necessity at hand, which leads to a lack of curiosity about wider issues, and an inability to imagine longer-term consequences. The effect of this scarcity-generated “loss of bandwidth” has catastrophic results....” Tim Adams wrote in a 2013 book review on the topic. The “struggle” that Tough, Duckworth, [blogger Vicki] Davis et al. want for kids is the creation of “scarcity” among children already scarred by “scarcity.” The “grit” they discuss imposes “scarcity” by focusing kids on the problems, the deficits, “the mountain” as Davis puts it, instead of the solutions, or, what we might call, the highway we try to build to our students’ futures.

The Calvinist Roots of Duckworth et al.

People have argued that the “work ethic” expressed in the work of Angela Duckworth and Paul Tough is “not religious,” and cannot really be seen as “racist.” Those promoting “grit” are not “Calvinists” they say, and Duckworth isn’t even “white,” but, in fact, the nature of Duckworth’s work, and the essence of Tough’s reporting, are both fundamentally religious and fundamentally “racist” in terms of belief in what those back in the day might have called “Godly behavior,” and in terms of group identities being “closer” or “further” from “God’s plan.”

That the myths of the Protestant Work Ethic (see <http://carbon.ucdenver.edu/~bgoodric/The%20Calvinist%20Work%20Ethic%20and%20Consumerism.htm>), and mythic identity racism (see <www.racismnoway.com.au/about-racism/understanding/culture-language-identity.html>), are embedded in the American power structure does not make them less religious in nature or origin, simply more troubling, because they have been used for all time to abuse those
not wanted within that power structure. The Irish are lazy, illiterate drunkards. African Americans are lazy and uninterested in success. Italians are lazy and disrespectful of the law. Latinos are lazy, illiterate, and can’t stay put and focus.

The myths of the Protestant Work Ethic and identity racism grew in America and have been carried forward for almost four centuries because they made those born to wealth and power feel good about themselves. How much better to describe your ancestors as having struggled alone against a brutal wilderness and wild savages than saying that your ancestors were “illegal immigrants” who stole a remarkably resource-rich continent from its inhabitants. How much better to embrace Frederick Jackson Turner’s “Frontier Theory” (see <www15.uta.fi/FAST/US2/REF/fjt.html>) than to worry about slaves and underpaid immigrants who built the early national roads, dug the Erie Canal, and built the railroads. How much better to celebrate “American Invention” than to discuss the wholesale intellectual property theft—ranging from woolen mills to those railroads to the telephone debuting across those 1876 fairgrounds—which had enriched the American Republic’s first hundred years.

Abundance in Schools

Here are two examples of providing students with abundance. In Albemarle County, Virginia, in our most “at risk” high school, we added, in response to student requests, a music studio in the library. This allowed a range of high poverty students, and we’re talking both black and white poverty, to come together around an existing set of community passions, from rap to hillbilly blues, and then to bring the middle class students, with rock, show tunes, and classical added, to join with them. We allowed these students to present their work and to construct their core course learning via music. We did not impose our passions, our paths on them—rather we embraced theirs.

From then we expanded an already inclusive theater program, including what we might call “street dance” and “street music” if we had real streets in that area. We kept kids in school. We kept kids in class. We kept kids engaged and involved in the positive. It changed, the students told us, the entire character of the school for the better. We have continued to build on those kinds of efforts in that high school and others because we have discovered the value of abundance.

In our “at risk” elementary schools we have pursued a differing, but similar course. Our classrooms are now designed around what we call “choice and comfort,” with kids able to discover what makes them comfortable in terms of learning environment and learning style. Kids lie on the floor, perch on stools, lean against high tables, sit on low tables. They write using differing technologies, from pencils to handhelds to tablets to laptops. They move when they need to. We allow children to harness the full power of their cognitive energies on learning. By providing an abundance of choice, an abundance of time, an abundance of tools, we have encouraged persistence in ways that “grit theorists” can only hope to emulate.

In other words, offering children abundance is a choice. It is a choice a community—a nation—can either make or not. And if a community, or a nation, chooses not to offer children abundance, I still find it remarkably unfair to complain that our children of scarcity lack character.

What Paul Tough ignores, from his perch at the New York Times, is the responsibility of organizations such as the Times to promote fundamental change. Tough does call for a better welfare system, which is lovely, I suppose, but not the equity our children need.

Myth matters in the struggles for power. And understanding mythic belief matters even more. And as I have said on more than one occasion, education is the most political thing a society does because it is a struggle for our future.

What Duckworth and Tough do in their—perhaps conscious for her, unconscious for him—unquestioning belief in the Protestant Work Ethic, is to give the power structure a pass, no matter how much either of them calls for more charity.

That is a pass I will not sign on to.

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On Net Neutrality

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Instructional technology is a tricky thing. For example, you could have 1:1 devices but pick the wrong devices. You could open your network, and no one might notice. You could have the right devices—even at a 2:1 or 3:1 ratio—but little or no bandwidth for the apps your teachers and students want to use. You could have the right apps or the wrong apps at the right or wrong time. Really, all the problems we could have with instructional technology mirror all the problems we have with teaching and learning in general: with limited and scarce resources, we want the fewest things that will do the most print–epoch work at the lowest cost, rather than the widest variety of things that could allow the most types of work at debatable costs. This tension binds together everything from picking the right tablet to making relationships between us work in schools. (Arguing for the post–print epoch in schools while we’re here: check.)

However, apart from providing universal access to the Web, the biggest instructional technology problem I see right now is the continued degradation of net neutrality. “Net neutrality” describes an Internet that passes along all bits of information at an equal rate. Without net neutrality, regardless of how much bandwidth any particular user has, Internet service providers can “throttle” the speed of delivery to privilege some bits of information over others, effectively slowing down some websites and services while speeding up others.

I don’t mean to suggest that access to the Web is the greatest problem a community can have, or that net neutrality is the most pressing problem to solve in the whole world. Whereas schools, by and large, have no systemic investment in cultural production or in teaching a skillset like design, they do have multi–million–dollar investments in hardware and licenses for content and assessments. So net neutrality ought to be a big deal to schools as further loss of net neutrality can lead to increased costs, limited teaching and learning outcomes, and a generational and societal misconception of what the Internet can do for people.

I would love to see parent groups, school boards, school administrator organizations, and teacher unions issue frequent statements and maintain active campaigns to protect net neutrality. Here are some anxieties underpinning that desire.

First, I worry about Big Education Publishing partnering with Big Service Providers to throttle up access to purchased curriculum and content while throttling down the rest of the Internet. It’s easy to advertise “flipped” instruction and “technology enhanced interventions, 5x as fast” as competitors’ products when you pay service providers to make that claim fiber–optically true.
Second, I worry about de facto censorship. A division could actually claim to have an open network to assuage stakeholders and simply buy a plan from a service provider that throttles sites and services instead of firewalling them. The theoretical possibility of teaching with games or helping kids do inquiry-based research on a controversial issue is not the same as being free to do those things.

Public schooling should be a public good and teach us to engage with one another as thinkers, citizens, and neighbors. We can’t do that when we’re coerced to spend our time engaging with product.

Third, I worry about the continued standardization of public schooling and the increasing amount of control corporations have over it. Public schooling should be a public good and teach us to engage with one another as thinkers, citizens, and neighbors. We can’t do that when we’re coerced to spend our time engaging with product. If we have to spend X amount of time waiting for a Web app to load, or Y, where Y costs a bit more but loads faster and delivers more content, schools (if we let them) will go with Y, even if X is free and open. If we are paying extra for faster delivery of online content, schools will make sure we spend more time with that content.

Moreover, I can see a scenario in which we change the school calendar, not because we’re no longer an agrarian society, but because so many schools pay for preferential Internet service during their testing windows. Imagine hearing, “We start the school year in October so we can test in July during our TurboTest window.” The coup de grace of standardizing education is a perverse modularity that makes it, you know, “imperative” we all implement the same “schooling” with 100 percent fidelity because we can’t fall behind the divisions starting and testing two months earlier than we do. Also, we have Internet. Do we think we’ll be able to preserve whatever it is we have now (surviving elective programs and maverick teachers come to mind) if we start paying more for a smaller set of standardized learning objects delivered through a financial partnership between ed publishers and Internet service providers?

Finally, I worry that very few schools give kids an accurate, democratic idea of what they can do with the Web. Imagine schools in which bandwidth is even more scarce than it is now. Of course schools are going to buy the services and products that promise dependable speedy delivery, and publishers will want to be a part of that. Networks are shaky things already. I know that I bounce around between two or three a day at work in the best configuration we could have right now. Are we really prepared to teach kids that the Net is for doing what you’re told? Is our mission to school-ify the Internet? There exist entire taxonomies and ecosystems of art and science we don’t offer in public schools even with a “neutral” language arts. His blog is available at <http://classroots.org>.

For more on Net Neutrality, visit the Electronic Frontier Foundation <www.eff.org/issues/net-neutrality> or Fight for the Future <http://cms.fightforthefuture.org/tellfcc>.

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HOW WILL THE ED-TECH INDUSTRY SHAPE STUDENT READING?
Education technologies will reshape the ways in which we teach and learn, the ways in which we read and write and communicate—or that’s the promise, at least.

Indeed, new hardware and new software are often marketed to schools and libraries with language that stresses their transformative and innovative potential, even when, upon closer inspection, it may well be that these new tools simply update or expedite existing practices.

But whether or not the changes ed-tech will bring about are as radical as some of the PR hype suggests, it is clear that the education-technology industry does have a powerful influence on the design and development of new tools, as well as on the policies that push their adoption.

It’s worth asking, in light of all of this, how the ed-tech industry might be poised to shape the future of reading.

The Business of Ed-Tech
Investment in education-technology companies hit a record high in the first quarter of 2014 with more than $559 million in funding spread across 103 deals (CB Insights 2014). For a little historical perspective, there were 106 education deals total in 1999, in the middle of the dot-com boom. Investment in ed-tech that year hit $1.3 billion, and then dropped precipitously when the bubble burst in 2011 (Global Silicon Valley Advisors 2012).

Of course, the ed-tech industry is vast and disparate, and includes companies that focus on K–12, higher education, and corporate training, as well as those who sell directly to consumers. The industry includes companies that focus on administrative needs and those that focus on curriculum. But lumped together—rightly or wrongly—it’s apparent that the sector is growing, in both its economic and political influence.

Many reasons are given for the recent resurgence in ed-tech investment, which has skyrocketed since 2007 or so: the increasing ubiquity of computers, particularly mobile devices; the decreasing costs to starting a technology company (thanks, in part, to open-source technologies and cloud computing); the “consumerization” of technology and education technology; the rising costs of education, particularly at the higher education level, and the associated search for cheaper alternatives; and a belief that education is a huge and largely untapped market.

The Politics of Ed-Tech
One of the other recent boons to education-technology interest and investment: the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Designed to provide a single set of standards for K–12 in language arts and math across the United States, the Common Core has been adopted by the majority of states (although hardly without controversy; see Simon and Shah 2013). A single set of standards is very appealing to the education and ed-tech industries as it simplifies (and standardizes) their offerings across the U.S. market.

Focused on math and literacy standards, adoption of the CCSS will require schools purchase newly and properly aligned materials (textbooks, assignments, assessments, and so on). As more and more of these resources are digital, the need for new materials is a huge boon to the ed-tech industry. The Common Core also mandates the use of computers for students’ online assessments, again another line item for school...
budgets. According to a survey taken last year, 68 percent of school districts say they plan to purchase new instructional materials as they implement the new standards. As just 67 percent of respondents said they felt their districts were fully prepared for Common Core online testing, it’s likely that the purchases will include new hardware as well (Molnar 2013).

Although the development of the CCSS has been described by the Common Core State Standards Initiative and others as a “state-driven” process (Huckabee 2013), its origins aren’t quite so democratic. The initiative was originally sponsored by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers, and, as such, the development of the standards was funded—directly or indirectly—via organizations like the Gates Foundation (Schneider 2013). Furthermore, states were incentivized to adopt the standards as they competed for the Obama administration’s Race to the Top funding grants.

All this backstory means that the CCSS and their adoption is fraught politically. But the implications for ed-tech are (so far, at least) less complex. Stanford University education history professor Larry Cuban, long a critic of education technology’s failed promises and of schools’ inability to integrate computers into the classroom, argues that the Common Core is going to become a significant force for driving technology adoption in schools. But the reasons for doing so are, in a nutshell, the Common Core itself, not some other educational goal (apologies for quoting him at length).

The best (and most recent) gift to the hardware and software industry has been the Common Core standards and assessments. At a time of fiscal retrenchment in school districts across the country when schools are being closed and teachers are let go, many districts have found the funds to go on shopping sprees to get ready for the Common Core. And here is the point that I want to make. The old reasons for buying technology have been shunted aside for a sparkling new one. Consider that for the past three decades the rationale for buying desktop computers, laptops, and now tablets has been three-fold:

1. Make schools more efficient and productive so that students learn more, faster, and better than they had before.

2. Transform teaching and learning into an engaging and active process connected to real life.

3. Prepare the current generation of young people for the future workplace.

After three decades of rhetoric and research, teachers, principals, students, and vendors have their favorite tales to prove that these reasons have been achieved. But for those who want more than Gee Whiz stories, who seek a reliable body of evidence that shows students learning more, faster, and better, that shows teaching and learning
to have been transformed, that using these devices has prepared the current generations for actual jobs—well, that body of evidence is missing for each of these traditional reasons to buy computers.

With Common Core standards adopted, the rationale for getting devices has shifted. No longer does it matter whether there is sufficient evidence to make huge expenditures on new technologies. Now, what matters are the practical problems of being technologically ready for the new standards and tests in 2014–2015: getting more hardware, software, additional bandwidth, technical assistance, professional development for teachers, and time in the school day to let students practice taking tests (Cuban 2013).

In other words, the Common Core is a big “win” for the ed-tech industry. The label “Common Core-aligned” is affixed to almost every new product, whether the products are really aligned or not (Polikoff 2014). The Common Core is not simply another rationale for bringing computing devices into the classroom; it is a mandate to do so.

The Business and Politics of Reading

But how will all this affect reading, you ask? After all, much of the investment that’s gone into education technologies has been funneled to administrative software and then, perhaps, to math curriculum. A recent survey of educators pointed to a gap in both the availability and the effectiveness of literacy software (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation 2014).

Nevertheless, thanks to the current focus on the Common Core, there is a major push to rethink both the medium of reading (think digitized reading materials) and the content of reading. Most famously perhaps, the CCSS places an emphasis on nonfiction over fiction materials: 70 percent of what high school students are supposed to read in accordance with the CCSS should be nonfiction—but that’s across all subjects, not just English class (NPR 2013).

But another element of implementation of the Common Core will also shape what students might read. It’s another element that, again, is deeply connected to the education-technology industry. The element is the Lexile Framework, which measures a text’s complexity (based on individual words and sentence length) and gives a number rating for the text to indicate its reading level.

Lexile is a proprietary framework, developed and licensed by MetaMetrics Inc.—hardly a newcomer to or minor player in education. The company was founded in 1984, long before the recent ed-tech craze, and the Lexile Framework is used in assessments across multiple states and has been adopted by all of the major publishers.

The Lexile Framework has been widely criticized, particularly when the notion of “appropriate reading levels” gets translated into steering readers away from books they want to read and toward books that match their “level.” Late last year University of Iowa English professor Blaine Greteman blasted the Common Core and the Lexile Framework in a *New Republic* story...
with the catchy headline "Federal Bureaucrats Declare 'Hunger Games' More Complex Than 'The Grapes of Wrath.' " Indeed that’s a major problem with the framework: it deems *Slaughterhouse Five* less “complex” than *Mr. Popper’s Penguins*.

Greteman wrote:

> Few would oppose giving teachers better tools to challenge students, but this approach seems badly flawed. One alternative would be to trust teachers themselves to determine the moral and aesthetic complexities that engage students as individuals. After all, human expertise is the center of the humanities. Lexile scoring is the intellectual equivalent of a thermometer: perfect for cooking turkeys, but not for encouraging moral growth.

Any attempt to quantify literary complexity surely mistakes the fundamental experience of literature. (Greteman 2013)

**The Business and Politics of Reading Technologies**

Despite this line of criticism, the Common Core has given the Lexile Framework a substantial boost—it is now the (quantitative) arbiter of reading level. And when it comes to the connections between education and technology that I’ve tried to describe in this article, this boost may be even more significant: Lexile becomes more than policy—it becomes *code*.

The importance of this cannot be understated, particularly in a world in which the ed-tech industry is both well-funded and school-mandated. The Lexile Framework will be written into applications and assessments—it will be “hard coded.” The Lexile Framework will shape software design and development. From there it will shape adoption and implementation.

Rather than *human*-based recommendations that steer readers toward or away from certain materials (problematic enough already), we will increasingly find these recommendations automated, delivered via an algorithm.

This automation is often couched in terms of “personalization” and/or ”adaptivity.” It combines the data that software gleans about individual student readers and the data it has about the material (data that includes the Lexile score). The companies that offer this automation have raised staggering amounts of money. Knewton, for example, which has inked deals with many of the major publishers for its adaptive learning platform, has raised over $105 million in investment (AOL 2014).
Looking Ahead

New education technologies have been pitched to many of us as being full of promise and possibility. New ed-tech means new devices, more interactive media, Internet connectivity, and so on. And no doubt new ed-tech has much potential for increased accessibility, shareability, portability, and the like. But it’s too simplistic to stop at the slogan that “the future of reading is digital.” We need to dig further.

The future of ed-tech—and, by association, of schools, libraries, and reading—is deeply, increasingly implicated in the politics and business of education technology. Arguably, reading always has been caught up in similar sorts of debates about what students should read and how they should read and when they should read it. But it’s important for us to ask: What changes when the politics and the business decisions around this become code and not just policy? What position are schools and libraries in to recode these new technologies so that they work in the service of learners and not simply in the service of business?


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The Story Is More Important Than the Words
A Portrait of a Reader-Focused Library Program
A couple of years ago I picked up a copy of Edward Myers’s *Storyteller*. As a middle school librarian, I am constantly reading titles for this age group so that I can recommend books that my students will connect with. This particular story ended with a passage that spoke to me as if it had been uttered from my own heart:

For each of us, life is a story. There are characters, conflicts, plot developments, crises, interludes, twists, and resolutions. Sometimes the story make sense; sometimes it doesn’t. But there’s still value in the story itself, even when you can’t add up the parts and understand the whole. A good story can lead you toward insight—perhaps wisdom—regardless of whether or not you fully understand it. Maybe that’s why storytelling has always been so important to me. (2008, 282)

I keep this idea in my mind whenever I am faced with well-meaning, but perhaps misguided, attempts at leveling libraries by labeling books with Lexile levels, AR levels, or colored dots that indicate the difficulty of the text and its appropriateness to a particular reader.

Fostering Independence

I believe strongly in teaching independence in book selection, and I have been able to back up my belief by putting programs in place that provide evidence to show my administrators how fostering independence works. I spend time creating personal bibliographies for my students based on an interest survey. I teach my students how to create resource lists in our online catalog so they have a handy list of likely titles when they are ready to read something new. I work with my language arts teachers to set aside time for monthly book talks to share stories that might fly under students’ radar or exist outside their comfort zones.

When all of this is combined with a commitment to know my students, know the literature, and keep current on titles and authors for middle school, I am able to provide a program that not only encourages independent self-selection but helps middle readers broaden their scope in preparation for high school. To be sure, this commitment results in a lot of extra work for me, but I would rather put the time into teaching independent self-selection than labeling or color-coding books on my shelves. It is important for school librarians to be proactive in this area so that administrators...
and parents become educated about why self-selection is better than labeling and color-coding. Getting cooperation is much easier before you are in a situation where you have to go to battle over the issue. Even though leveling my library had not become part of the conversation at my school, when my principal first arrived I made a point to talk to her about my philosophies in regards to an effective school library program. Labeling was one of the issues I made sure to address.

One point I made that really hit home was my belief that labeling or color coding lulls one into the false security that students can rely on a number like Lexile or AR levels for appropriateness. I pointed out that neither of those designations factor in the maturity level of a title’s content when determining reading level.

The Poky Little Puppy and The Color Purple have the same 4.0 AR level but are in no way appropriate for the same readers (Renaissance Learning 2008). The Lexile levels (from Lexile.com) for these two titles are alarmingly similar as well: AD640L for The Poky Little Puppy and HL670L for The Color Purple. Again, Lexile labeling, in and of itself, does not help the reader make a good decision about appropriateness of the title.

Focusing on Students’ Interests
Another important point to emphasize: interest drives learning. If a student is interested in a subject or author or story, the reader is much more apt to push through challenging text than if no interest is present (Paul 2013). I’m not suggesting students will automatically grab a dictionary and look up all the words that are not in their current vocabulary. I am saying that when students have a high level of interest in what they are reading then that interest acts as an “approach urge” (to use Paul Silvia’s phrase reported in Paul 2013), and learners will use context clues and deeper thinking to extract meaning. Isn’t that what we want them to do?

When I first began teaching middle school seven years ago, I had the disadvantage of being unfamiliar with the literature for that age group. I knew picture books and chapter books for early readers, but I did not have much of a feel for what was available and popular for grades six through eight. I spent the first couple of years reading constantly so that I could recommend books to students. In fact, I was so involved in middle-grades literature that when adult friends asked me for recommendations I was at a loss to talk about anything other than what I was reading for my students!

It was around that time that a colleague developed an interest survey for students; she used the results to create personalized lists of recommended titles. She willingly shared that survey with me, and I began using it to connect students to literature (see figure 1). During collaborative planning I showed the survey to language arts teachers, and they were very interested in using it to help spark their students’
interest in reading—especially sixth-graders who were “bridging up” and somewhat overwhelmed in their new library.

Entire classes filled out surveys, and teachers turned them in to me. I used them to create one-page personalized lists of recommended titles; students stapled the lists into their agendas. Creating these lists was a time-consuming task, and if every student in the school had asked for one I probably wouldn’t have been able to comply. When our county system upgraded our online public access catalog (OPAC) I realized that the personalized reading recommendations could be done as resource lists under a student’s log-in. I also realized that I could teach students how to use Boolean operators and create their own lists.

Since I strongly believe that interest drives learning, what could be a better way to teach Boolean searches than with something in which students had interest?

Students were given the surveys and asked to circle or highlight the items in which they were interested. They brought the completed surveys to the library where they were taught how to log in to the OPAC and go into the search module to use those interest items as search terms. We talked about how the Boolean operators allowed students to combine or separate search terms.
to get a good selection of books to keep on personal reading lists.

The students who were given this instruction created resource lists of fiction titles and would readily access that list when coming to the school library to look for the next book to read—no leveling or labeling required! (See figure 2.)

The bonus to this approach is that these same students were able to put together much more meaningful search strings when they came into the school library to do research for an assignment.

For example, one of my students wanted to research the cowboys of the old west and was frustrated by getting search results about the Dallas Cowboys football team. He quickly figured out that he could use the search string “cowboys NOT dallas” or “cowboys NOT football” to get a more targeted list of relevant resources.

Students also figured out how to create additional resource lists that were specific to a class, subject, or research project. Additionally, the same system follows them to high school (or any other school in our district),

Figure 2. Example of personalized reading list based on results of an interest survey.
and those resource lists do not disappear unless the student deletes them. This group of lists provides an interesting timeline of books read by the student, and the more students use advanced search techniques, the more independent they become when selecting both fiction and nonfiction books that fit their needs and interests.

The other bonus that came out of these lessons was the increase in student awareness of call numbers, what they mean, and where they are. When learners were interested in finding titles, especially the nonfiction shelved by DDS, they learned the layout of the library and began to understand the concept of subject arrangement. I know these students will navigate their high school libraries more easily because of the personal resource lists that were created here in middle school.

Booktalking, Book Trailers, and Displays

Another tried and true method for helping students become independent library users is the use of regular booktalks. The language arts teachers make a habit of bringing classes in around once a month so students can select free reading or “book group” titles. The teachers let me know ahead of time if they want a particular theme or genre highlighted, and I pull books and spend the class period talking about the titles.

We have also expanded that practice to include book trailers that students can access by scanning QR codes with a school iPad or their own device equipped with a reader.

Watching the book trailers has become so popular that students have started clamoring to create their own.

As I write this in May, I am currently working with my “on-level” reading teachers in the sixth grade to use this as a unit of study during the first semester of the 2014–2015 school year. While expanding the project has not yet been scheduled, I am also working on getting this idea going in our remedial reading programs so that students can create and share book trailers with students at our neighboring elementary school.

Because of the Common Core State Standards’ emphasis on informational text, I make a point of creating displays that feature nonfiction. One of the most popular of these was a display that put a nonfiction title next to a fiction title in which a common event or historical time period is featured. Students were able to see the connection between the Japanese internment camps and a fiction story about a young Japanese boy enduring his confinement. I put a biography of Charles Dickens next to Carmen Deedy’s The Cheshire Cheese Cat to help students make a connection with Deedy’s references to Dickens. The iconic photograph of a black high school student walking to school in the midst of an angry white mob that is on the cover of Little Rock Girl 1957 was placed next to the more quietly decorated cover of the novel Lions of Little Rock (see figure 3). It was not uncommon for both books to be checked out at the same time, and I believe a deeper connection with the fiction title was the result.

The bonus to this approach is that these same students were able to put together much more meaningful search strings when they came into the school library to do research for an assignment.
Looking Ahead

Some administrators, parents, and teachers will always believe that leveling and labeling a school library is a way to help drive students toward appropriate literature. But, if we truly believe that our job is to foster independence so that students can use any library anywhere in the world, then we must teach and support that independence, and we must teach our school community the importance of independent self-selection.

You know the old saying about teaching a man to fish, right? The stories that resonate with each individual are personal and unique; the reading level of those stories is just one factor in a complicated equation. When we are able to set students free to find materials appropriate to their tasks, appropriate to their reading levels, and appropriate to their interests, we are contributing to a wonderful story indeed.

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How Common Core-Aligned Assessments Place Demands on Time, Technology, and Connectivity

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The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) have been thoroughly aligned with existing curriculum, the trade publication support proclaimed, and the outdated test exemplars mildly excoriated. While school librarians were quick to embrace the leadership opportunities implicit in a new set of standards requiring research across the curriculum, the adoption of the CCSS involves complicated assessment components, including testing that will affect hardware, software, and network resources in school libraries.

For many school librarians, the adoption of the CCSS was perfectly captured in Robert Grossman’s 2012 illustration for School Library Journal. In that image, from their listing life raft school librarians eye the Common Core with a spyglass before climbing up the ladder to the “ship” representing the CCSS. Publisher’s Weekly described the Common Core as nothing less than an “extraordinary opportunity” for librarians (Albanese 2013), and Education Week declared that the standards propelled school librarians into a new leadership role (Gewertz 2014).

While it is true that implementation of the CCSS offers many opportunities for school librarians to insert their particular sort of expertise into classroom learning, and—at this precarious moment in our professional practice—might...
have saved some jobs if implemented sooner, the same Common Core expertise that librarians cultivated might result in school librarians' instructional spaces being repurposed as dedicated testing labs.

School librarians and other specialists should take note of the new wave of computer-based assessments required by the standards, testing that is only now beginning to get off the ground. When pressed to identify available resources for systematic assessment involving the provision of certified personnel, networked technology, and space for both formative and summative computer-based assessments, many administrators could turn to the resources housed in their school libraries, resources that can do much more than just assess student mastery.

By signing on with the Common Core State Standards, states agree to implement “common assessments aligned to the core standards” (CCSSO and NGACBP n.d.). As a product of the demand for better assessments, two large multistate testing consortiums—the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium—have taken on the role of creating these “next generation” assessments. Both PARCC and Smarter Balanced were developed using “$360 million in federal grants to develop the tests,” most of which assess end-of-course mastery in curriculum areas “aligned with the Common Core” (Lu 2014). Writing for the Pew Charitable Trust, Adrienne Lu raised the issue of “the long-term viability of the multistate testing groups” given the significant per-student cost of implementing the consortium-created exams (2014).

Brandt Redd, head of the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, said “districts don’t need 1-to-1 programs, but should ensure they have enough computers and devices so groups of 20 to 25 students can test for periods that span eight weeks for high school juniors and span 12 weeks for third- through eighth-graders” (Pascopella 2014). Redd’s class size estimates may be overly modest, as well as his suggestion that hardware would be dedicated to testing only two or three months out of the nine-month school year.

Most testing is being coupled with computerized prep tools that provide formative assessment. For example, in Idaho the director of the curriculum and assessment for the Coeur d’Alene district described the need to give students “the opportunity to take the practice test,” largely so they are familiar with the interface, in addition to assessment-specific tasks like manipulating drag-and-drop items and “rotating items with a mouse” (DeNisco 2014). In most districts, students will take benchmark assessments online throughout the year, “so they are used to taking tests online” (Pascopella 2014).

Online Testing Challenge

The new testing necessitates that districts possess the right hardware, install the requisite software, and, in some cases, create secure dedicated networks. School systems with robust networks reported fewer issues with the new assessments, but “districts less familiar with online testing had a steeper learning curve” (Gewertz 2014). A recent state professional development webinar for school librarians I attended devoted considerable time to warnings about using particular browsers for online testing and acknowledged the school librarian’s role in the testing process throughout the state. An ACT demonstration I attended last fall stressed the use of animation and other resource-intensive elements in computer-based assessments, but most school networks I’ve worked with could not sustain an individual class working on these sorts of bandwidth-intensive online programs, to say nothing of an entire grade attempting it. And while any requirements are a moving target, currently, the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium recommends “Windows 8 OS or newer for tablet, external keyboards, a 1 GHz or faster processor, and 9.5 or larger screen size,” and the ACT is promoting its new testing environments with multimedia elements. The demands of those resources don’t jibe with the capabilities of either the Chromebooks or the iOS devices that so many 1:1 districts provide.

Additionally, in light of Microsoft’s April 2014 abdication of tech support for Windows XP, our state
testing providers first surveyed the districts about their hardware and acknowledged that many schools were simply not going to be able to afford to upgrade. Then the same software company used the logging capability inherent to web-based software to warn schools it discovered were still using the outdated operating system. The capture of the testing platform information is among the most innocuous technological capabilities of these sorts of network-based resources.

Here in Alabama, the ACT Quality Core product has been designated as aligned with our CCSS-based standards. That test demands machines configured with locked-down browsers. Last year was the first year the new assessments were deployed. Since the time frame for computer-based assessment left the classroom teachers more time to cover the material than the schedule for administration of paper tests, computer-based assessment seemed the natural choice when considering when and how to test.

At my campus, the preparation was an all-hands-on-deck experience, with computer technicians borrowing and deploying laptop sets from around the district for the administration of tests to ninth- and tenth-graders. Even the electrical capacity of the physical plant had to be adjusted as it wasn’t initially up to the daisy-chained, makeshift testing labs. The morning of our first attempt at online testing, things quickly ground to a halt as our network couldn’t handle the demands. Fortunately, we were able to rush-order paper-and-pencil versions of the exams.

We learned that we weren’t the only ones who had encountered problems. Breaking news from the first wave of testing in 2013 found that a variety of this generation of computer-based assessment platforms in different states simply did not work as hoped. “In state after state, education officials say the same thing: there have been forgotten passwords, frozen computers, or discrepancies in how browsers handle the test,” reported Libby Nelson (2014). New York’s attempt at Common Core-aligned testing in 2013 proved so disastrous that the State Board of Regents “voted to delay by five years the date by which all high school graduates must pass Common Core-aligned Regents exams” (Baker 2014).

**Dispatches from the Front Lines**

Our school system felt up to the computer-based testing challenge. We have won numerous awards for our 1:1 initiative (launched in 2005) and overall technology integration, and our schools are staffed with five librarians, five aides, and two instructional technologists for about three thousand students. I anticipate that many other school environments will face similar challenges but with fewer resources. The bandwidth required per student for the Smarter Balanced assessment has been described as “less than the size of an average email” (DeNisco 2014). However, practically everyone else in our system is strongly warned against using network resources for the weeks of testing, and most multimedia resources are blocked altogether during test administration—a roadblock for anyone trying to integrate instructional technology. Combine the long weeks of staggered testing with the online formative assessment, and you seem to sound a death knell for any authentic or constructivist computer use. The actual tests are estimated to take between 7.5 and 10 hours per student, spread out over two weeks (DeNisco 2014).

Also, the mandates for these smarter assessments and the technology to support them gets at the lifeblood of any school library program: funding. In Alabama, public school libraries are in our seventh year without designated funding. With grant monies and fundraising, school collections are limping along, and with our excellent state-funded
databases and more content than ever freely available online, some of us are managing to make our library programs work despite the lack of dedicated funding.

But these new realities are not reflected in accreditation systems based on access to print resources or in unfunded mandates related to hardware required for student testing. Given the demands for resources to support the assessment of the new standards, I worry that, without money and materials to make ourselves relevant in the new flipped school culture, which privileges student-paced exposure to content and assessment for mastery over experiential and inquiry-driven work, testing could be the next flashpoint deflecting public school libraries and librarians from their central mission.

Effects on Students

In addition to the reality that resources being used for testing aren’t available to directly support learning, concerned parents and educators have recognized another, bleaker aspect of all these schools nationwide working toward Common Core-aligned tests: the results. In New York state, “the percentage of black students who scored ‘Below Standard’ in third-grade English Language Arts tests rose from 15.5 percent to a shocking 50 percent post-Common Core implementation. In seventh-grade math, black students labeled ‘Below Standard’ jumped from 16.4 percent to a staggering 70 percent” (Cody 2014). The lower scores can be damaging to student morale and carry with them a heavy indictment of established educational systems.

Maintaining student engagement within buggy or sluggish online testing environments can be a challenge in itself. Testing problems can turn off students and could skew results. Some forty percent of students in rural Wells River, Vermont, had to repeat testing on a second consecutive day after technical problems (Gewertz 2014). The format itself puts some students at an additional disadvantage, “particularly those from homes without computers [who] were not prepared for the level of technological savvy the tests demanded” (Gewertz 2014). One principal even suggested students’ test performance actually gauged their “skill in using the device” (Gewertz 2014).

U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan ignited a firestorm last year when he attributed the backlash against the standards to its assessment aspect and said, “white suburban moms who—all of a sudden—their child isn’t as brilliant as they thought they were, and their school isn’t quite as good as they thought they were” (Strauss 2013). Though Duncan quickly apologized, the willingness to impugn the quality of our schools and the level of student achievement remains ominous.
What Lies Ahead

Some twenty-three of the forty-four states that initially adopted the CCSS have now seen legislation to repeal the standards wholesale, delay implementation, or withdraw from aligned testing—efforts that have met with varying degrees of success (Nelson 2014). Nonetheless, some 2.5 million students have participated in the two consortial pilots. “In most states, the testing will begin in 2015. The tests are expected to be widely used for student, teacher and school evaluation in the following years” (DeNisco 2014).

My fear for school librarians in this new age of growth model-based assessment is that the coming attempts at measuring rigor and relevance might leave us fondly remembering the days when Accelerated Reader was decried as a waste of financial and computer resources. Critics of CCSS have publicized Bill Gates’s 2009 remarks to the national Council of State Legislators, in which he linked adoption of CCSS to the establishment of “a large uniform base of customers” for technology corporations (Network for Public Education 2013). My hope is if we do have technology in our libraries, those resources can be used for the sake of learning, not testing.

Wendy Stephens

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Works Cited:


FEATURE

Through the Looking Glass

Examining Technology Integration in School Librarianship

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The school library profession has begun to develop a reputation for tech-savviness. Several school librarians are nationally recognized technology leaders and present at conferences where instructional technology is at the forefront. Others have become Google-certified teachers, developed robust virtual school library repositories, and trained fellow teachers on a laundry list of Web 2.0 tools. Technological proficiency is threaded throughout AASL’s Standards for the 21st-Century Learner, which call for student “mastery of technology tools for accessing information and pursuing inquiry” (2007, 4) so that students are able to use “technology skills to create products that express new understandings” (2007, 5). Although the development of these skills can be addressed directly when school librarians collaborate with classroom teachers (and become responsible for teaching the “techie part”), student technology skill development that impacts their academic achievement is best supported through teacher training and shifts in pedagogical practice and belief—changes school librarians make when they become technology leaders (Kopcha 2010). Melissa P. Johnston explains that “because of their knowledge of pedagogical principles and curriculum, paired with technology and information expertise, school librarians are in a unique position to serve as leaders and valuable assets through making meaningful contributions toward the integration of technology and learning” (2012, 2).

Notice that Johnston lists knowledge of pedagogical principles and curriculum as a key ingredient. Her assertion that the school librarian is a technology leader is clearly supported in the ALA/AASL Standards for the Initial Preparation of School Librarians: “Candidates acknowledge the importance of participating in curriculum development, of engaging in school improvement processes, and of offering professional development to other educators as it relates to library and information use” (AASL 2010). Unfortunately, while we have done a wonderful job of marketing our technological expertise in the professional development we provide, I believe we neglect to develop and emphasize pedagogical principles that should be guiding the technological choices of our teachers, as well as our own.

This concern grew out of two separate but related trends that I see in the world of school librarianship: our blind acceptance and sometimes misuse of technology integration models and the emphasis we place on technology integration versus technology-enabled learning (yes, there is a difference!). These two trends are directly tied to our position as technology leaders. How we approach the place of technology in education and how we visually present this placement to others determine the type of professional development we design and deliver to classroom teachers and determine the type of technology leaders we become.

**Misuse of Technology Integration Models and SAMR**

**What Is SAMR?**

SAMR, which stands for substitution, augmentation, modification, and redefinition, is a technology model developed by Dr. Ruben Puentedura. It is a basic grid that attempts to define different levels of technology tools and their use in the classroom. A graphic of the SAMR model, outlining the definitions of each stage, is available at <http://bit.ly/1kySzs3>.

SAMR is an extremely popular model. A simple Google search results in all kinds of graphics and visuals adapting SAMR in charts and infographics. Ruben Puentedura has presented all over the world, and his presentation slides are commonly shared on Twitter. A day does not go by without a blog post or article that suggests aligning student writing, iPad
lessons, or digital storytelling to SAMR, and I certainly understand its explosive growth. SAMR is clean and simple, which means it can be easily adapted and interpreted in multiple ways. It implies a hierarchy behind tech tool use, giving us a “goal” to shoot for that is quickly explained to an administrator or to a grant evaluator.

**Is SAMR Valid?**

Due in part to SAMR’s popularity, this spring one of my students attempted to write a paper on it. As she worked through the assignment, she struggled to find research and background on the development of the model. The assignment requires that students use peer-reviewed research articles, sources she simply could not locate. Her struggle awakened me to my own blind acceptance of a model that I did not, in all honesty, know much about. Then, I ran across a blog post by Dr. Jonas Linderoth.

Jonas Linderoth, whose PhD is in pedagogy, is an associate professor at the University of Gothenburg in Sweden. In October 2013 he wrote an open letter to Ruben Puentedura, asking pointed questions about the origin of SAMR and Puentedura’s qualifications as an educator and educational researcher. I encourage you to read the letter. (See list of recommended reading.)

In this open letter Linderoth engaged in the process of critically evaluating SAMR and its origins. In fact, his process was quite similar to the evaluative steps we teach our students to take as they investigate websites for accuracy and reliability. (See Kathy Schrock’s “The Five W’s of Web Site Evaluation” in list of recommended reading.)

1. **Who created this model, and is the individual an expert?**
2. **What information is included and how does it differ from other sources?**
3. **When was this model created?**
4. **Where can I find out more about who sponsored this research?**
5. **Why should I use this model?**

Reading through Linderoth’s critical evaluation and the surprising answers he uncovered made me keenly aware that as a school library educator and teacher trainer, I should have been asking these questions all along. I spent years in a school library pushing middle school students to investigate, to question, to never accept at face value information presented in neat packaging, and yet, here I was doing the exact same thing: using and promoting a technology integration model simply because it neatly categorized and packaged tech integration in a visually attractive format.

Conducting my own background research on SAMR proved to be just as challenging for me in 2014 as it was for Linderoth in 2013. Below is the information I was able to track down to answer the five questions listed above.

1. **Who? Qualifications?** Ruben Puentedura has a PhD in chemistry and taught at both Harvard and Bennington College in the 1990s. I was able to locate his name on several institutional documents and news articles concerning his work with physics, chemistry, and multimedia labs. His experience seems to be in managing these labs and in managing technology resources for the hard sciences. I could not locate any evidence of K–12 educational experience or work with K–12 students beyond his presentations through consulting firms.

2. **What info? How is it different?** The SAMR model seems to have come out of Puentedura’s experience but not his research. No peer-reviewed papers on this model have been authored...
and published by Puentedura; he has not published any results of the decade of study he claims to have conducted. To me, this lack is the most worrisome, especially when one compares this paucity to the hundreds of research articles published on the second model I address in this article, TPACK. The closest I came to locating anything resembling SAMR in research was in an article by Joan Hughes in which three functions of technology were identified: a) replacement, b) amplification, or c) transformation (2005, 281). In fact, the explanation and theoretically supported description provided by Hughes is strikingly similar to the SAMR model.

3. When? In the summer of 2003, Puentedura left academia and, in the following blog post, announced the beginnings of his consulting firm: “I decided it was time to try something new. Hence—Hippasus—a consulting company designed to make the best use of the experience I garnered via teaching, administration, and research in the physical, biological, and social sciences, and to bring together some of the most interesting minds I have encountered in those years” (Puentedura 2003).

Again, I was unable to find any publications in educational research journals related to research on SAMR, pedagogy, or technology integration authored by Puentedura, and so I cannot answer question number three. However, keep in mind that the Hughes article was published only a few years later. It is not uncommon for researchers to share their ideas at conferences or workshops even before publication, which means Hughes could have discussed her organization of technology-supported pedagogy as early as 2004. Again, if Puentedura based the SAMR model on the research of others (and I have located no evidence to support or refute this), he did absolutely nothing wrong. What would be disingenuous and misleading would be his promoting this model as the result of his own research and experience, research and experience that we still have no ability to review or confirm.

4. Who sponsored research? Since there is no record of research studies that could document the development and validation of SAMR, it is impossible to know if Harvard sponsored the research on SAMR, if Puentedura began developing SAMR while at Bennington College, or if he simply developed the model as a visual for his lectures and presentations as an educational consultant. I suspect this last assertion may be correct.
5. Why use the model? I encourage you to conduct your own background research on SAMR and answer this question for yourself.

Is It Useful?
All this is not to say that models such as SAMR are completely unusable. Our human brains are wired for categorization, and creating structures that crystallize those categories can be extremely useful. However, applying simplistic models to the development of large-scale technology integration programs, professional developments, and the like without investigating the research and pedagogical beliefs that shape those models is irresponsible and dangerous. Such application flies directly in the face of a profession that emphasizes information-literate behavior: finding, retrieving, analyzing, and using information.

Misuse of Technology Integration Models and TPACK

What Is TPACK?
TPACK, which stands for technological pedagogical content knowledge, is a conceptual framework famously defined by Dr. Punya Mishra and Dr. Matthew Koehler, both from Michigan State University. TPACK represents "teachers' knowledge of how to integrate content knowledge with appropriate pedagogical approaches, including those that use emerging technologies, to enable learners to master the subject matter at hand" (Brantley-Dias and Ertmer 2013, 106).

TPACK is typically demonstrated in the manner shown in figure 1.

What Is TPACK's Purpose?
The TPACK (or, sometimes, "TPCK") framework grew out of Lee S. Schulman's (1986) PCK (pedagogical content knowledge) construct. Schulman originally
shared this framework because he wanted a clear way to explain just how large and specialized teacher knowledge needed to be. In doing so, he hoped to inspire well-deserved respect for professional educators—especially respect in the minds of those who directly impact the field of teacher preparation (researchers, teacher educators, and policy makers). The intention for TPACK was much the same in that it visually organized and categorized labels for thinking about how pre-service and in-service teachers learn to use technology in the classroom (Polly, McGee, and Sullivan 2010). Charles R. Graham, Jered Borup, and Nicolette B. Smith described it as “an analytical lens with which to look at the instructional decisions teachers make” (2012, 3). Much like PCK, the target audience for TPACK comprises educational researchers and teacher educators of pre- and in-service teachers.

How Is TPACK Being Misused? Sadly, the TPACK framework has recently been promoted as a technology integration model. In re-reading the definition and exploring the large body of research on TPACK (over three hundred articles catalogued at tpack.org), it is exceedingly clear that TPACK is a construct for measuring a teacher’s knowledge and capacity to integrate technology in instruction.

Let me be clear: TPACK is not a technology integration model. It is not appropriate for the selection and evaluation of technology tools or mobile apps. TPACK should not be combined with SAMR in a colorful graphic perfect for tweeting out to unsuspecting followers who may not have access to the research that clarifies the correct application of TPACK.

Instead, use this model to design professional development for your teachers. Use it to assess how effective your training was in developing areas of teacher technological pedagogical content knowledge. Several surveys and assessments have been created for this purpose and can be implemented to collect data useful for teacher trainers and district administrators. Even so, be aware that there is much debate about the practicality and realism of TPACK—and whether it is actually possible to measure teacher growth in the overlapping domains of technological pedagogical content knowledge (Archambault and Barnett 2010).

Technology Integration vs. Technology-Enabled Learning

Why Does This Misuse Matter? If the misuse of technological models hurts our ability to be effective technology leaders, then the emphasis we place on technology over pedagogy may negate our influence altogether. Despite the millions of dollars spent by school districts nationwide...
on technology and professional development, teachers still struggle to integrate technology in the classroom. This is because, to do so, teachers need two skill sets aside from a background in and knowledge of the content they are teaching: 1) basic technology skills and comfort with tech tools, and 2) pedagogical practice aligned with meaningful, student-centered learning (Brush and Saye 2009; Kopcha 2010).

At the beginning of this article, I stated that students’ technology skill development that impacts their academic achievement is best supported through teacher training and shifts in pedagogical practice and belief. Why is a shift in teacher pedagogical practice so central to the relationship between students’ use of technology and their academic achievement?

First, a large body of research supports a connection between increased student academic growth and student-centered learning activities such as collaborative information gathering, realistic problem solving, and use of technology to explore and create new representations of knowledge (Kopcha 2010). When technology is integrated into student-centered instruction, the same potential for academic achievement is present (Lei and Zhao 2007).

Second, a common pattern is identified by those who investigate the relationship between what teachers believe about teaching and how they use technology in instruction. Teachers who subscribe to constructivist pedagogy tend to use technology in student-centered activities, while those who are more traditional in their teaching use technology to support teacher-directed activities (Ertmer and Ottenbreit-Leftwich 2010).

Consequently, no matter how much technology training and how many resources we provide, without a corresponding and overarching emphasis on pedagogy, the training and resources have little to no impact on teachers’ technology practice and on the interactions with technology their students experience.

When we refer to SAMR, TPACK, and other visuals to organize technology tools and promote technology integration, we are allowing the tools themselves to determine their own categories. A prime example is seen in figure 2.

How Should We Focus Our Efforts?

Technology tools, whether mobile apps or Web 2.0, offer such a broad range of overlapping characteristics that what determines their taxonomy or classification (even in a basic model such as SAMR) is the way in which these tech tools are used. That means that depending on who is using or integrating a tool in instruction at any particular point in time, the tool may be classified as three or four different things. Additionally, a tool or app may offer all kinds of possibilities, but, if a teacher chooses not to access these features, the technology is then categorically basic. Therefore, becoming effective technology leaders involves shifting the focus of our efforts from promoting technology tools and usage to supporting teachers in designing technology-enabled learning experiences.

While technology integration implies increased and indiscriminate technology use by teachers and students, technology-enabled learning “places the primary emphasis where it needs to be: on the content-based pedagogy of teachers’ lessons followed by a consideration of all the tools teachers might use to implement it, in order to effect student learning” (Brantley-Dias and Ertmer 2013, 120).

If you would like to explore an excellent approach to technology-based learning in visual form, I encourage you to visit the Technology Integration Matrix maintained by Northern Arizona University <www.azk12.org/tim>. This matrix, linked to example lessons and video clips, organizes technology-enabled learning around the characteristics of meaningful...
Final Thoughts

As school librarians, as educators who value and promote information literacy, we are responsible for carefully reviewing and analyzing the resources and information we ourselves use to support our instruction and practice. If we truly aim to become technology leaders who “acknowledge the importance of participating in curriculum development, of engaging in school improvement processes” (AASL 2010), then we must make sure that meaningful learning is at the center of all we do. This commitment means that we support the professional practice of teachers and academic achievement of students not only through our pedagogical and technological expertise but also through our critical examination of the tools, models, and frameworks we use and disseminate to others.

Works Cited:


Recommended Reading:


Lucy Santos

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UPDATES ON EBOOKS

Challenges & Changes

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Introduction
The ebook ecosystem has experienced so many changes recently that we are reminded of an old game from our youth: Fortunately/Unfortunately. Fortunately, many publishers have stopped seeing ebooks as the coming of the Apocalypse; instead, they are seeing that the publishing business survives and, indeed, flourishes. Unfortunately, legal issues related to ebooks make it hard for libraries to manage their ebook collections as easily as they do their print book collections. Fortunately, the different actors in this arena are beginning to work together to standardize some elements of ebook management. Unfortunately, some solutions that work for individuals and larger public library and academic library systems still have not yet migrated to us in the school library world. Fortunately, a sense of balance seems to be returning to libraries, as the idea of blended collections providing resources in a variety of formats is gaining ground. And, fortunately, we are here to look at some of these challenges and opportunities emerging in the world of ebooks.

Publishers and Ebooks

Early Days
When ebooks first came into the marketplace, publishers were initially excited about the ability to sell books to readers while bypassing the complicated and expensive elements of printing, warehousing, and shipping books. It didn’t take long, however, for publishers to see ebooks as a primal threat to their industry. After all, in theory anyway, an ebook never wears out, and after the uproar surrounding Napster and other music-sharing utilities we all saw how easy copying digital files could be.

Libraries were especially threatening to publishers’ business models because of the perception that libraries would be able to buy one copy of a book and circulate it forever without ever buying another copy. At the beginning, publishers joined together in staying out of the library market. As time went on, however, the occasional pioneering publisher would dip its toes into the library ebook waters and find out that safeguards and structures could, indeed, be used to keep chaos at bay. Even better, interested parties eventually discovered that they could get together and work toward creating structures and policies that would benefit everyone.

As an indication of the changes in this volatile area of the library world, let’s look at how publishers made their titles available to libraries as of early 2012. At that time, Simon & Schuster did not sell ebooks to libraries at all, and MacMillan would make only its smaller Palgrave MacMillan imprint of scholarly titles available. While Random House was one of the few to sell ebooks to libraries, this publisher had just announced price increases of as much as 300 percent. HarperCollins was the first to install limits of twenty-six circulations, requiring libraries to repurchase a title once that cap had been reached. Also in 2012 Penguin suddenly terminated its contract with OverDrive, only to start a pilot project with 3M and Baker & Taylor in New York and Brooklyn Public Libraries.

This was a pretty bleak scenario to be sure, although the panicked repositioning of Penguin was balanced in part by the beginnings
of some creative models. While Random House’s price hikes were hard to budget for and HarperCollins’ circulation caps were also problematic, at least these two publishers would sell to libraries.

Current State
Fast forward two years, and let’s see where we are in 2014. Douglas County (CO) Libraries publishes a monthly report comparing prices of ebooks available to libraries and to consumers. As we write this, their current (May 1) report showed great improvement since the days when many publishers would not even sell their products to libraries.

You may have noticed the elephant in this reading room. Most best-selling titles are now becoming available to libraries through OverDrive, Baker & Taylor’s Axis 360, or 3M Cloud Library. Sadly, however, school libraries are among the most underfunded of all libraries; indeed, according to the State of America’s Libraries 2014 report, “Squeezed school budgets and increased emphasis on high test scores have led professionals to recognize that school libraries nationwide are at a critical point” (ALA 2014).

Many school libraries are not able to manage the outlay or ongoing financial commitment required for systems like OverDrive. The 3M system is only now beginning to be widely available for the school library marketplace but may prove to be an attractive alternative. Many other vendors are also providing nonfiction titles to school libraries, but to complete the picture and provide the fiction titles our students need, school librarians have a much smaller group of vendors to choose from, including Follett, Baker & Taylor, and Mackin, among others.

To build a comprehensive fiction, nonfiction, and reference ebook collection, it is necessary to provide access through several vendors, each using a different platform. We hope that continued discussions between publishers, vendors, and advocacy groups will bring solutions to smooth out this crazy quilt of ebook access.
### FIGURE 1. Comparison of ebook vendors’ services.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vendors</th>
<th>Fiction/Nonfiction</th>
<th>Elementary/Middle School/High School E-resources</th>
<th>Number of Digital Titles #</th>
<th>Accessibility*</th>
<th>Single/Multiple/USA (Unlimited Simultaneous Access)</th>
<th>Annual Hosting Fee**</th>
<th>License/Subscribe/PDA (Patron-Driven Acquisition)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Capstone MyOn</td>
<td>Fic/Nonfic</td>
<td>E/MS/HS</td>
<td>7,000+</td>
<td>Text-to-Speech</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Subscribe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>StarWalk KidsMedia</td>
<td>Nonfic</td>
<td>E/MS</td>
<td>500+</td>
<td>Text-to-Speech</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Subscribe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TumbleBook Library and</td>
<td>Fic/Nonfic</td>
<td>E/MS/HS</td>
<td>300 E 700 MS/HS</td>
<td>Text-to-Speech</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Subscribe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TumbleBook Cloud</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baker &amp; Taylor Axis 360</td>
<td>Fic/Nonfic</td>
<td>E/MS/HS</td>
<td>633,000+</td>
<td>Text-to-Speech with the Blio ^ app on Android and iOS devices, &amp; audiobooks</td>
<td>Single/USA</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>License</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3M Cloud Library</td>
<td>Fic/Nonfic</td>
<td>E/MS/HS</td>
<td>300,000+</td>
<td>Text-to-speech on iOS devices &amp; audiobooks</td>
<td>Single/USA</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>License</td>
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<tr>
<td>Follett, FollettShelf</td>
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<td>E/MS/HS</td>
<td>450,000+</td>
<td>Text-to-speech &amp; audiobooks</td>
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<td>Mackin, MackinVIA</td>
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<td>E/MS/HS</td>
<td>300,000+</td>
<td>Text-to-speech &amp; audiobooks</td>
<td>Single/USA</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>License</td>
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<tr>
<td>OverDrive</td>
<td>Fic/Nonfic</td>
<td>E/MS/HS</td>
<td>K-12 1,500,000 including textbooks, study guides, PD, and audio</td>
<td>Text-to-speech depends on the e-reader, audiobooks</td>
<td>Single/USA</td>
<td>Yes—currently waiving fee</td>
<td>Minimum annual amount must be spent on new titles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proquest, ebrary Schools and Educators Complete</td>
<td>Nonfic</td>
<td>MS/HS</td>
<td>11,000+ schools and educators complete access to 440,000 ebrary or EBL titles</td>
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<td>E/MS/HS</td>
<td>600,000+</td>
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<tr>
<td>GALE CENGAGE Learning, Gale Virtual Reference Library</td>
<td>Nonfic</td>
<td>E/MS/HS</td>
<td>10,000+</td>
<td>Text-to-speech</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>JSTOR books</td>
<td>Nonfic</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>25,000+</td>
<td>No text-to-speech but can be read with JAWS^^</td>
<td>Single/USA</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>License/Subscribe/PDA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Accessibility refers to accommodations, such as text-to-speech or audiobooks, for the learning disabled or visually impaired patron.

**Hosting fees are generally minimal, up to $200 at most, except for OverDrive and 3M Cloud, which charge around $1,000 or more depending on the population of the school.

^ Blio e-reader app was honored by the National Federation of the Blind, because of the high-quality text-to-speech component. Axis 360 uses the Blio e-reader app.

^^JAWS (Job Access With Speech) is an accessibility program developed by Freedom Scientific.

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# “Number of Titles” may include material such as study guides, professional development, and public-domain titles that you may not consider vital for your ebook collection. (Numbers as of June 2014)
Designing a School Ebook Collection

The Willows Community School Library (where Cathy is school librarian) has been acquiring a nonfiction ebook collection through the Gale Virtual Reference Library (GVRL) that contains ebooks that are appropriate for different grade levels and can be searched for the research projects assigned in the first- through eighth-grade classes. Students have commented that it is easier to search an ebook platform for information on a topic than to comb through the print books one at a time looking for information. Even so, at present, the GVRL collection does not contain all the titles that a print collection can offer a researcher.

The Willows is also building an ebook collection with Baker & Taylor’s Axis 360. These resources are discoverable through the library’s ILS. The ILS can also manage patron access and circulation of the Axis 360 ebooks. Recently, the Willows school library has started circulating NOOKs and iPads for downloading titles from these collections; circulating e-readers ensures that all students and faculty have equal access to the ebooks for recreational reading or research.

Managing Ebooks in School Libraries

Ebooks are not purchased and owned by a library but are licensed from the vendor, often through long-term license agreements. To work smoothly with libraries, ebook vendors need to provide consistent access, circulation, and licensing models.

One problem school libraries have traditionally encountered was the fact that the library didn’t have control over patron access to ebooks, which is important in schools with a broad range of students. Through a URL built into ebook MARC records the Integrated Library System (ILS) provided direct access to a specific ebook, but patron and circulation management did not exist.

As a solution to these challenges and others, librarians banded together to create ReadersFirst, a coalition of librarians working to improve ebook lending practices. ReadersFirst helped frame the dialogue between libraries, ebook vendors, and ILS companies. The concept that the school library catalog should be used to access and circulate ebooks is becoming a reality. In 2013 ReadersFirst invited ebook vendors and library systems companies to sit down together at the ALA Midwinter Meeting for the first substantial discussions concerning ebooks, access, and libraries. Since then some ILS designers and ebook vendors have been working together to bring the ReadersFirst requirements to fruition. Now, librarians can regulate patron access, item management, and circulation of ebooks in the ILS through SIP2 (Standard Interchange Protocol 2) software developed by 3M. SIP2 integration between the ILS and vendor platform shows promise to be the best solution for the ebook circulation challenge.

In 2013 ReadersFirst collected data from ebook vendors to rate how they were progressing with SIP2 connectivity. A report published in January 2014 rated vendors’ progress in this area. Baker & Taylor’s Axis 360, OverDrive, and 3M Cloud received high marks on integrating technology for their ebook delivery through different ILS systems like Alexandria, Surpass, and SirsiDynix (ReadersFirst 2014). Continued pressure from librarians will help induce other ILS companies to follow suit.

Access

Ebooks can be licensed with various types of access. Publishers of fiction titles tend to use the “one book per patron” model of access. If the book is a popular title, just like with a physical book, the library will have to buy multiple copies to circulate to multiple patrons simultaneously. The most useful—and often the most expensive—access model is unlimited simultaneous access that, in essence, allows the books to circulate without limits because they are always available. The chart in figure 1 compares different vendor platforms and the services they provide.

Ebook Budgets

When choosing ebook vendors, it is important to determine how much of the library budget should be allocated to ebooks each year. Vendors are beginning to offer creative licensing models, such as...
subscriptions for short-term usage and patron-driven acquisition. With patron-driven acquisition, the vendor might offer researchers access to a group of ebooks for free; if certain ebooks are accessed consistently throughout an allotted period of time or a certain pre-set cap of uses is reached, the school can choose to acquire those ebooks for permanent use. In a different model, a short-term subscription allows the school to use an ebook for one project, and then the subscription is terminated. Both of these licensing models can save the school money because the school is not paying for ebooks that the students are not interested in using.

Yearly fees must be factored into the library budget. These fees include hosting fees; using an ebook subscription service like TumbleBook Library, TumbleBook Cloud, StarWalk Kids Media, or OverDrive; choosing to subscribe to ebook bundles through ebrary or EBSCOhost; or paying the fee for popular titles from publishers that require yearly repurchase. Consequently, a school librarian ought to determine if the cost of repurchasing, hosting fees, or resubscribing every year is something that the library can maintain in future years.

Recently, OverDrive has temporarily dropped its hosting fee, but libraries are still required to spend a set annual amount of money to add titles to their OverDrive collections. As librarians create their budgets, thinking of OverDrive as a subscription service—paralleling the ebook vendors that charge a yearly fee to gain access to their entire ebook collections—makes sense. Planners then know how much must be set aside each year to maintain access to their school’s ebook collections. Each of these different licensing models and repurchasing requirements must be considered when establishing a library’s e-resources budget.

Legal and Ethical Considerations

Ebooks bring certain legal and ethical issues simply by reason of their digital nature. Some of these limitations are not found in the world of print. One striking example involves visually impaired students who do not have the same access to e-resources that other students have, in part because of restrictions on ebooks imposed through Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) restrictions.

The DMCA was enacted in 1998 to address concerns that copyright laws originally created in 1976—when the Internet was still being developed—did not adequately protect newly created digital products or the needs of their users. Unfortunately, by fixing one problem Congress created another. Under DMCA, it is illegal to transform a copyrighted digital title, even to create a version adapted for the visually impaired. It is time that Congress reviewed DMCA law as it applies to digital rights management (DRM) on ebooks that are not accessible to the visually impaired.

DRM refers to access technologies that restrict how we use e-resources. George Reid, an attorney at Georgetown Law’s Institute for Public Representation, commented, “If you want to get around the DMCA you must petition the Librarian of Congress for a special exemption to circumvent a class of works, such as e-books” (2013). Every three years this petition to the Librarian of Congress must be renewed to exempt people with disabilities from some DMCA restrictions so that they can access e-resources. The proposition that was passed by the Librarian of Congress in 2012 allows ebooks that do not have a print equivalent and can be read only on e-readers that are not compliant to the needs of the visually impaired to have their DRM removed, so the ebook can be transferred to an accessible e-reader (Reid 2013). (For more about the petitioning process, see <www.copyright.gov/1201/docs/Understanding1201Rulemaking.pdf>.)

We hope that continued discussions between publishers, vendors, and advocacy groups will bring solutions to smooth out this crazy quilt of ebook access.
E-readers and ADA Compliance

School libraries must acquire ebook collections that are accessible to all students and faculty. To address the economic disparity among students, school librarians may choose to circulate e-readers to allow access to e-resources. When choosing to circulate e-readers it is important to understand the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) requirements for e-readers.

ADA compliance requires that libraries provide access to e-readers that students who are learning-disabled, sight-impaired, or hearing-impaired can navigate. At the time of this writing, the only device that fully accommodates students and faculty with these disabilities is the iPad. The iPad’s operating system has built-in accessibility features developed for disabled users.

Nancy Herther, in her article for Information Today, mentioned that Amazon and Barnes & Noble have developed apps that are designed to help blind and visually impaired customers. Right now, the Kindle app is only for iOS devices, but an Android version is in the works. Clara Van Gerven, of the National Federation of the Blind, noted that the Kindle app and the NOOK apps are necessary, but not enough. “Amazon has made a good start,” said Van Gerven (Herther 2013), but the apps still need to be refined, because they work inconsistently; not all ebooks can be easily read with the apps. An app is helpful, but Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and other e-reader manufacturers need to continue working on developing ADA-compliant devices.

Circulating Devices

Another issue of ethical concern arises when devices themselves are circulated. Two webinars produced by ALA TechSource in 2013 discussed circulating e-readers. Both presentations, “Purchasing E-Books for Your Library (ALA TechSource Workshop)” by Sue Polanka and “Copyright, Licensing, and the Law of E-Books” by Mary Minow, affirmed that circulating unloaded devices for the purpose of downloading ebooks from the vendor platform is an ethically acceptable solution for patrons without access to e-readers. Mary Minow considers circulating e-readers to be covered under the Right of First Sale Doctrine (Minow 2013). However, both Sue Polanka and Mary Minow cautioned that choosing to circulate devices pre-loaded with ebooks, such as a Kindle loaded with ebooks from the Amazon store, can be problematic (Polanka 2013).

They also both caution against circulating what amounts to one purchased ebook and five free ebooks. The publishers have an agreement with the commercial ebook vendors (Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Kobo, etc.) that an individual can purchase an ebook and read it on any six devices that the individual owns. The agreement is not for libraries to buy one ebook, load it on six different devices, and circulate those devices to six different people.

There has been much confusion on this point, in large part because Amazon did not originally make a clear distinction between individual customers and libraries, and Amazon’s responses to questions about circulating e-readers have been contradictory. Recently, Amazon’s stance has solidified; Amazon seems to be more clearly identifying two different customer models, that of an individual user and that of a library. Whispercast, Amazon’s tool for managing and distributing Kindle content, limits downloads for library customers to one book per device. As a result, increased clarity on this question may be gained. As it becomes clear what is legally acceptable to vendors like Amazon and publishers, it is important for librarians to model ethical behavior and follow the rules.
The 21st-Century Library: A Blended Collection

The exemplary school library of the twenty-first century will be a carefully crafted blend of the best format, content, and delivery systems to support each school’s program. While making sure we provide the best resources to support our curricula, we also need to be sure our students are able to access those resources in the most productive way possible. This obligation means providing access to whole collections of reference and fiction ebooks so that students can access materials while away from the library. It also means continuing to provide these resources in print as well. A recent report on ebooks notes “it’s not unusual to hear that many children, tweens, and teens still prefer reading physical print books, even as they do countless other things on electronic devices” (Library Journal 2013, 3).

Some studies show print reading can allow for better understanding. A recent post on EdWeek’s Digital Education blog sums up: “The early data raise some concerns and should prompt educators, policymakers, and publishers to reconsider assumptions that the skills students use to read print materials automatically transfer to the reading of digital materials” (Herold 2014). Even so, while students might often prefer to read a print resource, they also appreciate the convenience of being able to access materials from home and when other copies are checked out. Digital format also allows for efficient keyword searching through sources.

Add to these advantages the fact that print books, under the Right of First Sale doctrine, are easily managed, purchased, lent, weeded, or given away. Electronic books are governed by an entirely different set of laws, based mostly on the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA), which says, in a nutshell, that you don’t buy an ebook; rather, you purchase a license to access that ebook. Very strict controls govern how you might transfer an ebook that you legally own from one device to another, even in the pursuit of perfectly legal processes.

A recent Wired article stated the issue clearly. After exploring the differences in reading comprehension between print and digital resources and positing some reasons for these differences, Brandon Keim suggested, “Maybe it’s time to start thinking of paper and screens another way: not as an old technology and its inevitable replacement, but as different and complementary interfaces, each stimulating particular modes of thinking” (2014).

Just as there are limitations to the usefulness of print books, so, too, are there limitations to the usefulness of electronic books. Therefore, it makes a great deal of sense to provide our students with the best of both worlds. A blended collection is the real future of the school library. The most effective schools are those offering students access to the resources they need. Indeed, the most successful schools will provide the resources students need, in all the formats they can effectively use.

Looking Ahead

We are fortunate, indeed, to live in such exciting times. With changes to the ebook ecosystem coming along at lightning speed, it is important to stay as informed as possible to keep abreast of developments. Fortunately, many of these developments are improvements to the way school libraries can make ebooks available to students. Unfortunately, we school librarians must keep an eagle eye on the industry to make sure unforeseen changes don’t slip into practice without notice. But fortunately, finally, we are looking at a much more settled ebook landscape, one that is finally open to embracing the world of school libraries.

WHEN CHOOSING TO CIRCULATE E-READERS it is important to understand the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) requirements for e-readers.

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Works Cited:


Resources:

3M Cloud Library <http://3m-ssd.implex.net/cloudapps/index.html>
Baker & Taylor, Axis 360 <http://btol.com/axis360>
Capstone MyOn <http://thefutureinreading.myon.com>
EBSCO and EBSCOhost <www.ebscohost.com/ebooks>
Follett, FollettShelf <www.aboutfollettbooks.com/follettshelf.cfm>
GALE CENGAGE Learning, Gale Virtual Reference Library (GVRL) <www.gale.cengage.com/servlet/GvrlMS?msg=ma>
JSTOR books <http://books.jstor.org>
Mackin, MackinVIA <www.mackin.com/corp/via/via.html>
OverDrive <http://company.overdrive.com/education/k-12-schools>
ReadersFirst <http://readersfirst.org>
StarwalkKids Media <http://starwalkkids.com>
TumbleBook Library and TumbleBook Cloud <www.tumblebooks.com>
FEATURE

UNDERCURRENTS

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Knowledge Quest  |  Trends and Foundations: A Closer Look
We hear stories about the glory days of school librarianship, when the Big6 information literacy process gave many librarians a desired research structure, school librarians were envisioned as instructional partners, and Carol Kuhlthau’s work mapping emotions to phases of research helped us see our struggling young researchers with empathy and understanding. We remember hearing and experiencing the rush of pleasure that came when school librarians, teachers, and administrators joyfully planned cross-curricular learning events that mashed up flair, fun, and learning. We remember when, if we were patient with the dial-up connection, the world would appear on screen without the help of Readers’ Guide to Periodical Literature. And later, we recall our excitement when Web 2.0 tools like wikis and podcasting put our students’ voices online. Possibility abounded.

Since Information Power was released in 1998, our profession has thrilled to the vision that we could be not only partners but leaders in children’s education. We’ve heard that ”good librarians” convince their faculty and principals to adopt flexible scheduling and convert dull worksheets to rich inquiry projects. We are shown the work of “talented” librarians—and are sometimes pointed to ourselves—as the ones who ”get it right.” So-and-so has a bigger budget! A large-screen TV to display announcements! A broadcast studio! An aide! Oh, if only we were good enough, we’d have those things, too. Yet in spite of what other professionals praised us for—transparency, innovation, pedagogy, or program advocacy—we both lost staff after doing it “right.”

It’s a dirty little secret we don’t like to talk about with our out-loud voices: in many schools, the vision is not unfolding. (In some—particularly in well-funded and/or independent schools—the bar continues to be raised.) We hear and see an undercurrent to our public professional narrative, a silent but steady divide between what should happen and what does happen.

Increasingly, rich collaborative planning is the exception, not the rule. Many library collaborations, when they do occur, happen in minutes over faculty mailboxes or when passing in the hall: “Can I bring my class down for biography...
So what does it mean to be a good school librarian today?

booktalking after lunch?” Those neatly stacked collaboration planning worksheets? There just isn’t time to use them.

Think about the flexible-versus fixed-schedule debate. Despite almost thirty years of promotion of flexible scheduling as a strategy for richer instructional outcomes, most American elementary school libraries remain on fixed schedules. (Ironically, this reality saved many colleagues’ jobs during the recession.) Flexible scheduling works, but it wouldn’t be doable if every teacher bought in. What makes a flexible schedule successful is…gulp…having some teachers who opt out, making room in the schedule for those who volunteer. Wait. That wasn’t what we intended.

School librarians as building leaders? Too often, our colleagues hear, “Well sure. You could take on the School Improvement Plan, fix the printer jams, update the webpage, or organize the data in-service.” But as for leading through information literacy (or its less glamorous cousin, research)? Leading through our collection? Occasionally.

Inquiry learning? This one is particularly difficult to face, as it has been such a cornerstone in our practice. School librarians often hear, “Sure, you can squeeze that in when I bring the kids down for that fifteen-minute database demo, right?” In spite of our best efforts, many teachers are not convinced they can do inquiry-driven work with their students.

The threat of evaluations tied to standardized test scores looms large on many teachers’ radar at all times, and some educators don’t feel comfortable sharing ownership of their classroom with anyone else.

But what about the Common Core State Standards? They have research and information literacy skills interwoven throughout them. They even use information science words like *credibility*. And those skills are going to be *tested!* In their own section of the test! Finally, we will be at the center of learning via the what-gets-taught-gets-tested trope. Yet each month we paw through mainstream educational journals looking for themes and cover stories about the research performance tasks. Alas, in the tsunami of informational text, building arguments, and text complexity, research isn’t urgent yet. And besides, with all those iPad carts, digital natives can find information whenever and wherever! (Somehow, the scaffolding via worksheets, graphic organizers, and discussion that is necessary in classroom settings seems to disappear when “digital natives” go online.)

And what about that satisfying belief that we are master teachers? In some states, you must be a teacher before you can begin library school. In others, becoming a school librarian means becoming a teacher simultaneously. Some in our profession are deeply skilled educators who can talk and walk discipline-specific pedagogy with ease. But is master teaching a systemic part of our professional training for all or a happy accident for some? Is master teaching an essential component of school library practice? If not, how do school librarians who thrive in and value the role of instructional partner find satisfaction when teaching and learning aren’t the centerpiece of their programs or role?

Sometimes, when we meet other school librarians, we offer up a heretical idea to help them around a thorny challenge. “What if you shifted perspective and saw your fixed schedule as an effective way to reach every kid?” “What if you did agree to teach a standalone class on research?” “What if you stopped trying to partner with every teacher?” The responses we hear don’t resolve our (or their) uncertainty: “I can’t do that—they told me in grad school never to say ‘yes’ to that,” or, “Well, I do that, but I’d never tell anyone because we’re not supposed to do it that way.” There’s a tacit code of conduct that we don’t dare violate.

So what does it mean to be a good school librarian today? Here are some questions that tug at us in the undertow.

1) What does it mean to be great?

Popular wisdom says that you can be an outstanding teacher without having the support of a great school librarian. Can a school librarian be truly great without excellent faculty who want to work with you? Can you be a great librarian if you don’t have a collaborative school culture? Where do the lines blur between instructional coach/partner/consultant and school librarian? What if you cannot convince a faculty to adopt extended inquiry projects in lieu of cut-and-paste? Is partnering with every teacher such a priority that we do it even if
much of the work is quite shallow. Does being a “good” librarian mean working within existing culture? Or are you expected to change it?

2) Does anyone really understand data? We’ve all sat in faculty meetings where we’re told to use data to drive instruction. Does anybody understand how those data were collected? What hidden biases or errors may have led to erroneous results? Can everyone confidently distinguish percentage from percentile? Do we know how to interpret the data we’re given as teachers, much less how to guide our students in interpreting the reams of data being fed to them in charts, tables, and infographics? What are the collective perils of not knowing?

3) Speaking of data, what are the metrics—qualitative and quantitative—that define quality school librarianship? We know that circulation statistics aren’t enough, but do we have a collective sense of what is? Who defines this quality? How does local context—e.g., local politics and morality or large numbers of students with disabilities or poverty-related challenges—inform that criteria? Do we hold a solo librarian in an inner-city school with no book budget to the same standard as a team of librarians at a well-funded, upper middle-class high school?

4) Are we setting ourselves up to fail? When we hold up individual librarians as the model for all or offer a single pathway to quality school librarianship (such as flexible schedule, having an aide, having a book budget of a certain size, or de-Deweying), are we accidentally setting up unreasonable expectations for the overall profession? What might the cost be of flying our profession’s flags so high that no one can reach them?

5) What do librarians do that classroom teachers cannot? Kristin was once asked this question by the powers—that-be, and it was followed up with, “But don’t say research, because the teachers do that.” Well…yes and no. We know that very few teachers receive pedagogical training or guidance on research skills and strategies in their teacher education programs. We know teachers’ perspectives change about us and about their students when they see better research practices unfolding. Yet this remains our invisible skill, muted now by anytime, anywhere Internet access. We used to say we had collections we groomed, but now there are classroom collections. Authentic texts, reading aloud to kids, looking up stuff, writing, technology…it’s all in the classroom now. We call ourselves specialists, but the world is increasingly “satisficing”: being satisfied with what is “good enough” (“Guru: Herbert Simon” 2009). What is the consequence if we cannot say—or cannot be heard—about what makes us different?

We (and by we, we mean both “Buffy and Kristin” and “the school library profession”) don’t thrive on conflict. But it seems that it’s time for those quiet confessionalists to be discussed more openly. School librarianship is at a critical juncture. Increasingly, schools can no longer fund comprehensive instructional programs. More and more public schools are being converted to librarianless charters. We must ask if the dreams that began with Information Power can still be achieved. Is our job to face reality and adapt, subjugate, or thwart it? Or to continue to push a boulder up a steep, resistant hill, strong in our convictions but exhausting ourselves with the Sisyphean effort?
Who Authors the Rural Narrative?

I grew up in a small Virginian town in the Great Appalachian Valley. My childhood memories are bound by blue mountains full of tall stories with complex characters and themes of family and community. The place narrative I read rested on oak leaves, the banks of the Shenandoah, and in the storied hollows of my youth. Folks there would say: “We don’t have a lot, but we have what we need.” That was certainly true for my family. In fact, it wasn’t until I left to be a first-generation college student that I became acutely aware of the stuff I did or didn’t have. For example, I didn’t have a credit card or Advanced Placement credits—just a few ways in which I lacked real or figurative capital. What I did have, however, was a southern accent. That was news to me! In my community, I spoke like everyone else, so in no way had I been othered until I said “polecat” or “greazy” and heard in response, “Where are you from?” (a question I would field for years). But, before I ever answered, assumptions were being made about where I was from and who or what I was: a redneck or hick, white trash or hillbilly. Despite the roundness of my upbringing, I had been reduced to a flat, static stereotype.

This is an all too common experience for rural people who fall into an enduring American narrative as either “barbarians or paragons of the pioneer spirit” (Donehower, Hogg, and Schell 2007, 39), allowing for pejoratives and negative stereotypes to persist in our social consciousness despite a climate of public correctness. In stories, it seems that rural people have become caricatures ranging from American Gothic to Davy Crockett to the Clampetts spilling out of a 1920s flatbed. Likewise, the media have predicated their stories of rural people and places on fallacies and misconstructions. From Al Capp’s popular comic strip Li’l Abner to Deliverance, there are countless examples of the hillbilly stereotype with Appalachians (and rural people in general) depicted as barbaric, uneducated rubes. Two decades of Jeff Foxworthy jokes aside, lately the problem seems more prevalent as evidenced by a host of reality TV shows, such as CMT’s My Big Redneck Wedding, Animal Planet’s Hillbilly Handfishin’, A&E’s American Hoggers, and others on what NPR recently called “Redneck TV,” recognizing that “these series feed an odd sort of racial stereotype” (Deggans 2011). Even a recent DirecTV commercial featured a white man in khakis being held captive by what the voiceover calls “crazy hillbillies”—complete with men who have rotted teeth, goats in the house, and a pregnant woman cooking at the stove. How is it okay to air such a stereotyped version of rural poverty?
The question then becomes: Who author these rural narratives? Do the stories in the public mind capture adequately the experiences of rural people and places? And, if not, how do we offer counter—narratives that resist these pervasive and unreliable stories? Without positive or critical narratives, we re—inscribe a deficit perspective in thinking about rurality. Therefore, we must teach students to think critically about place. School libraries are an ideal setting to disrupt these unchallenged stereotypes, inviting students to use a critical pedagogy of place to read and construct authentic rural narratives that honor the complexities of rural people and places.

The Neglected Rural
In 2003 the National Writing Project argued that writing, education’s second “R,” was neglected in schooling and called for a “writing revolution.” Here, I argue that rural is the neglected “R” in culturally relevant pedagogy. Culturally relevant pedagogy, informed by the work of Gloria Ladson-Billings and other change agents in education, advocates for student—forward teaching, inviting students’ cultural strengths into the classroom. John Dewey (2004) called for a similar philosophy and said that schooling should “deepen and extend the values” students bring from home into the classroom. And to serve as a scaffold to make meaning of the “decontextualized stuff” of schooling, Paul Theobald (1997) suggests using “place” and place—conscious instruction.

School libraries offer students and teachers a unique opportunity to consider place and rurality.

These pedagogies—whether they are called culturally relevant or place—based—challenge the “banking model” of education, famously criticized by Paulo Freire (1970). Yet, in conversations about and deconstructing rural content within broader contexts—presents opportunities to teach critical literacy skills to readers. These conflated ideals become what Chris Emdin (2014) has called “reality pedagogy.” Though Emdin is known as an urban scholar, his call for teachers to know and teach from student realities is an ideal stance for the rural classroom.

A critical stance toward rurality is vital for the sustainability of rural communities, and the onus is not on just rural educators and students but on society at large. If we consider society’s role in any group marginalized by poverty or geography or by a historical shunning and societal disregard, then a mainstream collective must work to amend that marginality. Beyond stereotypes and pejorative slurs, sustainability issues like mountaintop removal and fracking have huge implications for rural communities, but these issues are nonetheless national and international energy, environmental, and economic concerns.

Finally, some have challenged the feasibility or practicality of being both “critical” and “place—based,” but such pedagogy can and should be done. Yes, we need to disrupt ill—conceived, historical stereotypes about rurality, but we also must not adopt wholesale Pollyanna views of rural places; “thus, there is a tension between reinforcing negative caricatures of rural life and relying on more comfortable, but equally inaccurate fantasies or childhood memories” (Eppley 2010, 6).
Neither the barbarian nor the paragon of the pioneer spirit is necessarily a fitting image of rurality, and an affinity for rural places does not mean we ignore the contextual realities of students coming from geographically disparate or economically disadvantaged communities or shrug our shoulders at policies that re-inscribe institutional “placism” (Jimerson 2005). But just as culturally relevant pedagogy offers a critical lens for students, so can a place-based one.

Making Space for Place

While many educators intuit how to use place-based pedagogy to engage readers, few can justify using what they may perceive as “creative” strategies to motivate students, especially in an era of high-stakes tests and time-consuming focus on Common Core State Standards. Therefore, school libraries offer students and teachers a unique opportunity to consider place and rurality. Not only can school library programs create a physical space for considering these topics, they can provide scaffolds for more complex, canonical texts, to forge meaningful connections with the curriculum, and to have students think critically about the ways rural people and places are depicted in popular media.

What follows are some ideas to make space for a place-focused micro-collection in school libraries. The physical space would allow students to explore and consider PLACE: Poetry, Literature, Adolescent or young adult (YA) literature, and Community and Engagement. Students can read related place texts that ask critical questions about rural places, their own place, and the relationship of both to a global context. Ideally, teachers can deepen place connections to the content. In the humanities, what can place texts teach us about history, society, and literature? In the STEM disciplines, how can we use our local community to bring greater relevance to math and science classes? Creating a space for this work in our school libraries will serve to make more visible the neglected rural.

Poetry of Place

"Where are you from?" is an interesting question and a great one to ask students when thinking about place. “Where I’m From,” a poem by rural Kentucky native George Ella Lyon <www.georgeellalyon.com/where.html>, provides a perfect entry point inviting students to consider their own sense of place. School librarians can create an area for place poetry, including works by Lyon, Wendell Berry, Frank X Walker, Ted Kooser, and others who write not only about rural experiences but also introduce students to think about places they too are from.

Critical Questions:
- Where am I from?
- What does it mean to be from this place?
- How does my place shape who I am or how I see the world?
- How do others perceive people from my place?

Literature with Rural Themes

Several canonical texts that students read in school have rural settings or themes. However, rarely do we ask students to tune in to how rurality is being depicted and if it’s a critical interpretation of rural people and places. For example, *The Great Gatsby* is a staple of the American literature curriculum. As a former high school English teacher, I taught the text many times and had my students consider the social commentary Fitzgerald was making about money, socialites, and the New York City of the Roaring 20s. However, the central character, Jay Gatsby, was from a farm and had been “othered” by his place in the world. While he aspired to higher social status, he was reminded by Tom Buchanan that no amount of money would ever make them equal. This contrast between rural and nonrural (or urban and nonurban) could provide students with an opportunity to discuss the access residents have in rural communities.

Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird* is another canonical example of a text with rural themes. Another foundational text of the language arts curriculum, the novel is often used to discuss racial tensions during the Jim Crow era and the Civil Rights Movement. However, it also provides a complex view of rurality, one that addresses small...
town politics and differentiates between rural typologies: Atticus Finch as the rural hero, of course, but Sheriff Heck Tate and Link Deas (boss of the accused Tom Robinson) provide a more complicated understanding of what it meant to question their own sense of place and prejudice, while Bob Ewell represents rural poverty and stereotyped ignorance. Through a rural or place-based lens, the novel provides an opportunity for students to ask enduring questions not only about what it means to live in rural communities but how novels, like Harper Lee’s, leave a lasting image of rurality in the minds of readers. Other novels for consideration include Of Mice and Men, Grapes of Wrath, and Things Fall Apart.

**Critical Questions:**
- How are rural communities depicted in literature?
- Who are the characters I identify with in these novels?
- How do these representations define rural people in a broader context?
- How are these images similar to or different from the ones on TV?

**Adolescent or YA Texts**

Apart from "school reading," students are often engaged with other texts, including young adult fiction, nonfiction, and popular culture “texts” (music, television, favorite website or blog, and so on). The school library can make use of these texts to further students’ thinking of place and rurality. The Hunger Games series by Suzanne Collins, for example, presents an ideal opportunity to feature a rural protagonist. Students can question the Capitol, consider why hunger is used to oppress, examine the absurdity of a dystopian society, and study the protagonist, Katniss Everdeen, who volunteers as a tribute for the hunger games. Katniss hails from District 12, a region of Appalachia, and learned at a young age to hunt and live off the land. Despite challenges in rural communities, residents often speak about a richness of community with nearby family and generations of stories and traditions. This rural lifeworld contextualizes students’ experiences and creates a place identity for them, a lens through which they come to know and understand their worlds. Katniss knows this rural lifeworld. She grew up in a tight-knit community with intimate knowledge of the natural world and a unique understanding of norms and expectations. Her sense of place is her greatest strength.

Wee Free Men series, and the Fablehaven series.

For younger audiences, include place-themed picture books about rural life. In an analysis of how picture books depict rural America, Karen Eppley found representations of rural areas as expendable, and of rural people as self-reliant, connected, happy, diverse, and as “other.” Eppley has suggested that these representations offer students an opportunity to think critically about the ways we picture rural life and stated, “Together, children and adults can analyze the variety of discourses around rural life offered in the texts, consider their own acceptance or refusal of the messages, and begin to explore the political consequences of the representations” (2010, 6). Among others, she includes in her discussion Auction!, Prairie Town, Old Henry, Junk Pile!, The Relatives Came, and Letting Swift River Go.

**Critical Questions:**
- How are rural communities represented?
- What are the choices for young people in rural communities?
- How much access do students in rural or small towns have to urban amenities?
- How are adolescents privileged or limited by their place?
Community and Engagement

Include community texts in the library’s PLACE collection. These texts can include local newspapers, historical documents, and other relevant works. Here, students have the opportunity to read and ask questions about the stories in their community. Who authored these stories? What is the history of my place? What is happening in my place that has implications for other places (e.g., coal mining)? Which decisions, policies, and practices made about my place have implications for my community?

Ultimately, we want students to become critically engaged with their community. They can author their own place stories that can then be featured in community texts. Students can identify community challenges and develop place-based projects to respond to those challenges.

Critical Questions:
- What does it mean to be part of the collective consciousness of my place?
- What does it mean to be a citizen here?
- What are the issues, assets, and challenges facing my community?
- How do I engage with my place?
- Am I an agent of change?
- What questions do I need to explore to become critically engaged now and in the future?

Conclusion

The rural story in America is a complicated one, but one I have found to be limited in its portrayal of real people in real places. In a study examining the use of place in a rural English classroom (see Azano 2011), I found that a critical lens was a necessary component of place-based instruction. Teachers who employ a place-based lens in the classroom should do so while simultaneously challenging students with critical questions that help to develop a more nuanced understanding of rural life. While we certainly want to affirm a student’s sense of place, we also want to challenge young people to think critically about the spaces that serve to shape their place identities.

Rurality is rarely considered or oftentimes completely neglected in conversations about culturally relevant pedagogy. Yet, without a relevant curriculum, students both in and out of rural communities are left with dominant and deficiently positioned narratives about rural people. We must provide counter and critical narratives for student readers to consider their own sense of place. School libraries are an ideal setting to create a space for PLACE so that students can learn to question those enduring images and author their own, authentic place narratives.

Amy Price Azano, PhD, is an assistant professor of Adolescent Literacy in the School of Education at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Virginia. In 2014, she coauthored “Understanding the Experiences of Gifted Education Teachers and Fidelity of Implementation in Rural Schools” in the Journal of Advanced Academics and “You Have No Idea Where I’m From: Community, Culture, and Critical Literacy in an Intensive Writing Course” in the Journal of Teaching Writing. She also contributed “Gifted Rural Students” in Critical Issues in Gifted Education: What the Research Says and “The CLEAR Curriculum Model” in Fundamentals of Gifted Education. She has two forthcoming books: a picture book about autism and an academic text about place-based pedagogy. To learn more about Amy, visit <www.amyazano.com>.

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Every two years in the fall a dedicated, forward-thinking, and, frankly, good-looking group of leaders come together to spend time in a focused, deep discussion on a topic central to the current school library landscape. This year’s gathering, the 2014 AASL Fall Forum, October 17 and 18, is shaping up to take this focused, deep discussion to new levels in content and geographic coverage. Over the past year, a thoughtful committee of AASL members has been working closely with AASL staff to produce an event that will inform, inspire, and excite participants to define, discuss, and learn more about school librarians in the anytime, anywhere learning landscape. Let’s take a look at what anytime, anywhere learning means, what the committee has in store for participants, and how easy it is to be a part of the action in the 2014 AASL Fall Forum—even if you don’t have a big travel budget.

**What We’ll Talk about and Do**

The concept of anytime, anywhere learning has many names and related concepts, including blended learning, online learning, distance
education, digital learning, extended learning, just-in-time learning, 24/7 learning, and more. School librarians have been pioneers in taking learning outside of brick-and-mortar classrooms for decades. We are local experts on the intersections between curriculum and our collections and other reliable information resources. This year’s Fall Forum gives us a chance to get together and establish definitions as a community of engaged learners of the landscapes we are navigating. Taking time to establish this common ground allows us to best position our school library programs as leading partners in all anytime, anywhere learning ventures. We will spend time during the Fall Forum learning more about the resources and tools available to meet the needs of anytime, anywhere learners and, in the process, develop action plans for our home library spaces.

Librarians’ Roles Will Frame the Discussion

When the committee thought about school librarians in the anytime, anywhere learning landscape, three main roles were mentioned repeatedly: the school librarian as leader, innovator, and partner. These three roles will serve as frames for our ongoing discussion throughout the Fall Forum.

• The school librarian as leader session will be led by author and former AASL President Ann Martin together with Kathleen Roberts, a building-level school librarian. This section promises to be an active, fruitful discussion to remind us of our natural leadership abilities and how they manifest themselves in the anytime, anywhere learning landscape.

• The school librarian as innovator section, coordinated by committee member and school librarian Craig Seasholes, features the venerable David Loertscher leading all sites in a blended learning exercise to highlight those succeeding in the landscape and their strategies and secrets.

• The school librarian as partner section may prove to resonate in unique ways as we hear from a successful partnership of a school administrator, technology specialist, classroom teacher, and school librarian about proven ways to cultivate partnerships to guarantee commitment to student and faculty success in blending learning endeavors.

These sections are sure to keep participants thoughtfully engaged while gathering plans and ideas for immediate implementation after the Fall Forum.

DAVID WARLICK WILL INSPIRE US

Any successful deep discussion needs strong, thought-provoking facilitators to spark conversation. This year’s keynote speaker and primary facilitator David Warlick recognizes the unique position that school librarians occupy at the center of any successful anytime, anywhere learning landscape.

David’s background is informed by years as a classroom teacher, school administrator, and entrepreneur—roles that resonate with school librarians. At this point in David’s successful career as an author and speaker, he is extremely selective in what invitations he accepts. He is excited to spend time with hundreds of school librarians as we prepare to more fully serve our students and colleagues in anytime, anywhere learning environments. David will offer a keynote conversation-starter on Friday and offer closing remarks on Saturday after being present for both days of conversation and learning.
Event Itself Is Anytime, Anywhere

Following so much talk about anytime, anywhere learning, it is only logical that we make the Fall Forum an anytime, anywhere learning environment all its own! The main site, where the primary facilitators will be located, is the Hilton St. Louis Frontenac in St. Louis, Missouri. All of the action on the podium in St. Louis will be broadcast to nine satellite sites across the country, allowing more AASL members the chance to engage in smaller, regional communities of learning. Each satellite site will have a site facilitator to lead breakout sessions and coordinate other needs throughout the Fall Forum.

SATELLITE SITES

- Montgomery, Alabama (Alabama State University with project manager Naomi Caldwell)
- Atlanta, Georgia (Lovett School with project manager Robyn Martin)
- Johnston, Iowa (Heartland AEA II with project manager Susan Schrader)
- Greensboro, North Carolina (University of North Carolina at Greensboro with project manager Rebecca Morris)
- Houston, Texas (University of Houston-Clear Lake/Clear Creek Independent School District with project managers Roberta Raymond, Jane Claes, and Ty Burns)
- Mercedes, Texas (South Texas Independent School District with project manager Ann Vickman)
- Richardson, Texas (Region 10 Education Service Center with project manager Terry Roper)
- Norfolk, Virginia (Old Dominion University with project manager Sue Kimmel)
- Vancouver, Washington (Bates Center for Educational Leadership with project manager Craig Seasholes)
Satellite site attendees will have the chance to participate in real time with the St. Louis broadcast location while having the added richness of conversations with local site attendees during breaks. Everyone involved will have multiple opportunities to make valuable connections.

AASL also plans on making some of the content from the Fall Forum available via eCOLLAB. Stay tuned for more details!

Registration and Logistics
If you are not already registered, take time to visit <www.ala.org/aasl/conferences/fall-forum/registration> today!

AASL members receive the best rates if they register before September 17. This great value is not for AASL members alone, though! AASL members are encouraged to add an administrator, technology/curriculum specialist, or AASL student member from their home school or community for a reduced Member PLUS rate. The Fall Forum committee advocated for this registration option to encourage collaborative work partners to be able to participate in the thoughtful planning for the anytime, anywhere learning landscapes that are alive in each AASL member’s home community. While ALA members and nonmembers are also encouraged to attend, AASL members receive the best rates!

Conference registration includes a handbook of materials, two chances to hear David Warlick, facilitated sessions with school librarian leaders like Ann Martin and Kathleen Roberts, and two breaks with refreshments on Friday and two meals on Saturday—all while networking and expanding your personal learning network with fellow attendees. Do not let the opportunity to participate in this important discussion pass you by—get a group together within your school, district, or state and register today!

Steven D. Yates is an instructor and communications/distance education coordinator for the University of Alabama School of Library and Information Studies. He is an AASL member-at-large, chair of AASL’s 2014 Fall Forum Committee, and a past president of the Alabama Library Association.
3-D printing creates physical items or objects from digital data. This type of printing starts with an electronic file and turns it into a physical item through the use of a 3-D printer, making the imagined real—or, at least, real via built-up layers of plastic (Kaur 2012). Multiple 3-D printer brands are available, but the most popular among schools and libraries is the MakerBot Replicator 2, mainly because of its ease of use, size, and overall print capabilities. If you wonder what 3-D printers can do, the answer is just about anything. If a student, librarian, or teacher can design it, the 3-D printer can make it. The printer may be limited by size or scale, but 3-D printers allow users to print the physical world that surrounds us (Kaur 2012). 3-D printers can play a large role in the lives of our students’ research and education by creating models of thoughts and ideas as well as supporting invention (Kurt and Colegrove 2012). In this Technology Quest column I focus on two educators, an art teacher and a middle/high school librarian, who have recently introduced 3-D printers into their learning spaces.

Ashley Sullivan: Art Teacher, Reidsville Middle School, Reidsville, NC

Ashley Sullivan received her MakerBot in December 2013, and already, as I write this in May 2014, the students are mesmerized by it. If it weren’t for all of the snow days this year students would be using the printer much more, but the bad weather has interrupted design time. Not to worry, she has lots of plans for this technology in her art class. Using mostly Tinkercad and Thingiverse, MakerBot’s design and download sites, Ashley’s students have already made some fun designs using the 3-D printer. At this time they have created key chains, nametags, and other designs such as small houses. In the future she plans to have students create Chinese calligraphy seals in an Asian art lesson, as well as stop-motion puppets similar to those seen in the movies ParaNorman and Coraline, which were inspirations for her 3-D printer project and grant.

Ashley got her 3-D printer using DonorsChoose.org funds, specifically with backing from the NASCAR Foundation. DonorsChoose.org is a site where educators from across the United States can request funds for their
classrooms and donors can choose the projects they wish to support. In 2013 MakerBot partnered with DonorsChoose.org to create opportunities to place 3-D printers in schools.

Sarah Justice: Librarian, Rosman Middle and High School, Rosman, NC

Sarah Justice received her MakerBot in February 2014. She took it out of the box, hooked it up, and it was ready to go. In her school library she is in the process of creating a makerspace with a sewing machine, large-screen television, old typewriter, and more. The 3-D printer will be a part of this new learning space, but at the moment this technology is on a rolling cart near a plug for easy access. Like Ashley, Sarah got her MakerBot with DonorsChoose.org funds, and, as she told me in our interview, “The students are absolutely amazed by it.”

In the short time that she has had the printer, Sarah has already collaborated with the art teacher in doing a steampunk sculpture project. She worked with her peer educator and pulled literature and made a display and a bulletin board about the project. She printed gears and steampunk-style goggles along with windup keys and other items relating to that genre. She also had the opportunity to help a student prepare for the prom. When a student was designing a bow tie for his tux he decided he wanted to use glow-in-the-dark filament (raw material used by the printer). Sarah ordered some, but when it arrived she found the hole in the spool was too small for the current filament spool holder. Using her new 3-D printing design skills, she went online, found a smaller spool holder, printed it, and hung the spool.

Figure 1. Examples of items “printed” in the Rosman school library.

Sarah got her MakerBot with DonorsChoose.org funds, and, as she told me in our interview, “The students are absolutely amazed by it.”
The durability of the output of this type of printing has come a long way, and its accessibility and price have become much more manageable.

She is planning a Teen Tech Week and will open the school library for makerspace projects using the 3-D printer. As part of her tech focus, she also plans an area for reading magazines on recently received Kindles. Other projects are in the works to be featured during this special tech-based week.

Why Implement This Technology?

When I asked these two educators why they decided to use this technology in their libraries they both had very interesting responses. Ashley Sullivan said, “Because it gets kids thinking about technology and their future. And I think it gets them excited about design.” When I posed the same query to Sarah Justice she shared this response:

“It’s what our kids need. The idea of the traditional library and the books—and basically that’s it—is going out. Another thing, and it’s a little bit more selfish, our school has gone 1:1 with netbooks; we are almost three years into that. Ever since that happened the library has become very quiet because I don’t have anything that they don’t have in their classrooms, then I can start bringing them back.

Challenges

While both these school librarians have had early success with their printers, there can always be challenges to implementing new technologies in a classroom or library. Neither of these librarians had any training with a 3-D printer. Bringing a 3-D printer into a school library or classroom takes a sense of adventure and a spirit of exploration. For advice and information, both used social media, YouTube, and their peers in the field. For instance, in her school system Sarah Justice had a peer teacher who had received a MakerBot earlier in the school year and was, therefore, a local source of useful information.

Other challenges can include issues of funding for items such as space and 3-D printing filament. Once the printer has been received, the printing filament may last a while. However, just like toner for a laser printer, the filament supply eventually runs out and more must be purchased. A challenge for Ashley Sullivan was getting access to computers. Reidsville Middle School has a shared computer lab and a rolling cart of Chromebooks, but her students have no full-time access to computers on which to design. Training, funding, and lack of technology infrastructure can also be challenges when working with this new and exciting type of printer.

New Technology

While 3-D printing may be new(ish) to us, it has been in existence for close to ten years; the first 3-D outputs were held together with cornstarch and glue, similar to Play-Doh modeling compound. The durability of the output of this type of printing has come a long way, and its accessibility and price have become much more manageable. Its existence in a classroom or school library speaks loudly to patrons and students about “the [library program’s] continuing support of combining new with traditional technologies in support of the depth of learning that could not otherwise be obtained” (Kurt and Colegrove 2012).

When considering 3-D printing, realize this may or may not be a type of technology appropriate for your library, students, or teachers. As with all technology integration, instructional value and where the innovation can fit into your teaching should be the factors guiding your decision.

Heather Moorefield-Lang is an assistant professor for the School of Library and Information Science at the University of South Carolina. She is the chair of the AASL Best Websites for Teaching and Learning Committee. The focus of her research is technology in libraries and schools with a current emphasis on 3-D printers and makerspaces in libraries. To learn more about her work, follow her on Twitter @actingintheLib.

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Along with showing students a variety of information sources, we must teach them why it is important to evaluate the quality of sources and information—and how.

Revisiting the Common Beliefs

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AASL’s Standards for the 21st-Century Learner were published seven years ago. The standards document contains enduring common beliefs that remain the foundation of school library programs nationwide. We invite you to take a few minutes to reflect on how your school library program embodies these beliefs and whether the program has kept pace with the evolution of students’ information environment.

When the common beliefs were introduced, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and other similar state standards had not yet been developed. Today, states have either adopted the CCSS or other standards that require rigor, research, communication, and technology skills across content areas. All emphasize college and workplace readiness.

It is time to revisit these common beliefs to learn how to continually develop and enrich your library program in light of the adoption of the CCSS. (The common beliefs are listed in the sidebar. The numbers in the headings below identify the relevant common beliefs.)

How do you promote reading and support it for all members of your community? (1)

Seneca High School in Tabernacle, New Jersey, has used a One Book/One School program for the last three years. The entire school community reads one book during the summer.

Year-long activities foster students’ connections to the world around them, build a strong school culture of literacy, and successfully infuse a love of reading in students and staff.

How are you providing your school community with an open window to the world of reading?

Do your students use questioning skills to develop solutions to real-world problems? (2)

Throughout Seneca’s One Book/One School program, students are challenged to question and problem solve. Students process information, draw conclusions, and strategize on how to use information from the book.
How are you challenging your students and staff to question the world around them and find answers in literary and informational texts?

**Do your students respect other’s creative work? (3)**

With all types of information available at our fingertips, it is extremely easy to copy, paste, and download. When educators at Clearview Middle School in Mullica Hill, New Jersey, recognized that most students were not concerned with the origin of information, a learning objective was developed to address the ethical use of information. A science teacher and school librarian provided a copyright refresher and introduced the concepts of fair use, public domain, and Creative Commons. The LibGuide created included links to help students use information responsibly.

Are you and your students discussing intellectual property?

**What real-life situations are you incorporating into your teaching? (4)**

In an Association of American Colleges and Universities survey, most responding employers cited critical-thinking, communication, and problem-solving skills as crucial (Hart 2013). Knowing how to use basic word processing, spreadsheet, and presentation applications are important, but the most essential skills are critical thinking and problem solving. Along with showing students a variety of information sources, we must teach them why it is important to evaluate the quality of sources and information—and how.

While you weave communication skills into teaching, do you emphasize the importance of online etiquette and the security of personal information?

Of evaluating the relevance and authority of online sources?

**Is the concept of equitable access in education a key component of education at your school? (5)**

"Access to Library Resources and Services Regardless of Sex, Gender Identity, or Sexual Orientation: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights" (ALA 2004) points to our unique roles: promoter of intellectual freedom, overseer of a point of voluntary access to information and ideas, facilitator of a learning laboratory where students acquire critical-thinking and problem-solving skills, and developer of collections that meet the developmental and maturity levels of all students and support intellectual growth, personal development, individual interests, and recreational needs.

Does your library program provide students with adaptable and cutting-edge technology devices and resources?

**Does your school library program actively promote development of information literacy skills? (6)**

With the amount of available information growing, information literacy skills continue to be essential skills for our students. No matter what type of information students are searching for, they need the skills to find information, evaluate that information, and effectively use it.

How do you reinforce and expand these essential skills students will need throughout their lives?

**COMMON BELIEFS**

(AASL 2007, 2–3).

1 Reading is a window to the world.
2 Inquiry provides a framework for learning.
3 Ethical behavior in the use of information must be taught.
4 Technology skills are crucial for future employment needs.
5 Equitable access is a key component for education.
6 The definition of information literacy has become more complex as resources and technologies have changed.
7 The continuing expansion of information demands that all individuals acquire the thinking skills that will enable them to learn on their own.
8 Learning has a social context.
9 School libraries are essential to the development of learning skills.

**Has your library program evolved to help students learn to handle the information explosion? (7)**

In 2010 the International Data Corporation determined that the amount of digital information created and replicated worldwide was nearly 1.203 exabytes (a billion gigabytes) and predicted that this number will double every two years (EMC 2014). By 2012 Edd Dumbill defined “big data” as
"data that exceeds the processing capacity of conventional database systems. It’s too large, moves too fast, or doesn’t fit the strictures of database architectures" (2012). Dumbill recently stated, "the ability to experiment has become an imperative for today’s companies who wish to play a part in tomorrow’s market" (2014).

David Loertscher, Carol Koechlin, and Sandi Zwaan have challenged school librarians to take a leadership role by working with technology teachers to turn school libraries and computer labs into a learning commons: a flexible, collegial, and social environment that ignites the desire to learn and experiment. There, students "learn how to learn" through assignments that require deep understandings and critical thinking. Students create new knowledge through collaborations—face-to-face, virtual, or a combination—as learners develop strong communication skills. Makerspaces provide areas to create. Classroom teachers, special-area teachers including the school librarian and technology teacher, and other educational specialists become involved in designing assignments and providing support for all students across the school curriculum and continually address the skills, dispositions, responsibilities, and self-assessment strategies found in AASL’s Standards for the 21st-Century Learner.

Is your library becoming a learning commons?

Does your students’ learning have a social context? (8)

Today, businesses require communication, collaboration, and integration among departments and find that this cooperation greatly shortens the time required to complete projects. In addition, the explosion of mobile devices enables every business to be in direct contact with their customers. Twenty-first-century students must be prepared to participate in this business environment.

Do you fully use collaborative groups and encourage student learning networks? Require appropriate use of communications?
Does your library program give students the challenge, freedom, and time to be risk-takers and deep thinkers as they learn and pursue personal interests? (9)

Findings of more than sixty impact studies conclude that schools with a well-equipped library staffed by a full-time certified librarian contribute significantly to increased student learning. School librarians must take a leadership role in the implementation of the Common Core State Standards and other state standards. These standards call for students to use strategic and extended thinking, which are the higher levels in Norman L. Webb’s analysis of depth-of-knowledge levels (2002).

AASL’s Standards for the 21st-Century Learner include the dispositions, responsibilities, and self-assessment strategies needed to develop these skills. Loertscher, Koechlin, and Zwaan see knowledge building as the focus of a learning commons program. The AASL Essential Links pages “Makerspaces” and “Library as Learning Commons” (http://aasl.ala.org/essentiallinks/index.php?title=Main_Page) provide a knowledge-building center for transforming your school library.

How are you providing a safe but challenging environment that supports student learning in your building?
I can think of teenagers who spent countless lunch hours in the school library because the cafeteria was too much of a social minefield. Inside the stacks they found a life beyond high school. They might have entered the library to hide out but left it having a world opened to them.

A couple of years ago I moved from Mt. Kisco, New York, to the Chapel Hill area of North Carolina. At the time, the Chapel Hill Public Library was located in a shopping mall while a new library building was being constructed. At first, I didn’t know the library location was temporary. I just thought, “What a great place; the malls here have libraries in them!” It seemed like a smart way to attract people who might not otherwise visit a library—people waiting for family members to finish shopping and parents with limited time. I loved the idea that someone might enter a mall with the intention of buying stuff but leave with library books. The books of the Chapel Hill Public Library are now at home in a magnificent new building, but I was a little sad to see them leave the University Mall.

A New York City zoning ordinance states that every oversized skyscraper must provide some sort of public space. Likewise, I think every new proposal for a shopping mall should include some type of library. Of course this is not going to happen. And really, I’m always suspicious when I hear plans about a public–private partnership. Every vulnerable tax-based institution plagued by the forces of privatization should be championed and free from the restraints of corporate sponsorship. So my “every mall with a library” idea would need some serious ground rules—rules that would keep the library autonomous. I want my government to prop up...
the valuable things that have little (or no) market value. I believe in taxpayer support for parks and libraries—the wide open spaces and small, quiet places necessary for mental health. Central Park, for example, works as a pressure-relief valve for the city, providing elbowroom for hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers. It’s a vacation spot for those with no opportunity to take a vacation. Like Central Park, libraries function as places to let off steam (albeit quietly).

I can think of teenagers who spent countless lunch hours in the school library because the cafeteria was too much of a social minefield. Inside the stacks they found a life beyond high school. They might have entered the library to hide out but left it having a world opened to them. They could have spent the hour reading *The Iliad* or *Scrapbooking Made Easy*; it doesn’t matter. That’s the beauty of the library.

Recently, I was talking with my husband about high school. He recounted that in the tenth grade he sometimes cut school and took the city bus to Baltimore’s Enoch Pratt Free Library, and he has no memory of a librarian speaking to him. The benign neglect.

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*I believe in taxpayer support for parks and libraries—the wide open spaces and small, quiet places necessary for mental health.*
intentional or not, was liberating. He was left alone to wander, listen to records, and read. The library confirmed his suspicion that there was more to be discovered just below the surface of things. To this day he loves exploring the library for the accidental find—the books he didn’t even know he wanted and the out-of-print books that can’t be found at Barnes and Noble. It was at the library, not his vocational high school, that he learned to love reading.

Sarah Vowell, in her 2008 column “Bringing Pell Grants to My Eyes,” has called her liberal arts education "a trap door to a bottomless pit of beauty." This seems like a fitting metaphor for finding a great novel. One minute you’re walking along minding your own business, then wham, the floorboards open below you. I confess that I watch a lot of TV, but when I stumble into a book I love, the experience feels like something magical.

Reading starts as something we’re doing but can change into something being done to us. Just think of the words we use when we talk about great writing. It takes hold of us. It pulls us in and carries us away. In her essay “On Rapture” Nora Ephron has compared getting sucked into a good book with the rapture of the deep—the disorientation that happens when deep-sea divers spend too much time at the bottom of the ocean (2008). In a time when we are encouraged to live our lives on the surface (and sell our Facebook personalities as some kind of brand), a library is still somewhere to dive down deep and lose ourselves.