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When students look around their schools and libraries, they need to see their diversity, their intersectionality, and the richness of their potential stories — in print and online.

Creating Space for Agency — pg 8
Welcome to another fantastic issue of Knowledge Quest! I think it is fitting that “Beyond the Horizon” is the theme of the issue that hosts my first presidential column as we cast our eyes toward the future. “Beyond the Horizon” is also the theme of AASL’s 2017 National Conference and Exhibition, challenging us to be the professionals our students and communities need. I look forward to seeing many of you in Phoenix this November at the conference where the latest standards for learners, school libraries, and our profession will be released. Before we head to Phoenix, though, I have to ask—is your school library a time capsule or a time traveler?

Picture it. A school library forty years in the future. I am delighted to admit that I have no clue what to picture when I think about school libraries forty years from now! Gazing into a crystal ball can be a puzzling task in today’s rapidly evolving school library landscape, so let’s all be thankful that future-casting exciting innovations possible in 2057 is not a required task on our annual checklists.

While my vision may be foggy in the forty-year range, my view of the next ten years is clearly in focus. My insight comes from being a part of the one national organization committed to making sure school libraries remain vibrant centers for learning as they inspire students to explore the world while developing critical-thinking and information-literacy skills.

AASL’s new National School Library Standards, scheduled to debut at the conference, provide a research-based roadmap for school libraries for the next ten years. While education, technology, and all areas of library services continue to evolve, we are united in our path forward to serve our students, schools, and communities by continuing to strengthen literacy instruction and connect those we serve with the resources they seek.

Forging Partnerships and Collaborations

This issue of Knowledge Quest is full of features and articles by inspiring school librarians and instructional partners who are committed to continued success for school libraries. The voices we hear from

While I firmly believe every school library is unique because every community is unique, the school librarians who bring school libraries to life are united by a number of common traits.
in this issue provide strategies for school libraries to travel through time, meeting the needs of our communities. While I firmly believe every school library is unique because every community is unique, the school librarians who bring school libraries to life are united by a number of common traits. We strive to make sure our students and, in turn, members of our communities are literate and prepared to critically think about the messages they encounter through print and digital media. We find and share diverse resources to best prepare our students to comprehend the rich array of voices in an increasingly smaller world. And, most exciting of all to me, we constantly seek to forge lasting instructional partnerships with colleagues in our buildings, our communities, and across the world to set an example for those around us on the power of collaboration.

Collaboration is a boon for all parties involved. Many school librarians are attracted to our field to share their love of reading. Typically, as school librarians we serve as standard bearers for reading, friendly but relentless promoters of reading, and enthusiastic readers’ advisory gurus. In these roles, our impact is amplified when we collaborate with classroom teachers, community members, and authors near and far as we facilitate opportunities for our students to interact with the world around them. AASL experienced the power of collaboration when advocacy efforts led to the inclusion of effective school libraries as important elements for learning as defined in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Librarians of all persuasions across ALA raised their voices for school libraries, and I want AASL to tap into that energy for exciting future collaborations. With our fresh national standards in mind, there is no time like the present to reach out and forge thoughtful new partnerships across our buildings, cities, states, and country, as well as within the larger library profession.

My presidential initiative focuses on looking beyond the horizon of our fantastic organization to make connections across the divisions and roundtables of ALA to celebrate our new standards while starting conversations on ways our national standards can positively impact the future of school libraries for decades to come by means of fruitful and lasting partnerships. Look on the KQ blog for more information about my initiative and feel free to share—via e-mail or Twitter @heylibraraman—your partnership success stories and ideas for future collaborations.

Now, back to picturing a school library forty years from now. If you pictured any part of your current school library, then I encourage you to think again. We are not in the business of managing time capsules! Effective school libraries meet the needs of students where they are. Let’s use AASL’s National School Library Standards to match today’s students with the best resources and practices as we prepare tomorrow’s citizens!

Steven Yates is an assistant professor at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa. In 2017 he received the Lois Henderson Presidential Award from the Alabama School Library Association. With Karen Chapman, he coauthored the article “The Impact of Monographs Crisis on the Field of Communication” in the May 2017 issue of the Journal of Academic Librarianship.

With our fresh national standards in mind, there is no time like the present to reach out and forge thoughtful new partnerships across our buildings, cities, states, and country, as well as within the larger library profession.
Many of our daily conversations with friends, family, and colleagues involve astonishment at how quickly the world changes day to day. When I (Lucy) see an advertisement for the thirty-year anniversary of *Princess Bride*, for example, or answer my daughter’s questions about what it was like to grow up in the eighties and nineties, it hits me that our present reality looks nothing like what I imagined as a college student or even as a young classroom teacher. As Susan and I brainstormed for this issue, we concluded that school librarians seem to experience these feelings and changes in hyperspeed. Not only do we swivel, adapt, morph, add on new skills, rebrand—we attempt to do so ahead of the curve. We futurecast during our present program implementation. The upcoming AASL National Conference theme “Beyond the Horizon” is an apt descriptor for the way school librarians scan the educational landscape, what they are looking for, what they are moving toward.

Ryan Lee, a U.S. Air Force service member, typically begins his futurecasting process by “compiling sources from various fields (technical data, economic trends, historical facts, expert opinions, social and cultural data, and so on) on the topic of interest” (2016, 94). When Susan and I discussed this *KQ* issue, it became clear we needed Lee’s approach: “Beyond the Horizon” had to mean more than the technology and the digital shift taking place in school libraries. It had to include a collection of data points on student access, equity, literacy, media bias, and more.

For this issue we worked to compile information on the multiple perspectives and challenges our profession will face five, ten, and fifteen years down the road. We spoke with school librarians, parents and teachers, and media bias and adolescent literacy experts. The features presented here invite you to futurecast by exploring varied perspectives and conversations. Use these data points and sources to determine how your program will move forward. How do these ideas color your view of the profession beyond the 2018 horizon?

It is not enough to keep abreast of current issues, trends, technological innovations, and the ever-changing educational landscape in which we work. We must keep abreast of these innovations while remembering that there are foundational beliefs about what we do as school librarians and why we do these things. These foundational beliefs and underlying truths will endure in spite of rapid change in the world around us, and should always inform how we move forward as a profession. In this issue we asked our writers to think about what libraries must do to remain relevant, while becoming the indispensable educational spaces Doug Johnson described back in 1997.

Rachel Altobelli, a 2015–2016 Lilead Fellow and current director of library services and instructional materials, Albuquerque Public Schools, calls for us to step outside of our privilege and our comfort zones to ensure we are providing a truly inclusive and culturally responsive library collection and experience for our students. Her
perspective on how we can build library programs that address the needs of ALL our patrons is unique and enlightening.

Dr. Renee Hobbs, professor at the Harrington School of Communication and Media at the University of Rhode Island, writes about using conspiracy theories and fake news as engaging raw materials when we teach students to assess sources for their credibility. Students rely heavily on digital information sources and are exposed daily to ubiquitous social media outlets where anyone can present as an expert. Dr. Hobbs asks us to face conspiracy theories and misinformation sources head on with our students rather than dismissing these theories and sources outright.

Dr. Dustin Dooly, a classroom teacher and mother of a transracial family in Fort Smith, Arkansas, challenges school librarians to develop programs that help students to live multidimensional lives, recognizing perspectives, perceptions, and experiences beyond their own lived realities. She advocates explicitly for teaching and modeling how to build relationships and, thus, develop empathy. She recognizes that people—including students—tend to focus on media stories about people like themselves and discusses ways to help students break out of this habit. She also reminds us of the importance of recognizing our own implicit biases and how they could affect our teaching and delivery of services to some students.

Dr. Phillip Wilder, assistant professor of Adolescent Literacy at Clemson University, argues passionately for the recognition of literacy as a social and cultural practice. He points out that the more narrow our definition of literacy, the more students we inadvertently ostracize. Dr. Wilder’s article describes how we can broaden our approach to literacy development by using texts beyond print as tools for literate thinking. Both Dr. Dooly’s and Dr. Wilder’s features serve as calls for our profession to look beyond the tools and the resources, as well as our own preconceived notions, to deliver a more culturally responsive and inclusive program in which our students and patrons find themselves honored and represented.

Finally, James Allen, a K–12 school librarian in Eminence, Kentucky, describes what is possible in a school library that changes gradually and organically to meet the evolving needs of its user population. His use of corporate staples such as genius hour and passion projects along with a community-centered and service-minded approach to school librarianship will inspire you! What he has been able to accomplish in a tiny corner of Kentucky should remind us all of what can be accomplished if we look past the barriers and think in terms of the possible.

We encourage you to delve into these features and the other resources available in this issue of KQ. We invite you to consider and wrestle with the ideas and challenges issued by this group of authors, so that you can craft a vision for your school library program for 2017, 2027, and beyond.

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Susan Grigsby is the interim teacher–librarian at the United World College of Southeast Asia in Singapore K–12 school libraries. She is a member of AASL and currently serves on the Knowledge Quest Editorial Board and AASL Leadership Development Committee. She is also the professional development chair and past president for the Georgia Library Media Association. She was named a Lilead Fellow for 2015–2016. She is the author of the forthcoming article “Take the Lead” in School Library Journal. She curates articles of interest to school librarians at K–12 School Libraries, available at <www.scoop.it/t/k-12-school-libraries>. Reach out to her on Twitter at @sksgrigsby.

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CREATING SPACE FOR AGENCY

Representing LGBTQ Perspectives in the Library Helps Future-Ready Students Chart Their Own Paths
Future-ready students must be creative, self-directed critical thinkers, conversant with both technology and collaboration (Alliance for Excellent Education 2015). For students to achieve these desirable heights, they need to feel a sense of agency. The importance of student agency has been discussed in this publication, with Philip Williams’s telling us that "embracing the value of individual uniqueness inevitably requires an appreciation for diversity in individuality within a classroom and is of central significance in every learning context" (2017, 10).

Sometimes, though, the diversity we should honor and support is hard to see—especially for elementary school librarians. It’s easy to imagine no gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or questioning (LGBTQ) students are at a given school, and, therefore, no need exists to court controversy and potential challenges by providing LGBTQ materials. LGBTQ students are everywhere, though, and they are at increased risk for a host of issues, including bullying, assault, and suicide. According to the CDC, while most LGBTQ students lead happy lives, and supportive schools are an important factor for their success, “some LGBTQ youth are more likely than their heterosexual peers to experience difficulties in their lives and school environments, such as violence” (2017).

I never experienced violence, but I did spend many years feeling like there was something wrong with me. I didn’t know it was possible to be a happy, successful lesbian, and so I refused to admit, even to myself, that I was gay. I had difficult times, but it should be noted: I am a white middle-class woman with a Master’s degree. My parents have graduate degrees. I am cisgender and have the kind of haircut and wardrobe that reads as straight to most people. I benefit from these characteristics every day. I grew up reading books with characters who looked like me, and watching TV shows and movies and commercials with actors who looked like me. I am very privileged, even if I did not grow up seeing people of my gender occupying half of all positions of power and authority, or see gay or lesbian characters on TV, or find books in my school libraries that had characters who were gay or lesbian. I wish I had, because despite all the sheltering societal privilege I grew up with, I still went through some unhappy years. I loved to read, but I never felt safe or at home in any of my school libraries. When I looked inside the books on the shelves, I wasn’t really there.

Visibility and Student Agency

Agency is a key ingredient in helping students navigate an increasingly digitized world, but agency does not spring from a vacuum. It grows from a solid sense that you are real and present and valued. Only then are students prepared to create their own futures, ready to shift and change as traditional labor markets morph into as yet unimagined employment opportunities. Our students will be the multifaceted innovators and

A student who feels invisible will not, in most cases, be a student who feels the kind of agency school librarians are trying to bolster. LGBTQ students are hardly the only ones to feel underrepresented and alone, and it’s important for school libraries to support every student. The strategies and mindsets used to support LGBTQ students can and should be used to help support all students.
creators of the future; the role of the library is to help them realize this potential, which means all students need to see themselves in the school library.

A student who feels invisible will not, in most cases, be a student who feels the kind of agency school librarians are trying to bolster. LGBTQ students are hardly the only ones to feel underrepresented and alone, and it’s important for school libraries to support every student. The strategies and mindsets used to support LGBTQ students can and should be used to help support all students.

Supporting students in their journey to reach their full potential in the digital arena does not consist solely of providing digital resources and instruction. The analog world informs the digital, and vice versa, and no one is better placed than the school librarian to help students find their balance between the two. When students look around their schools and libraries, they need to see their diversity, their intersectionality, and the richness of their personal stories—in print and online.

**Supporting All Students through Collection Development**

School librarians are well placed to support and advocate for all students; our profession calls for us to collect and curate materials in the most wide-ranging fashion possible and to fight for access to information for all. We buy materials that resonate with our personal experiences and beliefs and those that do not. We buy science fiction even if we don’t read it, and crocheting books even if we only knit. Our Code of Ethics calls us to “uphold the principles of intellectual freedom and resist all efforts to censor library resources” (ALA 2008).

When you consider the fact that many LGBTQ students may not be out to their parents or other adults in their lives, the need for school support—for all students—becomes even more important. The 2015 GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian, & Straight Education Network) report points out that fewer than half of all students surveyed could “find books or information on LGBT-related topics, such as LGBT history, in their school library” or could access LGBT-related information on school computers (Kosciw et al. 2016). All students need libraries with books, resources, and stories that mirror who students are and who they might become. They need stories that reflect their passions, interests, and struggles, and those of their classmates, and those of people they have never met.

Technology can help us achieve these lofty collection-development goals and expand our students’ horizons in new and exciting ways, but technology can also overwhelm and confuse. The Internet can have a dark side for anyone, but some students may be more vulnerable, especially when navigating our complex technological world. The same 2015 GLSEN report found in their most recent National
School Climate Survey that while 27 percent of LGBTQ students were harassed in the physical world because of their sexual orientation and 20.3 percent because of their gender expression, 48.6 percent of LGBTQ students experienced harassment in the digital world (Kosciw et al. 2016).

In our large urban school district with a diverse student population, my department has always encouraged school librarians to build diverse, current, and high-quality collections, taking advantage of both new and traditional technologies, formats, and approaches. Building a high-quality library collection is an intensely personal endeavor, requiring librarians to think deeply about themselves and their library communities. My work as a school district library supervisor involves a great deal of encouraging diversity of all types, but two years ago it took a more-personal turn.

At our annual August in-service day, I was presenting a session on diversity in collection development, talking about the many resources available to help diversify our collections. It was easy to talk about resources such as the many lists and resources consolidated on the We Need Diverse Books website <http://weneeddiversebooks.org/where-to-find-diverse-books>.

...I know from personal experience that many LGBTQ people are fully aware of their identities as children.
It was much harder to talk to librarians I’ve known for years about my experience as a (profoundly!) closeted student, and what it would have meant to me to see a book in any of my school libraries that reflected my most-hidden hopes and fears. As I prepared my presentation, I worried about the limits of my perspective—after all, not only can I obviously not speak for all LGBTQ students and former students, but I’m also privileged and monolingual, so I couldn’t speak from personal experience about any other kind of diversity—but there were still things I wanted to share, including the need for LGBTQ materials at all levels, including elementary. Barbara Fiehn and Tadayuki Suzuki’s *School Library Journal* article on this topic revealed the sad fact that in 2013 the authors could find “few books containing LGBTQ characters for students in grades 3–5.” This dearth may be because of a fear of challenges, or, more benignly, from the belief that elementary school students are too young to have any kind of sexual orientation. This belief never seems to prevent the many versions of *Goldilocks*, featuring a heterosexual family of bears, from finding a place on elementary school library shelves but has caused many problems for *And Tango Makes Three* (Simon & Schuster 2005), a book about gay penguins who adopt a chick. It also isn’t true; I know from personal experience that many LGBTQ people are fully aware of their identities as children (my wife and about half of our non-straight friends), and many others, while not consciously aware, do know that something is different (myself and the other half).

**Moving beyond Representation**

Representation is important, and Safe Zones signs matter, but there is much to be done beyond buying books and placing them on the shelves—or behind the circulation desk, available only with parent permission, which a frightened questioning child is unlikely to ask for, especially in conservative environments. While it’s important to have coming out stories, it’s equally important (if not more so) to have books with LGBTQ characters doing other things. Lauren Barack, writing in *School Library Journal*, stated that teens and tweens “want to see more genres featuring LGBTQ students as characters, even if gender orientation isn’t the main plot point” (2014). After all, coming out is—we hope—not the main or only event in an LGBTQ person’s life. Personally, I have spent more time playing soccer, pulling weeds, and reading books about teenage vampires than coming out.

Beyond acquiring a wonderful rainbow of diverse LGBTQ materials, how we present information and resources also matters. If I had walked into my middle school or high school library and seen all the LGBTQ-themed books shelved together, perhaps with a helpful rainbow sign, I would have walked right out of that library and never returned. My wife, on the other hand, would have felt supported and validated, and believes she might have made an exception to her personal policy (since rescinded) of never visiting the library or reading any of the books contained therein. I’m sure there were books she would have enjoyed, but she didn’t see the library as a place that welcomed her.

All librarians build collections beyond the confines of their personal experiences and up to the limits of what publishers make available. Sometimes no perfect resource is available, which is why we have to keep searching and continue to ask publishers for the materials we and our students deserve. We need to find the best books available and pressure publishers to make diverse stories available to us. However, while we wait, technology and the Internet can aid in the curation of a diverse and wide-ranging library collection and program. If a book or an article that covers what a student is looking for isn’t available, there might be a community member willing to speak to students. Guest speakers unable to make a trip to your school may be willing to Skype in for a question-and-answer session.
Using Technology with Care

Technology can also help us answer our own questions. If you or your teachers are unsure about pronoun usage with transgender students, useful resources abound on the Web. A quick online search of “transgender etiquette” produces a list of websites answering pronoun and name questions. Two places to start might be GSLEN’s guide for trans allies, downloadable at <www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/be%20an%20ally_0.pdf>, and GLAAD’s Tips for Allies of Transgender People, viewable at <www.glaad.org/transgender/allies>. Of course, this profusion of information, especially when surrounding potentially sensitive topics, must be rigorously evaluated. Who else—if not the school librarian—will teach students (and fellow educators) how to make such evaluations?

Digital tools and spaces give our students access to worlds of information but also create the potential for great harm. A questioning student may be more comfortable checking out Queer: The Ultimate LGBT Guide for Teens (Zest 2011) as an e-book instead of marching up to the circulation desk in front of classmates with the book (complete with rainbow letters) in hand. On the other hand, the technologies theoretically used to keep students safe may cause them emotional harm. Even after the ACLU’s 2011 “Don’t Filter Me” campaign, which resulted in many filtering companies changing their parameters (ACLU n.d.), the filters in many districts, including mine, are still far from perfect.

For example, in my school district <rainbowweddingnetwork.com> is blocked—as “adult/pornography” no less—but <theknot.com> is not. This filtering could lead LGBTQ students imagining their future wedding to feel that their love is dirty, shameful, and forbidden, while straight students see their future weddings as beautiful and loving occasions on which to spend a great deal of money, as long as they are thin, white, and fond of engagement photo shoots. Filtering can be a fraught and difficult subject, but it’s likely that no one except you, the librarian, has the skills, experience, and professional judgment to speak up in cases when filters are creating a biased information environment for students.

Standing up against filters can be hard, especially in conservative environments, but it is also likely that students in schools and districts with the most resistance to unblocking LGBTQ sites—or to buying Will Grayson, Will Grayson (Dutton 2009) or 10,000 Dresses (Seven Stories Press 2008)—are the students who most desperately need support. The temptation to avoid controversy can be strong, especially when budgets are limited and job security feels shaky at best. In 2009 Deborah Lau Whelan argued against “soft” self-censorship, noting that gay-themed books, including picture books and other books with no sexual content whatsoever, were an area of potential censorship. These students may be and remain invisible to you, but they are there, and a book on the shelf or an unblocked website has the potential to make all the difference in the world.

Library as Safe Space

School libraries have a hallowed role as safe spaces, especially for potentially marginalized student populations. Students who don’t feel like they fit—for whatever reason—can find a place in the school library. What’s more, school librarians can help students extend the safe space of the physical library into finding safe places online, merging the traditional with the techy and helping students navigate their digital and non-digital worlds. Future-
ready students need the capacity to live comfortably in both, after all. Vulnerable students, including LGBTQ students, especially need support when navigating the online world. If LGBTQ students are not out to their parents or other adults in their lives, they are less likely to tell their grownups what they are looking at (or who they are talking to) online. The Web can be a wonderful, affirming resource for students trying to figure out their identities, but if they lack strong information- and media-literacy skills, they can also put themselves in danger. Information-literacy instruction for all students might save a student—LGBTQ or not—tempted to meet face-to-face someone met online if the young person is too afraid to talk to adults about what they are doing.

As a librarian and a school district library supervisor, I believe that we have a responsibility to all of our students to look beyond our personal lenses—of privilege, of diversity, of experience—and to consider lenses that are not our own. Confronting our own privilege and sharing our own stories can be hard. I have never been officially closeted at my district, but I have at times chosen the path of omission, especially when working with those I did not know well. When writing this article, I was tempted to write broadly about diversity in collection development and information-literacy instruction, leaving out any mention of my personal perspective, but our students—all our students, in all our schools and districts—deserve better. They deserve school librarians and administrators who are willing to have hard conversations and consider difficult issues. If we are willing to do this work, we can help our students find strength in their diversity and in the perspectives and truths they have to share with us and the world. The future is theirs, and we can help them have the agency to create it.

Rachel Altobelli, a 2015–2016 Lilead Fellow, is the director of library services and instructional materials, Albuquerque Public Schools. She is also a member of the New Mexico State Library LSTA Advisory Council. She recently wrote “Gain Support When You Support District Goals,” a blog posting in School Library Journal’s Take the Lead series <www.slj.com/2016/07/schools/gain-support-when-you-support-district-goals-take-the-lead/>.

Further Reading:


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Teach the Conspiracies

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It was a fine spring day in May when I entered the Max Beckmann School in Frankfurt, Germany, to talk with teens about conspiracy theories as part of a U.S. State Department public affairs program. “Which ones were they familiar with?” I wondered.

“Well, there’s the Illuminati and the chemtrails, just off the top of the hat,” the high school student smiled shyly when asked about his familiarity with conspiracy theories. Another student chimed in, “Then there’s the question of who killed JFK—some people say it was the government. And some people think that Jesus and Mary Magdalene were lovers and had a child!”

Within minutes, these German high school students could recognize more than a dozen conspiracy theories that they were at least a little bit familiar with, including the possibly faked moon landings and evidence of aliens in Roswell, New Mexico. One girl talked about “birtherism,” explaining that Donald Trump had espoused a theory that former President Barack Obama was not a U.S. citizen. Another wondered, “Is the idea that vaccines cause autism a conspiracy theory?” and one girl noted, “Some people even think global warming is a hoax.”

At this high-profile school with high-performing students who were fluent speakers of English, some boys were clearly attracted to the entertainment value of conspiracy theories, while other students thought the theories were all rather silly. But they were riveted by the discussion, exhibiting high levels of attention toward a topic that clearly captured their interest. Before this session, none of the students ever had the opportunity to talk about conspiracy theories in a school classroom. “It’s not something we generally talk about in school,” one explained.

Rising on the Horizon: Conspiracy Theories

It’s indisputable: disinformation, hoaxes, propaganda, and hyper-partisanship are increasingly global phenomena. Educators, librarians, policymakers, and community leaders are wondering about the implications of the changing information landscape. Anyone can publish and promote anything, and increasing political polarization is being combined with feelings of powerlessness, disillusionment, apathy, and indifference to truth in a way that may compromise the future of our democracy.

With the rise of so-called “fake news” comes renewed visibility for conspiracy theories, defined as beliefs rooted in us-versus-them thinking. Conspiracy theories may be seen as a special type of disinformation, defined as false information that is intended to mislead. Conspiracy theories embody the idea that a group of people make secret agreements and take actions to accomplish malevolent goals (van Prooijen 2017). As Michael Barkun (2003) has expressed, conspiracy theories fundamentally proclaim: nothing happens by accident, nothing is as it seems, and everything is connected.

All over the world, the range of conspiracy theories and their visibility are increasing, say experts, in part because of the rise of digital and social media. “Conspiracy narratives are more common in public discourse than they were previously,” said Eric Oliver of the University of Chicago (Suhrie 2014, 1). It seems that even the use of the term has broadened in recent decades. Today many forms of generalized mistrust of authority have come to be labeled as conspiracy theories, including concerns about digital privacy, algorithms used by search engines, and controversies about medicine and health. In times of anxiety and insecurity, conspiracy theories can be reassuring because there is a clear identification of evil through simplifying the world into villains and victims.

Conspiracy theories are “sticky.” Due to human information-processing norms, people who believe in a conspiracy may receive social reinforcement from other like-minded individuals through online echo chambers (Sunstein 2014). People who believe one conspiracy theory are more likely to believe others. Sadly, once a conspiracy theory is believed to be true, it can be difficult to displace. Researchers who have studied medical conspiracy theories find that 37 percent of Americans agreed that the Food and Drug Administration is intentionally suppressing natural cures for cancer because of pressure from drug companies. People who believe in medical conspiracies are less willing to follow traditional medical advice, such as using sunscreens or vaccines, and are more likely to use alternative treatments like supplements (Oliver and Wood 2014).

Research is beginning to shed light on the power of conspiracy theories. One finding shows that even a single exposure to a conspiracy theory can have effects on people’s attitudes and anticipated behaviors; exposure causes people to have increased feelings of powerlessness and disillusionment. In one experimental research study, subjects who were shown a conspiracy theory video claiming that climate change was a hoax were significantly less likely to think there is widespread scientific agreement on human-caused climate change. They were less likely to say they would sign a petition to help reduce global warming, less likely to give money to a political candidate, and less likely to use energy efficiency as a selection criterion when buying...
a light bulb or household appliance (Jolley and Douglas 2013).

Not surprisingly, liberals and conservatives are equally susceptible to conspiracy theories. Fortunately, education seems to be a mitigating factor. Educational background is associated with lowered belief in conspiracy theories, with 42 percent of people without a high school diploma believing multiple conspiracy theories as compared with 23 percent of those with postgraduate degrees (Uscinski and Parent 2014).

Given how contagious conspiracy theories are, it would seem natural for school librarians and other educators to keep these potentially dangerous ideas far away from the minds of impressionable adolescents and young adults. But on the contrary, because of the increased prominence of conspiracy theories in our culture today, it’s more important than ever to tackle the topic of conspiracy theories head on as an approach to building media and information-literacy competencies.

Approaches to Teaching Conspiracy Theories

High school librarians and teachers have long recognized that the topic of conspiracy theories is like catnip to adolescent readers, with television shows like Decoded and books like The Rough Guide to Conspiracy Theories (Rough Guides 2013) attracting the interests of teen boys and girls.

Can conspiracy theories be explored safely in schools without potential risk or harm? It’s possible that talking about conspiracy theories in schools merely validates them in the eyes of some students. Because of time limitations it’s possible that more complex issues and information about these topics will get short shrift. Some teachers and librarians insist that “quality first” dictates that conspiracy theories never be permitted to enter the classroom.

However, when teachers and school librarians make all the choices for students, students never get the chance to learn how to make good choices for themselves. Ernest Morrell, a professor at Teachers College Columbia University, has argued that teachers and librarians can reinforce certain values within their libraries and classrooms, but at home students will be surrounded by media images and text presenting an often very different set of values. Learners need to practice how to be critical of popular culture (Morrell 2004). Where else will students get the chance to do this if not in school?

For these reasons, some teachers and school librarians are capitalizing on teen interest in conspiracy theories to explore ideas about the constructed nature of authority and the importance of being a skeptical reader and thinker.

For example, at Arthur L. Johnson High School in Clark, New Jersey, Dave Fosco and Rebecca Russo teach a semester-long social studies class called “Conspiracy Theories throughout History.” At the beginning of the semester students discuss:

- Why do conspiracy theories exist?
searches to practice identifying different types of sources and to use a variety of strategies to research the author, purpose, and point of view. “It’s not good enough to just review the ‘About’ page,” notes Russo. To really understand the motives of the author, students need to search the author’s name and the organization or website. By using active reading comprehension strategies, learners engage with the content deeply enough to recognize the author’s purpose: Is the author informing about the conspiracy theory, promoting it, or debunking it? (Russo 2017).

Recognizing bias is an even more challenging competency. Russo notes that her tenth-, eleventh-, and twelfth-grade students need guided practice to learn how to recognize bias in informational content. Before she sends learners out to find sources on their own, she gives them short news stories from All Sides <www.allsides.com>, a free website that offers partisan news coverage of current events from left, center, and right perspectives and fights polarization by helping learners understand how to recognize bias. Russo’s students must read and summarize articles and then look for clues in the use of language and images that betray the point of view of the author or news organization. “I want source evaluation skills to transfer,” said Russo, noting that students get better at recognizing bias when they practice this skill with a broad variety of sources.

Conspiracy theories create opportunities for rich discussion about how and why we decide what to believe.
of real-world informational content, especially content that students find themselves (2017). It’s important to critically analyze not just library resources but popular content that is easily available, attractive, and entertaining, or that activates strong emotions.

Christy Moran, Broward College librarian, uses a similar assignment with undergraduate students. In her seventy-five-minute activity titled “Evaluating Claims: Facebook Edition,” learners determine the validity of a pseudoscientific claim, like the claim that the 9/11 terrorist attack on the World Trade Center was a conspiracy orchestrated by the U.S. government. Students find evidence to either support or reject the claim, explaining their conclusions and why they perceive specific sources to be credible (Moran 2017).

English teacher John Bradford and school librarian Anne Thiers at Creekview High School in Canton, Georgia, help students develop research papers on conspiracy theories as part of their work in American Literature courses (Thiers 2017). Bradford’s unit on conspiracy theories takes about four or five weeks, and students construct a paper grounded in argumentative and persuasive rhetoric. With support from a LibGuide created by Thiers, students find three debatable points to write about, including merits and limitations of the conspiracy theory in question, and write a carefully structured eight-paragraph essay, using the Jane Schaffer structure for organizing sentences into paragraphs, and include properly formatted MLA citations. This approach to teaching writing teaches a paragraph-structure formula that includes a topic sentence, concrete detail, commentary, and closing sentence.

"In this…town, I sometimes face a little pushback from students when I tell them that the New York Times is more credible than the National Enquirer,” Bradford admits in a telephone interview. But as a result of their own search and inquiry processes, students learn to distinguish between high-quality sources and less-informative ones. He notes, "On the Internet, anyone can put up anything and make it look slick and professional. But my students learn to look for bias and investigate the sources of information because they’re motivated and engaged—they want to learn more” (2017).

Proving a Conspiracy Theory

When I met with the German high school students, I talked about the reality that not all conspiracy theories are false. For example, for forty years, African Americans
with syphilis were left untreated so that researchers in a joint study by the U.S. Public Health Service and staff at John Andrew Hospital at Tuskegee Institute could document and research the progression of the disease. At the time, some in the African American community were suspicious about the declining health of the four hundred infected men, a decline that researchers told the subjects was caused by their "bad blood." The infected subjects weren’t told they had syphilis or that it could be transmitted to spouses who then infected their babies. Men were encouraged to participate in the study by being given hot meals and free rides, and even when penicillin became widely available as a cure, the study continued.

Rumors about the dubious nature of the “treatment” given to these men circulated in the African American community, but only when researcher Peter Buxton wrote a report comparing the Tuskegee study to Nazi experiments did things start to change. He confronted the government with his accusations but was ignored. When race riots tore the nation apart in 1968, the national public health service took action to investigate. The health service commissioned a blue-ribbon panel of distinguished individuals from the fields of medicine, law, religion, labor, education, health administration, and public affairs. The panel found that the men had agreed freely to be examined and treated, even though there was no evidence that researchers had informed them of the study or its real purpose. Peter Buxton then contacted a reporter from the Washington Star who wrote about the story on July 25, 1972. The news caused a sensation. People around the country were outraged to learn how racial bias had affected the medical treatment of these men and their families. Senator Edward Kennedy held congressional hearings, and new laws were established governing the ethics of human research (CDC 2016; Kerr and Rivero 2014).

The Tuskegee syphilis story shows how challenging it is to investigate a conspiracy theory, and it also illustrates the importance of whistleblowers, journalists, and government officials as they attempt to uncover the truth. School librarians can use the Tuskegee syphilis study to show the time, effort, and courage it takes to investigate a conspiracy theory to determine its validity. The story also illustrates how the process of accessing information and analyzing it leads people to create media to share what they learn, inspiring moral reflection, communication, and public action to address social needs.

Authority Is Constructed and Contextual

The rise of the Web and digital culture creates some new forms of authority. It is now possible to gain attention and authoritative status, not for one’s job title, responsibilities, knowledge, or experience, but for being first, fastest, and findable.
on social media, using personalized messages to connect to audiences and appeal to emotions. Today a YouTube celebrity like Alex Jones can be perceived to have authority through producing compelling videos quickly in response to current events. When messages like his become viral, they often gain popularity by exploiting people’s sense of humor, curiosity, anger, disgust, or fear. Such content now drives the attention economy, where hoaxes, disinformation, and partisanship thrive.

As the ACRL (Association of College and Research Libraries) standards note, “Authority is constructed and contextual,” a statement that reflects the recognition that information resources are drawn from their creators’ expertise and credibility based on the information need and the context in which the information will be used. According to the standard, “Experts themselves view authority with an attitude of informed skepticism and an openness to new perspectives, additional voices, and changes in schools of thought” (2016).

Back in my class with the German students, after discussing how disinformation and hoaxes can sometimes turn into conspiracy theories, students viewed and discussed a video titled “Google Censors Anti-Hillary Search Results” created by Mark Dice, a noted conspiracy theorist with over one million subscribers on YouTube. The three-minute video demonstrates how, in contrast to other search engines, Google autocomplete results do not include references to Hillary Clinton’s health. Students used the digital annotation tool VideoAnt <ant.umn.edu> to comment on and critique the video. They recognized Mark Dice to be someone with a political interest in Donald Trump and that Dice was making money from the entertainment value of an anti-Hillary message. Students viewed the video carefully and paused to write notes, wondering whether the search engine demonstrations might have been conducted on different days or even different times of the year.

High levels of intellectual curiosity were activated by this activity. As students viewed and discussed this video, students also began wondering more broadly about the possibility that Google may indeed “censor” search results. Was censorship even the right term, they wondered? Students wanted to learn more about how the autocomplete function works on search engines, sharing with one another bits of knowledge based on their lived experience. A couple of students were aware that different people might get different autocomplete results based on their search histories. Others wondered: Did different search engines use different “signals of quality” to produce autocomplete results? How was Google adjusting the algorithm for autocomplete? Should people be concerned about this type of bias? Why or why not?

As Silicon Valley platforms ascend to cultural dominance, digital conspiracy theories will undoubt-edly continue to flourish. To teach the conspiracies, school librarians must set aside ideas about themselves as being gatekeepers of quality. We’ll have to get into the weeds. We’ll have to make time for students to search for content that is both “credible” and “incredible,” helping them use nuanced and sophisticated criteria to distinguish between the two. As we find better and more creative ways to help people identify and confront hoaxes, disinformation, and conspiracies, we will have to encourage the exploration of a truly broad range of information, propaganda, and entertainment. We’ll need to acknowledge both the destabilizing function of mistrust, suspicion, and fear, and the powerful moral and humanistic values activated by the search for truth. We’ll all need to step out of our comfort zones to consider the role of conspiracy theories in an increasingly uncertain world.
Conspiracies: Key Ideas

1. Conspiracy theories are entertaining because they embody the timeless allure of the mystery of the unknown.
2. Conspiracy theories are constructed by people, and they have an author, purpose, and a point of view.
3. Even brief exposures to conspiracy theories can increase their believability.
4. Whistleblowers, journalists, and government officials investigate conspiracy theories in an attempt to uncover the truth.
5. Composing critical commentary about conspiracy videos using digital annotation tools helps advance the development of critical-thinking skills.
6. Conspiracy theories resonate in an age of anxiety by simplifying complex and ambiguous realities and may contribute to destabilizing society and promoting feelings of helplessness, disillusionment, mistrust, suspicion, and fear.

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Living and Learning Beyond One Dimension

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"Anna is acting chippy," yelled the ten-year-old, Barrett.

"I don’t think that’s a word. Perhaps you mean ‘chipper’?"

"No, 'chippy' is a word!"

"Let’s Google it…"

We have a rule in our home, and these two squabbling siblings know it well. No adult had to intervene in this conversation. The rule is simple: do not argue about knowable things. For the record, “chippy” is a word. As an adjective, it means “touchy and defensive, especially on account of having a grievance or a sense of inferiority” (Oxford 2017). The ten-year-old was right. Anna, the seventeen-year-old, was acting chippy.

Sometimes we think we know everything.

"Where is Ecuador? That can’t be a real place. I’ve never heard of it." This from a sixteen-year-old student who attends a high-minority-population high school with actual Ecuadorians. I have the same simple rule in my classroom: do not argue about knowable things. So we Googled Ecuador, looked at a map, and compared the population of Ecuador (which the student argued "had" to be tiny and insignificant) to the population of Arkansas, our state. (For the record, its population is five times smaller than Ecuador’s.) By the time the conversation was over the student was acting, let’s say, a little chippy.

Sometimes we think we’re the only one who matters.

One-Dimensional Views in Tempestuous Times

I hear a lot of people acting chippy these days as different groups vie for attention—people thinking their way is the right way, their knowledge is the best knowledge, their perspective is the only perspective. We seem to instinctively crave information that confirms our biases. Rather than learning knowable things, we shrink inside ourselves and hunker down with the familiar, comfortable information that feeds our narrative of what we think we know, of how we think the world works.

With information at our fingertips, how are we still so blind to all the knowledge available to us? Amidst the cries of fake news, biased media, unvetted opinions, social media hoaxes, and everyone shouting into the wind—it can be overwhelming at times, this deluge of words and ideas, yet I watch in horror as people of all ages shut down and shun information rather than lean into it for comfort and clarity. If knowledge is power, why do we suddenly feel so powerless when we have access to unlimited knowledge? Because despite having the entirety of the world readily available to us, we still choose to live in our one-dimensional versions of reality, and sometimes we feel like our reality is slipping away.

I know all about reality slipping away. Our family is transracial. My husband and I are both White, as are our two biological children, while our two adopted children are Black. My learning curve about Black culture was steep. Going from a family of four to a family of six was overwhelming enough, but add becoming a transracial family to the mix and I suddenly felt like I was drowning in unknowable things. Prior to adoption, I would have told you that we live in a post-racial world of middle-class privilege that shattered when I changed jobs and began educating myself about the realities of being poor in America.

Not wanting our children to be raised in the one-dimensional White world in which we were raised, my husband and I began making conscious choices about where we lived, worshipped, worked, played, shopped, and more. We were intentional about every aspect of our lives. One of those major life decisions was the choice for me to move from a small, predominantly White, upper-middle-class private elementary school to an urban, high-poverty public high school to teach French where the majority of students are Latino, followed by Black and Asian; White students are the minority. My learning curve about other cultures steepened a bit more. I realized that there was so much more I did not know. Prior to working in this school, I would have told you that every student has access to equal and appropriate education if they are only willing to apply themselves. Obtuously ignorant, I lived in a world of middle-class privilege that shattered when I changed jobs and began educating myself about the realities of being poor in America.

Shifting Perspectives

In a short span of two years, my entire life’s certainty had shifted and the simplistic, one-dimensional foundation on which I had built my reality crumbled out from under me. I began seriously questioning my knowledge as a mother, as an educator, and as a human being. I began to feel quite chippy about my ability to know the things I needed to know to be an effective, impactful, and empathetic mom and teacher. Oh, there were people around me who had experienced similar things, but I could not find people who were truly examining their own knowledge base and worldview for bias and were actively working toward building new knowledge and new perspectives. I was floundering on my own.
Youth today consume information as fast as it is generated. While they sit in my fifty-minute class period, something in the world shifts, and they know it from the very seats where they sit not listening to my French instruction. But, much like adults, I’ve learned that they take in only what feels meaningful to them. My Black students rage about racial injustice of law enforcement, while my Hispanic students read about ICE raids. My Muslim students watch video clips from inside Syria and share them amongst themselves. Of course, we all argue about whether male rompers should be a thing, but, by and large, each individual group is steeped in its own brand of information. Their worlds, in many ways, are just as one-dimensional as mine was at one time, and no one is teaching them to look outside themselves and their experiences, especially when consuming information.

I do not want myself, my family, my friends, my colleagues, or my students living one-dimensional lives. I move to help everyone who crosses my path to create a more multidimensional view of the world. One-dimensional living changes only when we can learn to recognize the breadth and depth of the world outside of our own perspectives, perceptions, and experiences. This is the reality that I was missing prior to adoption and changing schools. This is the reality that our students are missing. This is the reality that many educators are missing.

To begin, we must examine our own implicit bias. Implicit bias speaks to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. Everyone has implicit biases. The danger lurks in refusing to recognize them. People love to tell me how “not racist” they are because they love my children. I always giggle and say, “That’s funny, because I love my children, too, but I’m totally racist.” Self-evaluation of long-held deeply seated beliefs that affect how we interact with students, what we expect in their learning, and our expectations for their futures is necessary if we are to move past our current views of how the world works and build a more multidimensional worldview.

Imagine a school librarian with several White students gathered around her talking openly with her about the need to “build that wall,” while Hispanic students sit nearby trying to study. Many of us cringe at this scene, which I recently witnessed, but when we look beyond the shock of the actual offense, we see the reality of how the librarian’s bias might affect the services she provides to the Latino population of the school. Am I calling her racist? No. Am I saying she has implicit bias that she isn’t even aware of? Yes. And without that awareness, she can never fully engage and actively participate in the education of that subset of the population. Does she have to agree fully with Hispanic students’ views on immigration? No. Does she have to learn to acknowledge that their experiences and perspectives differ from her own and should be taken into consideration? Yes, she does.

Building Relationships and Empathy

How empathetic are we to the lives of the students we are educating? This is a question of immense importance. What I’ve learned the hard way, as a mother and as an educator, is that empathy does not develop outside the bounds of relationship. And this development of relationships is so hard. And takes so much time. And can be emotionally overwhelming. And is the only way to truly gain the responsiveness needed to reach a population group about which we simply are not familiar. This past spring, the aunt of one of my Syrian students was caught up in President Trump’s initial ban on people from Middle Eastern countries entering the United States; the aunt was detained in the Dallas/Fort Worth Airport. My student asked if she could share her aunt’s story with my classes and share her own struggles that come with being a Muslim in this country. Many of my students, especially my

How empathetic are we to the lives of the students we are educating? This is a question of immense importance.
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Hispanic students, were in tears upon hearing the racism the student encounters daily in her everyday activities. Questions were asked and answered frankly. Education was happening in the rawest and truest sense. Empathy was born. A feeling that "our struggles are the same" was recognized and relatable.

Returning to the idea of my "golden rule" to not argue about knowable things, empathy plays a key role in its application. I tell my students all the time that if the impact of an event, opinion, or idea isn’t directly felt, they should be listening—not talking. If we are not immigrants, we shouldn’t be talking about immigration. We should be listening. If we are not Black or in law enforcement, we shouldn’t be talking about police injustice. We should be listening. Without listening, how will we ever develop compassion? Without compassion, how will we ever truly understand or care that the experiences and lives of our students can be drastically different from our own? Without moving past our implicit bias, we will continue to reap the harvest of students who are telling us in so many ways that they feel unseen, unheard, unloved, unwanted, and unimportant.

A graduating Latino boy told me recently, “You’re the only teacher who ever truly saw me and cared about me as a man.” After his thirteen years of education and countless teachers, this was the saddest thing he could have said to me. We must do better.

But it’s not only about seeing our students. It’s about teaching our students to see others. Many, many of my Latino students get wrapped into their own bubble of believing immigration is only an American problem—that they are the only ones who hear “Go back where you came from.” As a French teacher, I spend an enormous amount of time talking with my students about the immigration crisis in France as people flee North Africa, East Africa, and Syria. We read stories, watch movies, investigate crimes that all stem from anti-immigrant sentiments in France. My Muslim students are shocked to hear that France has, not once or twice, but multiple times, tried to use laws to ban the hijab from their country. My Black students grow upset when they see maps and we talk about immigration routes, as they begin to understand that, in France, Black Africans receive similar, if not worse, treatment as Hispanics do here in the United States. All of this develops a sense of empathy for groups outside of our own. These lessons in French class force a one-dimensional view of the world to shift again and take on new perspectives.

Teaching Explicitly and by Example

For these lessons to be possible, I have to consume this type of information. Therefore, necessity leads to the next key question: Are we modeling being good consumers of information? What voices ring in our ears? Do they sound like our own voices? Do they say things we want to hear? How do these voices differ from our own? What are they teaching us? How are they shaping us, changing us? And, most importantly, are we talking about this process with our students? Multiple times a day I share stories that begin with, “I was reading an article,” “I was listening to a podcast,” or “I saw a video,” and I talk openly about what I learned, how it challenged my prior knowledge, what I will do with what I heard going forward, and how it will change my day-to-day thoughts and actions.

Students do not naturally know how to open up their perspective to other points of view. We must model it. We must teach it. We must practice it. If young people do not see the adults in their lives valuing outside perspectives, changing their opinions, and allowing themselves to grow, students will never understand why expanding their own perspective matters nor how to achieve it. What are we doing inside the educational arena to challenge students in this way? Because my students know expanding my own perspective is an important and active part of who I am, they will come to me with new-to-them information and inevitably ask, “What do you think, Madame Dooly?” My response is always the same, every time, “I don’t know. What do you think?” And the conversation ensues with the only words from me being leading questions like “Why do you think that?” “For what reason?” “In
Removing Blinders and Changing Ourselves

Remember our definition of chippy—touchy and defensive, especially on account of having a grievance or a sense of inferiority? When my foundational beliefs about the world and the people in it tilted and then crumbled, I spent more than a few days feeling chippy. It’s a natural response to being told you didn’t know anything about what you thought you knew. Many people I know choose to stay in that state. They learn something about the world that isn’t what they needed or wanted it to be, but they refuse to allow that reality to permeate their core beliefs. However, the people who truly move forward and emerge renewed and reborn, in some ways, exhibit an entirely new quality that students are drawn to: humility. Students will flock to a person exhibiting a posture of humbleness. People want to be understood.

So, how do we go about creating an environment—in our homes, in our classrooms, in our institutions—that fosters expanding perspectives? We can take steps intended to expand our worldviews.

First, we must consider the diversity of our own lives. When we adopted and I chose to change jobs, I knew very few people of color. I often hear people say they are “friends with [fill in the blank with a minority group of choice]” to show they lead diverse lives. My slight pushback is always, “Have you shared a meal with them outside of work? In your home or theirs? Do your children have sleepovers together? Do you worship together? Do you call them when you need help?” There is a difference between knowing someone (an acquaintance) and being in a relationship with someone (a friend). As an educator, I would find it wholly appropriate to include objective measures in, for example, a professional growth plan to remove any ambiguity or room to hide from steps you need to take to diversify your personal and professional circles. Without accountability, we default to the easiest standard of what and who we know.

Secondly, I would highly recommend a similar strategic evaluation of what voices have dominance in our lives. When we engage in low-effort information processing, we default to stereotypical thinking and stereotype-based judgments. Then, when we act as decision-makers or leaders in our institutions, these biased ideas subsequently replicate, solidify, and spill out into our social and educational interactions with the stereotyped target. Unacceptable.

To curb this phenomenon, we must read, listen to, exhibit, talk about, subscribe to, and share information from people with a variety of backgrounds, experiences, and lives. We must make room in the professional growth plan for an ongoing evaluation and improvement of what information comes into the school library and how.

Finally, we must engage the community, the families, the faculty, and the students. These ideas may sound simplistic, but as the hub of institutional information, school libraries should be the optimal place for overcoming input bias. We should host seminars, workshops, TED-type talks, discussion groups, and support meetings for, with, and by the students in our schools. Our library schedules should be full of podcasting listening sessions, documentary screenings, lectures, and more. For our youngest students, do we host people of color reading books to our children about characters of color? This activity matters whether the purpose serves as a racial mirror for culturally similar children or a racial window for culturally dissimilar children. The final professional appraisal piece lies in creating a robust blueprint for how we will model and engage others in the diversity of thought we hope to foster.

I’m one person, one mother, one teacher. I take what I’ve learned into my life, into my classroom each day, and I do my very best to share it with others. As a mom, as an educator, though, I long for the day when the collective norm among educators is to live multidimensional lives that spiral out from around us and influence every child, every student—everyone we encounter. Then, we can truly change the world one child at a time.

Dustin Dooly is a French teacher at Northside High School in Fort Smith, Arkansas, the wife of a police officer, and the mother of four beautiful children.

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FEATURE

Support ADOL
ESCENT LITERACY
Requires a Focus on Literacy Practices in a Local Context

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School viewed David as a struggling reader. By seventh grade David’s schooling history included numerous elementary school reading interventions, a learning disorder diagnosis, below-average performance on standardized state reading assessments, and required enrollment in an additional reading course. Each day David spent a ninety-minute class period in a reading intervention class predominantly comprised of African American students like him. Filled with leveled books, young adult literature, and magazines, one corner of this classroom provided a space for silent sustained reading. In another corner students logged onto a computer program with the hope it would improve their vocabulary and reading comprehension. At a third station in the center of the room David’s teacher offered mini-lessons on improving the clarity of student blog posts about their independent reading books. The school librarian frequently visited the class to give book talks on recently acquired YA literature titles. Teachers in his other classes used the same set of agreed-upon content-area reading strategies to support David’s comprehension of traditional print texts.

While not diminishing the necessity of David improving his reading of traditional texts, I encourage you to consider what preconceived assumptions about literacy guided the identification of David as a struggling reader needing these interventions. If we desire to support how students develop a critical stance towards texts, we need to expand our view of literacy. The privileging of certain kinds of literacy “creates a fundamental unfairness” for students who have rich literacy practices not always recognized by schools (Gee 2014, 10). Our definition of literacy has implications for students.

New Literacies or Varied Literacy Practices?

A cursory exploration of the last two years of Knowledge Quest reveals no shortage of discussion on different types of literacy (e.g., reading literacy, information literacy and research skills, online literacy and digital citizenship, visual literacy, financial literacy, digital literacy, traditional literacy, source literacy, data literacy, disciplinary information literacy, global literacy). This proliferation of literacies complicates collaborative efforts between school librarians and teachers who see a multitude of interrelated yet divergent literacy goals.

Do new technologies create different ways of reading, writing, and communicating, or are these merely tools for new literacy practices with technologies destined to be viewed the same way we now remember the green-screened Apple IIE? If one of the graphic artists who produce the Google Doodles displayed daily on Google’s homepage struggles to adhere to a budget, is she visually literate but financially illiterate? When a relative newcomer to South Carolina concludes “Bless Your Heart” is a sincere expression of sympathy—and not a condescending pat on the head—is this misunderstanding a reflection of his cultural literacy? If so, where does the [insert term] + literacy formula end?

Tasha Bergson-Michelson and Jole Seroff likely spoke for many librarians when they stated: “It can be dizzying to consider the array of literacies and try to understand how they fit productively into our
own school library programs... how is a school librarian to get anything done?” (2016, 6–7). As a fellow educator who recognizes the critical role of librarians and the too few conversations among literacy researchers and librarians, in this article I present a unifying conception of literacy, a conception to buttress our collaborative efforts to support all students. The first section uses the experiences of David (pseudonym), a thirteen-year-old African American friend of mine, to call for viewing literacy as social and cultural practice. David’s use of texts as tools and his navigation of language demands ultimately allow him to participate in literate activity in multiple contexts. The final section turns attention to two principles librarians can employ to support adolescent literacy. While the case study focuses on an adolescent, the principles are applicable to younger children and adults and presented with the hope our collective efforts support empowering literacy for all.

David’s Literacy at the Donut Experiment

Walking into the newly opened Donut Experiment, David immediately grabbed a form, surveyed the possibilities, and checked off his caramel glaze with powdered sugar. It was our first visit to the newly opened donut shop where customizing your donut drew large crowds of teenagers. When my selection lagged, David joked, “Maybe, if they had an app, you could’ve ordered ahead of time.” He walked up to the counter, surveyed the donut assembly line, and waited for a woman to walk over before asking, “Hey, cool place. How long have you been open?” By the time I chose my maple glaze and sea salt, and joined him at the counter, David had inquired into what is typically done with the unused donuts, the capacity of the large oven, and whether he could pay with his Apple Pay. Succumbing to David’s smooth talking, the middle-aged woman behind the counter had already broken norms and given him a sample of a maple-glazed donut with bacon. This is David; he’s quite the smooth talker. What does it mean to be literate at this Donut Experiment? What texts are used to participate in activities here? What are the rules for communicating here? In other words, was David literate in this context?

Most people may not recognize the literate practices at a donut shop, but as Elizabeth Birr Moje argued, “Literacy practice is always domain specific in the sense that all literacy is enacted in a specific context, for a specific purpose, and to or with a specific audience” (2015, 256). Within this donut shop, customers and employees used texts (donut ordering forms, signs, chalkboard menu, Apple credit card scanner, children’s colorings, etc.) to participate in shared activities. But, as David demonstrated, engaging and participating in the activities at the Donut Experiment required an understanding of how to read and write in acceptable ways with local texts and how to engage in acceptable language. After all, acceptable language would be vastly different if the Donut Experiment were located next to Liebman’s Kosher Delicatessen and Catering on 235th Street in the Bronx or Yoder’s Kitchen on Columbia Street in the rural Amish community of Arthur, Illinois, instead of in Greenville, South Carolina. Not only did David quickly use and interpret texts in socially acceptable ways, but growing up in the South, David knew how to approach the older white female employee with polite talk (and not the gruff direct language we might encounter in the Bronx) to get the information (and a free maple-glazed donut with bacon) he really wanted.

Literacy as Social and Cultural Practice

Beginning in the 1980s, numerous influential literacy research studies documented how literacy is a product of social, cultural, and historical contexts. Sylvia Scribner and Michael Cole (1981) used the daily writing of the Vai people to demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and technology of literacy. Brian V. Street (1984) demonstrated multiple literacies in an Iranian village in multiple contexts (school literacies, religious literacy in Koranic study centers, market literacy, etc.). Shirley Brice Heath (1983) showed how three local communities used differing “ways with words” to socialize children into unique literacy and language practices. David Barton and Mary E. Hamilton (1986) provided a detailed study of the role of literacy in the everyday lives of people in Lancaster, England. In each study, literacy researchers determined literacy cannot be separated from the “particular forms of social activity” used to make meaning or the cultural context in which they occur (Prinsloo and Baynham 2008, 2).

Obviously, David’s literacy extends far beyond the Donut Experiment, and he is socialized into acceptable participation. When posting on Facebook an image of himself and his new girlfriend at a party, how do the previous reactions of Facebook friends influence David’s authorship decisions? How do the number of likes and comments on his previous...
posts and the posts of others who announce new relationships tell him when and how to announce his new relationship? The more he participates, the more his learning of these acceptable practices is scaffolded through conversations and interactions with others (Vygotsky 1978). And, David’s eventual post isn’t his own because making an “utterance” (or even a Facebook relationship status update) is to appropriate the words of others and populate them with his own intention (Bakhtin 1981). At the Donut Experiment or on Facebook, David’s literacy is a social practice.

Cultural practice also applies in other contexts for which participation involves awareness of varying culturally acceptable norms. Whether David attends a local church, a synagogue, or a mosque, activity at each place of worship depends upon varied cultural norms. Pierre Bourdieu argued language use depends on the historical, social, and cultural context in which it is used (1983). What counts as religious texts at a synagogue in Greenville, South Carolina, in 2017 and how do they differ from the religious texts used at an African American church in Greenville, South Carolina, in 1886? Is David expected to recite or analyze scripture? When and how is David expected (or allowed) to speak at the synagogue or the church? Proper greeting, acceptable language, and use of texts define what it means to be literate in these houses of worship. As a result, literacy is much more than the simple ability to read and/or write words (Gee 2014, 61).

Supporting Adolescent Literacy within Schools

David’s literacy practices in multiple contexts suggest supporting student literacy begins by broadening our concept (or definition) of literacy in school. Each school discipline has acceptable ways of using texts and language during activities to produce knowledge. Reading and writing and reasoning in disciplines becomes more specialized as students progress through schooling (Shanahan and Shanahan 2008). Within the sciences, students should be apprenticed into norms for making claims about the world, for designing a process of investigating, for collecting rich evidence, and for reasoning with the evidence to prove or disprove an original hypothesis. Within mathematics, teachers should guide students through using problems and data (texts) alongside mathematical practices to justify and explain problem solving. Within history, students need teachers who scaffold how to critically examine primary sources, how to contextualize the source within a historical period, and how to leverage evidence towards the creation of a historical argument. Moje (2015) argued learning in these disciplines represents cultural work as each discipline is a culture with norms for literacy and participation. Our goal as educators, then, is to help students navigate these varied disciplines and develop an understanding of literacy practices in social contexts, whether at the Donut Experiment, on social media, in a house of worship, or in a classroom. Students need teachers and school librarians who are committed to helping them understand how different texts and talk support knowledge creation and participation in different circumstances. Navigating with understanding, then, is to be literate.

What is the role of school librarians in supporting how students navigate literacy practices? In his study of the literacy practices in three libraries, Mark Dressman (1997) found vastly different literacy
opportunities as each library was connected to its community culture and presented varied opportunities to read and write. What literacy practices are valued in the libraries David enters? How are these literacy practices aligned with a shared view of literacy for students in schools and classrooms? What the library space offers is part of the support; I want to briefly outline two key practices school librarians can use with teachers to support adolescent literacy in the library and the classroom.

Exploration of Critical Local Issues

Adolescent literacy occurs within the context of inquiry that matters—to students and to communities. As Paulo Freire stated, “Reading is a matter of studying reality that is alive, reality that we are living inside of, reality as history being made and also making us” (1985,18). To support student liberation and their critical consciousness of the social realities around them, school librarians and teachers must frame disciplinary learning with a local lens, exploring critical local issues. In chemistry classes students and teachers can explore solutions to the increased prevalence of type II diabetes, and examine the impacts of processed foods and sugar on the health of marginalized and lower-income community members who do not always have access to healthy food choices. In math or statistics courses students and teachers can seek solutions to the challenges of living on a minimum-wage job in their community and the likelihood of minimum-wage earners eventually owning their own homes. Sarah Jane Levin (2016) demonstrated how critical civic literacy can be developed when students inquire into rigorous critical service-learning related to local social issues. School librarians should ask themselves: How might we support students’ exploration of the world around them? How might we partner with a classroom teacher to frame disciplinary units and content around critical issues in the local community?

Providing access to diverse resources is not enough. Students need school librarians to provide access to resources related to critical issues of empowerment and to help teachers in the disciplines frame inquiry with these issues.
Texts as Tools for Literate Thinking

Roni Jo Draper and Daniel Siebert defined text as "any representational resource or object that people intentionally imbue with meaning" (2010, 28). We can support students’ literacy by using a broadened definition of what counts as text, recognizing the affordance and challenges of using each. When David enters Mrs. Dumas’s seventh-grade geography class and explores limited local environmental sustainability efforts, he can use nontraditional texts as tools for literate thinking. Stemming from student concerns about the lack of recycling and sustainable environmental efforts in their community, to investigate and develop an argument to present to the city council students can use a copy of a proposed city council resolution, interviews with community members and city council members, a public-engagement video from a local environmental advocacy group, and a copy of the existing EPA law. For each of these texts, students need support in using texts for discipline-specific purposes and in understanding how to leverage evidence from texts to problem-solve a solution.

Each text has differing affordances or aspects making the text easier for students. These affordances could be alignment with a student’s background knowledge or experiences, familiarity with a genre, familiarity with the topic, the writing style in the text, or the mode of the text. Yet, each also offers bottlenecks or predictable places where students can get stuck in their thinking. How can educators, including librarians, help students critically navigate a multitude of text types and to see the affordances and complexities of texts?

First, students need school librarians to help teachers decide which texts are appropriate for students to read in their classes. Texts should provide contrasting perspectives on issues so students use the texts to construct discipline-appropriate arguments. Librarians can respond to the needs of David and other students by encouraging teachers to use a wide array of texts, including multimodal texts that mirror those used in disciplines: primary sources in social studies; charts, graphs, and tables in science; visuals, word problems, and graphs in mathematics.

Secondly, students need school librarians to engage teachers in considering how each text might be familiar or complex to students. Librarians can take the lead in these discussions by offering professional development workshops for teachers on the challenges of using different text types. A school librarian could visit Mrs. Dumas’s classroom to explain how each text being used by David and his peers presents challenges. Not only can libraries be physical spaces where diverse texts are used by students, school librarians also can support teachers’ understanding of how to use texts in the classroom.

Beyond Traditional Reading Interventions

The literacy offered to David in his reading intervention class is not enough and minimizes the wide-ranging literacy practices in which he participates daily. To empower adolescents—in classrooms, libraries, and community spaces—David needs librarians who are able to view

We can support students’ literacy by using a broadened definition of what counts as text, recognizing the affordance and challenges of using each.
literacy as a practice where participation depends on understanding of how to use texts and language. But, he also needs librarians who actively advocate for a wide array of diverse texts and who use conversations and activities to engage teachers in understanding the affordances and complexities of different texts. For students to use texts as tools to read the world around them and for learning in academic disciplines, teachers and librarians must first understand how different types of texts can both support and challenge students.

Finally, for David and any student, the use of texts as tools for literate participation rests upon the value of the inquiry in the first place. Students need classrooms and libraries where they investigate critical issues that matter to them and that result in heightened critical consciousness in communities. David will improve his literate practices (even in classrooms) when we support his ability to navigate literacy participation and we marry it with issues that matter. This vision of empowering literacy for students necessitates our collective efforts.

**Works Cited:**


School Library Experiences beyond the Expected

James Allen
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If you stopped by and visited our school library here in Eminence, Kentucky, for an entire day, it would be difficult to predict everything you might see and experience. You might see first-grade students browsing and finding books to check out, a ninth-grade student using a compound miter saw to prepare parts for a project in an engineering class, a fifth-grade class receiving instruction and practice in research best practices, or maybe even a seventh-grade student using vector-based design software and a laser engraver to create a model of a black hole.

Walk upstairs, and you may see a group of students recording a video against the green-screen wall in the studio, students maintaining the hydroponics tower garden, a class taking a field trip using virtual reality viewers, or a group of students working on a storyboard using detachable dry erase panels. Obviously, these things are not all happening at exactly the same moment, but an extensive variety of experiences that occur in one day can be guaranteed. The unpredictability of what might be going on in our space every day is perhaps my favorite part of being a school librarian in our kindergarten through twelfth-grade public school.

Eminence Independent is a small public school district. The city of Eminence is the center of a rural community on the railroad line between Lexington and Louisville. Student enrollment for the 2015–2016 school year was 805 students. The elementary is considered Title I eligible school-wide (Kentucky Dept. of Ed. 2016). The entire district, kindergarten through twelfth grade, is housed in one building. In the EDhub (the acronym given to our library space: Experimental Da Vinci Hybrid Ultra Bibliotheca), we have two full-time school librarians (including myself).

There are no classified assistants, but we work closely with our district technology coordinator and one of our assistant elementary principals who is also a former shop teacher.

Ten or fifteen years ago I would never have predicted a day looking like this, not even close. So when I think about the implications of what “Beyond the Horizon” means to school libraries, I’m a little scared but extremely excited. When I began my tenure as an elementary school librarian in 2003 I found myself trying to replicate and continue the existing program as closely as I could. It took me quite a while—longer than I like to admit—to realize that our school library program could (and should) change and evolve. Shifting the focus of the school library program and broadening the range of resources and experiences available to learners seemed at times to have happened rapidly. However, for the most part, from my perspective the transformation has happened gradually, organically, and in close connection with the changing needs of our students and teachers. My goal now is to make sure our school library provides students with fun, unique, and individualized opportunities and learning experiences that they otherwise would not have.

Development in technology have definitely shaped and will continue to shape the evolution of school libraries, but I believe that some other areas will also have a huge impact on how we serve our patrons. I will discuss some of these areas that are transforming my own school library program, but they all have a common connection: our students.

### Increased Focus on Student-Centered Learning

Increased focus on development of student voice, choice, and agency are giving our students more control over their own learning. This shift provides challenges—but also opportunities—for the school library. We have traditionally been in the business of supporting both students and teachers across many content areas, but when students begin to choose content that they would like to explore in small groups or individually, we have an opportunity to help guide them in their search for information, resources, and tools.

One way that our current program supports student-centered learning is through a genius hour class. In our model, high school students meet daily for one hour to work on individual and group student-driven projects. These have included collaborative group projects like the construction of a Rube Goldberg machine, entrepreneurial projects, and school-improvement projects. Individual work has included exploring robotics, hydroponic gardening, creating an original role-playing game, 3-D modeling design, and vector modeling design. One of the aspects of this class that makes me proud is that it is led and directed by one of our school librarians Jen Gilbert. Her students are fortunate in that they can meet daily in our space and become experts at many of the tools and resources we have available. Jen does not dictate projects or topics, but helps foster her students’ individual interests and goals. One high school senior
recently told our school leadership team during his exit interview that, thanks to the genius hour class, he had decided to pursue an engineering degree. He described to me what this class and the opportunities that our library provided meant to him. He said, “This class and our library allowed me a chance to explore and learn about things I probably wouldn’t have considered on my own.”

Another opportunity our school library program has for supporting unique student learning is through our school-wide “passion project” week. Currently the topics of these projects come from our teachers, but our students can vote for projects in which they would like to participate. During this week, two hours a day for four days in the elementary grades, and three hours a day for four days in seventh through twelfth grades, students meet and develop a product, learn a skill, and/or provide a service. Projects this past year included the building of a food pantry, creating a pollinating garden on the school grounds, building a hoverboard that is accessible for one of our elementary students who has a disability, conducting a service at the cemetery, and many others. Students also documented their week through writing, photos, and videos, and shared these artifacts as a culminating event at a “presentation of learning night.” Moving forward, we hope students will take these slightly more-structured experiences and start developing independent projects focused on their own passions. One of my favorite parts of our passion project week is that many of the projects relied on the design and making capabilities of our school library, the information expertise of our staff, and true collaboration between students and teachers.

The unpredictability of what might be going on in our space every day is perhaps my favorite part of being a school librarian in our kindergarten through twelfth-grade public school.
More Project-Based Learning

Many of our regular classroom teachers are beginning to weave more and more project-based learning (PBL) and design-thinking opportunities into their instruction. Implementation of these two concepts, PBL and design thinking, are perfect opportunities for our school library to support teachers and students. One of our fifth-grade teachers Donnie Piercey has embedded “twenty percent time,” a concept similar to genius hour, into his classes. Students have used this 20 percent of instructional time and our library to explore the creation of video games, and created 2-D and 3-D designs to create prototypes on our CNC (i.e., programmable) lathe and laser cutter. One student even created a custom virtual Breakout EDU game in Minecraft.

Another one of our teachers Kerri Holder facilitates both language arts classes and Project Lead the Way programs for kindergarten through eighth grade. She gives her students numerous opportunities to demonstrate their learning in their own ways. I love that her classroom is close by and students can use our library resources to research, design, and build truly anything they can dream up. Kerri gave me and our library program one of the best compliments this year. One afternoon she told me, “In my previous schools I thought some things just were not possible or feasible. But here, I feel like I can come to you all, and you can make anything happen!”

The successful evolution of school libraries will not involve simply adding e-books or makerspaces, or implementing other individual ideas in isolation. Instead, successful evolution of school libraries will involve a continual evolution of perspectives and mindsets of students, other educators, and ourselves.
Factors Contributing to Success

Our supportive school leadership and our collaboration with teachers are two elements that allow all of this to work and help us provide unique and powerful experiences for students. Another important key to our current, but evolving, school library is the space itself. It is still very new, and we continue to adjust, but one of its best features is how flexible it can be. The furniture, many of the walls, and all shelving that isn’t against a wall can be moved easily. In my previous schools we were pretty much stuck with the layout of the library. Having the ability to transform our space in minutes allows us to meet more needs of students and teachers. We have a space for print materials and a self-checkout kiosk. A large open space can be used for seating, studying, reading, or presentations. This space has a small stage with a sound system and a large nine-screen array of HD flat-panel displays. We also have three rooms that can be combined to create one large meeting space, as well as eight smaller and flexible lab spaces that can be opened into four larger rooms. All the collapsible walls are floor-to-ceiling magnetic white boards. Each individual space also has its own touch-panel display linked to its own Google Calendar. The display shows if the room is booked; if the room is open, it can be reserved on the spot.

I will not attempt to predict exactly what school libraries will look like in ten or fifteen years, but I believe there are some things we can do to make sure school libraries still exist. With work and planning, school librarians are well equipped to be prepared, flexible, and nimble in our ability to support our students and teachers. Some of this flexibility will also likely involve some evolution of physical spaces and access to specific resources. I don’t feel we all need to have exactly the same kind of school library or program; however, I do believe that the definition and perceptions of our roles must evolve if we are to be successful in serving our patrons as they—and we—move toward the next horizon.

It is easier than ever for us to connect, collaborate, share, and learn with each other as school librarians, but, at the same time, it could be easy to forget all the other perspectives that exist out there. If you are reading this you likely love libraries and have had some great experiences with them, but many of our teaching colleagues, school leaders, parents, and many students may not have had such great experiences. The successful evolution of school libraries will not involve simply adding e-books or makerspaces, or implementing other individual ideas in isolation. Instead, successful evolution of school libraries will involve a continual evolution of perspectives and mindsets of students, other educators, and ourselves.

We can help students confidently and empathetically interpret the world around them. They will need a wide and varied set of skills to be successful, thoughtful, productive, and kind adults. In fifteen more years, when we all look back at how our profession and spaces have changed, we will, I hope, be able to say that school libraries are still an essential and powerful force in education.

James Allen is school librarian/EDhub director at Eminence Independent Schools in Eminence, Kentucky. He is a member of AASL and is a member of the AASL Best Apps for Teaching and Learning Committee. He is also past president of the Kentucky Association of School Librarians. James is a Google for Education Certified Innovator. He blogs at <www.tljamesa.com>.

Work Cited:
ON THE HORIZON

New Standards to Dawn at AASL 2017

Marcia A. Mardis, Chair, AASL Standards and Guidelines Editorial Board
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As the sun rises over the horizon each day, we rarely get the opportunity to consider how the new day contributes to the month that forms part of a season that culminates in the year. A year’s progress guides and shapes the development of all growing things. Though not necessarily in a tidy twelve-month cycle, while developing your new standards the AASL Standards and Guidelines Editorial Board worked day by day, assembling components gradually. Now we find ourselves having completed our development cycle. With our new standards just about to dawn, let’s take a moment to reflect on the seasons that have yielded our new standards.

The Standards’ Winter: Thinking and Planning

Winter is a time to think, to reflect on past challenges and successes, and to plan for new opportunities. At the beginning of our process, the editorial board worked together to review AASL’s current standards and their function in current teaching, learning, and leading. We contemplated the conditions that produced the current standards and guidelines as well as how well you told us they suited your work lives, your students’ needs, and conditions in your schools. AASL’s learning standards and program guidelines help school librarians outline ways to provide high-quality learning experiences that prepare learners for college, careers, and citizenship; create dynamic information environments; and establish effective school library programs. We critically examined signs of success and frustration.

Clearing the ground for new standards is very hard work that involves a concerted and balanced assessment of current standards and current learning, teaching, and leading needs, all blended with carefully selected past accomplishments and bold, optimistic future-casting. The editorial board used findings from an online survey to determine key areas for subsequent discussions in focus groups. In November 2015, at the AASL National Conference, forty attendees participated in six focus groups dedicated to standards and guidelines. Throughout spring 2016 AASL held fourteen additional focus groups at seven state affiliate conferences, including Alaska, California, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas, and Wisconsin.

In other words, your editorial board made decisions about the depth and breadth of the standards based on our shared history—our challenges and expertise and a sense of what needed to come next to continue our clear-eyed, steady progress toward our profession’s vision for learners’ futures. As we listened in focus groups, reviewed survey data, and discussed key documents, we noted changes that had occurred in education and society since 2007 when AASL’s Standards for the 21st-Century Learner were published. We read and analyzed research and reports about educational practices now and to come. We prioritized and planned what would grow best in the next season of development. And we realized that, as a team, we had the diversity and resilience to envision strong, sustainable standards.

The Standards’ Spring: Creating the Foundation

Spring is a time for renewal; it is a moving forward from careful planning to bold action. We did not plow our current standards under; we made measured, informed decisions about where and how to update what we have.
We reviewed the common beliefs and learner standards in *Standards for the 21st-Century Learner in Action* (2009) and the program guidelines in *Empowering Learners: Guidelines for School Library Programs* (2009) as well as AASL’s official position statements on effective school library programs as recognized in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). These documents provided us with a clear expression of the qualities of well-prepared learners, effective school librarians, and dynamic school libraries.

We then listened to the school library community and learned that most school librarians reported that our existing guiding documents reflected current learning environments and professional best practices. You asked us to streamline the standards’ structure, and make the standards and their structure simple, easy to use, interlinked, and parallel for learners, school librarians, and school libraries. You wanted us to remove repetitive text and dated terminology in the current standards, and use language and terminology that would resonate with stakeholders as well as school librarians. Your ideal standards are visual, driven by beloved elements like Think, Create, Share, Grow, and include single-word key-verb shortcuts. Because you are busy, innovative educators you asked us to make the standards’ content digital and searchable in a mobile app.

After carefully considering our guiding assumptions, values, and perspectives, the editorial board affirmed that:

1. **The school library is a unique and essential part of a learning community.**
   
   As a destination for on-site and virtual personalized learning, the school library is a vital bridge between the classroom and home. As the leader of this space and its functions, the school librarian ensures that the school library environment provides all members of the school community access to information and technology, connecting learning to real-world events. By providing access to an array of well-managed resources, school librarians enable academic knowledge to be linked to deep understanding.

2. **Qualified school librarians lead effective school libraries.**
   
   As they guide organizational and personal change, effective school librarians model, promote, and foster inquiry learning in adequately staffed and resourced school libraries. Qualified school librarians perform interlinked, interdisciplinary, and cross-cutting roles as instructional leaders, program administrators, educators, collaborative partners, and information specialists.

3. **Learners should be prepared for college, career, and life.**
   
   Committed to inclusion and equity, effective school librarians use evidence to determine what works, for whom, and under what set of conditions for each learner. Complemented by community engagement and innovative leadership, school librarians improve all learners’ opportunities for success. This success empowers learners to persist in inquiry, advanced study, enriching professional work, or community engagement through continuous improvement within and beyond the school building and school day.

4. **Reading is the core of personal and academic mastery.**
   
   The school library program is centered on engaging with relevant information resources and digital learning opportunities in a culture of reading. School librarians initiate and elevate motivational reading initiatives by using story and personal narrative to engage learners. School librarians curate current digital and print materials and technology to provide access to high-quality reading materials that encourage learners, educators, and families to become lifelong learners and readers.

To read the full executive summary of the research results from both the online survey and focus group phases, visit <http://knowledgequest.aasl.org/informing-school-library-standards-evidence-executive-summary-standards-guidelines-editorial-board-process>.
5. Intellectual freedom is every learner’s right.

Learners have the freedom to speak and hear what others have to say, rather than allowing others to control access to ideas and information. The school librarian’s responsibility is to develop in learners, educators, and all other members of the learning community the dispositions of freely expressing ideas and rigorously protecting the free expression of others.

6. Information technologies must be appropriately integrated and equitably available.

Although information technology is woven into almost every aspect of learning and life, not every learner and educator has equal access to up-to-date, robust technology and connectivity. An effective school library plays a crucial role in bridging digital and socioeconomic divides by providing access to information technology and fostering development of digital and information-related skills in all learners.

With our ideas and intent in place, and on the solid ground of our current standards, the editorial board dug its hands deep into the earth of creation. We chose our strongest ideas, positioned them favorably, planted them deeply, and ensured that they received adequate care and support to thrive.

The Standards’ Summer: Bringing and Sharing Ideas

The editorial board agreed that every new endeavor begins with a seed—the encapsulation of a question and the necessary information to develop it into an idea. This foundational notion led us to consider the range of seeds that would be needed to result in a garden of knowledge. Planting many seeds requires many hands and is work best done with partners and teams within learning communities. Choosing the best information to spark a wide variety of nascent ideas is a careful process, undertaken thoughtfully, and fertilized by high-quality resources. Ideas hold the seeds of new questions, different questions that result in new ideas. The confidence, ability, and resilience to identify these new learning opportunities and act on them often leads to exchanging ideas and questions with others, ever increasing the range and amount of knowledge one has to enjoy, produce, and provide. As we worked, we came to understand that we were not merely articulating a closed-ended process of learning; we were writing standards that reflected what we saw as a rich, ongoing growth cycle for learners, school librarians, and school libraries.

As we worked, we came to understand that we were not merely articulating a closed-ended process of learning; we were writing standards that reflected what we saw as a rich, ongoing growth cycle for learners, school librarians, and school libraries.

The Standards’ Autumn: Growing in New Directions

In the last decade standards have been a reliable contributor to effective educators’ practice. To keep school librarianship healthy, hearty, and productive, we revitalized our standards and guidelines to ensure that we’re cultivating dynamic, exciting learning and leadership. At the AASL National Conference we will all celebrate our year of standards creation. As a professional community, we will reap our intellectual contributions and visions, savor our harvest, and rest assured that our lasting and best ideas will not only be enjoyed this season but will nourish learners, school librarians, and school libraries in the seasons to come.
Mary Keeling, Chair, AASL Standards and Guidelines Implementation Task Force
mary.keeling@nn.k12.va.us

As the standards and guidelines editorial board concluded its planning stages, the AASL Standards and Guidelines Implementation Task Force (ITF) convened. Its charge was to develop a plan to support states, school systems, and individual schools as they implement the association’s new National School Library Standards. This broad outline describes some of the tasks involved in preparing the ITF plan.

September 2015–June 2016. Establish Implementation Priorities

Examined previous implementation plans, change theory, adult learning theory, and marketing principles as we considered big questions:
- What makes ideas “stick?”
- What features of effective organizational change management, professional development, marketing, and advocacy work in our context?
- How will the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) affect implementation of new standards?

Consulted editorial board’s research findings to discover school librarians’ and stakeholders’ goals. Identified priorities for implementation plan:
- The plan should be simple but customizable for different situations and adaptable to respond to changes in the educational landscape.
- The plan should reflect the core values of school librarianship.
- The plan should balance the tension between aspirational and realistic goals and objectives.

Established guiding principles to satisfy member needs, such as:
- Develop messages, tools, and resources for a variety of users.

### Implementation Task Force: A Broad Timeline

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**Research & Plan**

**Develop & Conduct Online Survey**

**Plan & Conduct Focus Groups**

**Establish Support Priorities**

**Draft Standards**

**Develop Implementation Plan**

**Share Drafted Content across Committees**

**Create Implementation Resources**

**Develop AASL Nat’l Conf. Programming**

**Develop Articles, Blog Posts, & Webinars**
Concurrent Timeline of AASL Standards and Implementation Development

**KEY**
- Editorial Board
- Implementation Task Force
- Collaborative Work

**June 2016–February 2017. Develop Implementation Plan**
- Examined editorial board’s draft materials and provided feedback.
- Recommended branding strategies to AASL staff.
- Conceptualized audience segments as “personas.”
- Predicted learning needs of audience segments.
- Generated ideas for multiple professional development channels, including face-to-face, traditional print, Web portal, and social media.

**February 2017–February 2018. Create Implementation Resources**
- Developed functional outline for Web portal.
- Reviewed and provided feedback to AASL designers on brand development.
- Synthesized shared foundations for “at-a-glance” one-page documents and infographics.
- Collaborated with the editorial board to plan AASL National Conference programming, including preconference workshops, general session, Unconference conversations, and concurrent sessions.
- Wrote articles and blog posts for *Knowledge Quest* (with editorial board).
- Developed webinars for eCOLLAB (with editorial board).

The Gantt chart in figure 1 helps to further illustrate the parallel working timelines and collaboration points between the editorial board and the task force to create your new standards and to ensure implementation support is available immediately upon launch.

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**FIGURE 1**

Concurrent Timeline of AASL Standards and Implementation Development

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- Plan for connecting librarians to each other and to other educators.
- Provide multiple paths and entry points for personalized learning.
- Determined goals, objectives, and action items.
- Prioritized action items in a three-year plan.
- Contributed persona descriptions and an appendix on implementation planning to the editorial board’s book manuscript.
Marcia A. Mardis is associate professor and assistant dean, Interdisciplinary Research and Education, in the College of Communication and Information at Florida State University (FSU) in Tallahassee. A longtime member of AASL, Marcia is chair of the AASL Standards and Guidelines Editorial Board. Among her recent honors were receiving the 2016 FSU College of Communication and Information’s Leadership Builder Award, a 2016 Michigan Association for Media in Education President’s Award for Outstanding Contribution to the Profession, and several research and teaching awards from FSU. She is the author of the in-press article “The OER Curation Life Cycle: Closing the Loop for Our Learners” to be published in School Library Connection and co-author of a number of in-press papers, including “Usage Data as Indicators of OER Utility” to be published in Journal of Online Learning Research, and the recently published “Potential of Graphic Nonfiction for Teaching and Learning Earth Science” in School Libraries Worldwide.

Mary Keeling is district supervisor of library media services for Newport News (VA) Public Schools where she has led development and implementation of a district-wide inquiry process model. She chairs the AASL Standards and Guidelines Implementation Task Force. A former Lilead Fellow, she has written for many school library-related publications; during 2015 and 2016 she was author of the “Management Matters” column in School Library Connection.
UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING AND SCHOOL LIBRARIES

A Logical Partnership
School library programs have historically provided information literacy services to a range of students, including those with physical and cognitive disabilities (Hill 2012). School library multimedia production activities have facilitated opportunities for learners to be engaged and to express their knowledge in non-traditional modes. In my roles as an elementary, middle, and high school librarian, I recognized that many of the frequent student library patrons and student library assistants demonstrated strong technical aptitude. These same students were often not successful in traditional learning environments. It became evident that these students were able to express their knowledge in forms other than customary paper-and-pencil tasks. The most dedicated student library assistants were often not strong academic performers but were adept at wiring a computer lab, videotaping a school event, or editing video productions.

School library technology-integrated activities delivered a lens through which it was apparent to my instructional partners and myself that learning could be tailored to permit all learners to express their knowledge and abilities. Without the knowledge of a pedagogical framework for this phenomenon, we were experiencing the world of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) within the framework of the school library program. UDL and school libraries form a natural partnership. This article will explore the basic tenets of UDL in relation to collaborative curriculum development and implementation; provide a case study examination of UDL principles in action; and suggest school library curricular activities that provide opportunities for multiple means of representation, action, and expression.

Universal Design for Learning

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) began to evolve in the 1950s in Europe, Japan, and the United States with the emphasis on removing physical barriers in building construction. Kelly D. Roberts et al. (2011) noted that, in the 1960s and the 1970s, the UDL concept further evolved to integrating all people in architectural and environmental designs. The Higher Education Opportunity Act (2008) defined UDL as a scientifically valid framework for guiding educational practice that:

(A) provides flexibility in the ways information is presented, in the ways students respond or demonstrate knowledge and skills, and in the ways students are engaged; and

(B) reduces barriers in instruction, provides appropriate accommodations, supports, and challenges, and maintains high achievement expectations for all students, including students with disabilities and students who are limited English proficient.

The Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) defines UDL as a “framework to improve and optimize teaching and learning for all people based on scientific insights into how humans learn” (2017). According to the National Center on Universal Design for Learning, “UDL provides a blueprint for creating instructional goals, methods, materials, and assessments that work for everyone—not a single one-size-fits-all solution but rather flexible approaches that can be customized and adjusted for individual needs” (2014). UDL supports the needs of diverse learners, including learning-disabled students from diverse cultural backgrounds (King-Sears 2009).

Universal Design for Learning and Neuroscience

The foundations of UDL are based around guiding principles for three
primary brain networks (Meyer, Rose, and Gordon 2014). These brain networks are the Recognition Networks, Strategic Networks, and Affective Networks. The Recognition Networks encompass the “what” of teaching and learning; “how we gather facts and categorize what we see, hear, and read, identify letters, words, or an author’s style are recognition tasks” (CAST 2017). Different students process and comprehend information differently. The Recognition Networks are best supported in learning environments that include multiple representations of concepts and provide flexibility in modality, explanations, and examples (CAST 2017). Optimally, school library programs are the center of this Recognition Networks’ flexibility in Pre-K–12 schools.

The “how” of learning occurs within the Strategic Networks. Action and expression are the guiding principles of the Strategic Networks. Planning and performance tasks, the organization of ideas, and the ways in which students demonstrate knowledge are examples of the Strategic Networks’ “how” of learning (CAST 2017). This student demonstration of knowledge is best supported in environments that include multiple ways for presenting and expressing materials, for developing meta-skills, and for demonstrating knowledge and understanding (CAST 2017).

The “why” of learning occurs within the Affective Networks. Supporting the Affective Networks is facilitated by the guiding principles of motivation, challenging students to provide examples of the “why” of learning, and providing students with options for how they learn course content and information (CAST 2017). Students’ natural learning differences affect engagement with course content. Providing options via meaningful interactions and multiple modes of learning supports learning via the Affective Networks (CAST 2017).

The National Center on Universal Design for Learning (NCUDL) (2011) provided UDL guidelines that are organized according to the three main principles of UDL (Representation, Action and Expression, and Engagement). The three main principles are:

- Principle I. Provide Multiple Means of Representation
- Principle II. Provide Multiple Means of Action and Expression
- Principle III. Provide Multiple Means of Engagement (NCUDL 2013)

The three main principles and supporting guidelines are illustrated via an excellent graphic at <www.udlcenter.org/aboutudl/udlguidelines/udlguidelines_graphicorganizer>.

**UDL and School Libraries**

A consistent expectation of school librarians is the effective delivery of instruction to students with a range of learning needs. Ying Zhong, in a study of academic library instruction, noted that, in the design of library instruction, the simple adoption of UDL facilitates students’ mastering of skills (2012). Clark Nall noted that the principles of (UDL), when incorporated in academic libraries, provide learning opportunities for a wide array of students, especially for students with learning disabilities (2015). Elfreda V. Blue and Darra Pace in “UD and UDL: Paving the Way toward Inclusion and Independence in the School Library” stated that UDL “can greatly enhance the library experiences of diverse students, leading to inclusion and independence for students with disabilities” (2011, 54).

In **Empowering Learners: Guidelines for School Library Programs** AASL described the teacher role of the school librarian as one that “empowers students to become critical thinkers, enthusiastic readers, skillful researchers and ethical users of information” (2009, 18). The role of “instructional partner” was identified by AASL, via a survey of select school librarians and administrators in 2009, as the most critical role in the future of the profession (2009, 16). In **Empowering Learners** the school librarian’s interconnected teaching roles of instructional partner and teacher are evident when the instructional partner is described as one who “collaborates with classroom teachers” (AASL 2009, 17) and “understands the curriculum of the school thoroughly and can partner with teachers to create exciting learning experiences in an information- and media-rich environment” (AASL 2009, 19). These key roles of the school librarian, particularly the roles of instructional partner and information specialist, serve as a framework for modeling and infusing UDL principles and strategies throughout the entire school curriculum. The following case study illustrates how collaborative school library curriculum planning and coteaching can support students’ accessing the UDL Recognition Networks, Strategies Networks, and Affective Networks to provide for optimal learning. The three main UDL principles (Representation, Action and Expression, and Engagement) are included in table 1 to denote their application in the following scenario.

**Case Study and Connections to UDL**

The focus of this case study is a group of five middle school students who collaborated on a research and multimedia project on the United States Civil War. The students were...
### Table 1. Case study research/production process and UDL.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process</th>
<th>UDL Principles</th>
<th>UDL Indicators</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The students took notes with varying levels of assistance based on their respective accommodations, including the use of assistive technologies.</td>
<td><strong>Representation</strong> by providing options for language and options for comprehension.</td>
<td>2.1–2.3, 3.2–3.4, 7.3, and 9.2</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Action and Expression</strong> by optimizing access to tools and assistive technologies.</td>
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<td><strong>Engagement</strong> by minimizing threats and distraction, and facilitating personal coping skills and strategies.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students could choose from print materials, online resources, and audio and video resources from which to take notes.</td>
<td><strong>Representation</strong> by providing options for perception and comprehension.</td>
<td>2.1-2.3, 2.5, 4.1, 5.2, 7.1–7.2, and 8.2</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Action and Expression</strong> by varying the methods for navigation and using multiple tools for construction.</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Engagement</strong> by optimizing individual choice, and varying demands and resources.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The classroom teacher provided significant assistance to the students in writing script.</td>
<td><strong>Representation</strong> by providing options for language and comprehension.</td>
<td>2.1–2.2, 3.1–3.3, and 7.3</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Action and Expression</strong> by providing options for expression and communication, and providing options for executive functions.</td>
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<td><strong>Engagement</strong> by minimizing threats.</td>
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<tr>
<td>A storyboard was developed, and the students were asked to find images to align with the text.</td>
<td><strong>Representation</strong> by illustration through multimedia and highlighting patterns, critical feature, big ideas, and relationships.</td>
<td>2.5, 3.2, 6.2–6.3 and 8.2–8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Action and Expression</strong> by providing options for expression and communication, and providing options for executive functions.</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Engagement</strong> by varying demands and resources, and fostering collaboration and community.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The soundtrack was recorded. Using a video copy stand, small groups of students recorded the video images, and incorporated some in-camera effects.</td>
<td><strong>Representation</strong> by guiding information processing, visualization and manipulation, and maximizing transfer and generalization.</td>
<td>2.5 3.4, 4.2, 5.1, 5.2, and 8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Action and Expression</strong> by providing multiple media for communication, multiple tools for construction, and optimizing access to tools and assistive technologies.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Engagement</strong> by fostering collaboration and community.</td>
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Once the note-taking process was completed, the classroom teacher provided significant assistance to the students in writing a script. With the script completed, a storyboard was developed, and the students were assigned the task of finding images to align with the text. This assignment provided an opportunity to discuss copyright and fair use.

The next step was to record the narration and soundtrack. The oldest of the five students, who was the best reader, narrated the script. Using a video copy stand, small groups of students recorded the images from print and online sources, and incorporated some in-camera effects. Editing the final video was completed by my working with rotating pairs of students.

Table 1 outlines each phase of the research and production process, and the corollary UDL principles and indicators. The full list of checkpoints (indicators) associated with UDL can be viewed at <www.udlcenter.org/research/researchevidence>.

The entire research and production process took about three months. Some entire class sessions were dedicated to the process, particularly the note-taking. Much of the production work was accomplished by working with the students individually or in teams. To celebrate these students’ efforts, we arranged for a premier showing of the video and invited teachers, administrators, and central office supervisors to attend. The students shared with the audience the process of making the video and their knowledge acquired in the process.

We sensed the students learned more in this constructivist process than they would have by more traditional means. The most vivid example of this qualitative supposition was demonstrated by the narrator. As she was narrating a scene on the assassination of President Lincoln, she suddenly went off script and said, “Oh my god, they killed the man.” This was a landmark moment for the classroom teacher and myself. We had been discussing the Lincoln assassination through the entire process, but it wasn’t until the narrator read the script in conjunction with the images, that she correlated the assassination with the death of President Lincoln (consistent with multiple means of Representation, Action and Expression, and Engagement). In addition to the knowledge acquired on the United States Civil War, the students were provided with opportunities to engage with a variety of technologies. The students expressed motivation and satisfaction with the process.

**Conclusion**

The pairing of research and multimedia production has a rich history in school libraries (Lamb 2015). This case study illustrates how the principles of UDL are naturally rooted in school library curriculum and activities. School librarians may use information presented in table 1 as a template for other research and multimedia collaborative activities. As school librarians embark on instructional partnerships with co-educators, the following are some additional UDL-compliant curricular activities that provide for multiple means of Representation, Action and Expression, and Engagement.

At the elementary level, digital storytelling provides a vehicle to
School librarians must meet the needs of all learners. UDL provides the ideal framework for collaborative curriculum planning and implementation to meet these needs.

David E. Robinson is an assistant professor and graduate program director in the School Library Media Program at Towson University. He coauthored (with David R. Wizer) the 2016 article “Universal Design for Learning and the Quality Matters Guidelines for the Design and Implementation of Online Learning Events” in the September issue of International Journal of Technology in Teaching and Learning.

Works Cited:


When I first receive a manuscript, I begin by brainstorming and asking myself, “How can I use my illustrations to add to this story?”

I still remember the excitement I felt as a kid when I opened a brand new coloring book filled with illustrations of my favorite cartoon characters. Each illustration was a simple outline, a blank canvas, waiting for me to personalize it with whatever colors I chose. The possibilities were endless. Armed with my box of crayons, I began coloring each page while carefully making sure that absolutely no crayon marks made it past the thick, black lines—not even a smudge.

Half-way through the coloring process, I started veering away from my original plan. I began to embellish the characters with different accessories like a floppy hat or cowboy boots. Sometimes I would even create new characters altogether by adding fairy wings or mermaid fins. Then I would go a step further and add a backdrop to each page. Now the new and improved characters were exploring a treetop canopy in the forest or looking for lost treasure at the bottom of the ocean rather than floating around on a blank piece of paper. Before I knew it, way more crayon marks were beyond the lines than in between.

Much like my six-year-old self, I still enjoy coloring beyond the lines. When I first receive a manuscript, I begin by brainstorming and asking myself, “How can I use my illustrations to add to this story?” As a picture book illustrator, I aim to not just depict what is written in the manuscript but to go beyond the text. I want my illustrations to convey a complete and believable story and to create a rich visual world that fully engages the reader.

Throughout my career I have been fortunate enough to work on very different stories written by extremely talented authors—the kinds of stories that immediately get my imagination running and my creative juices flowing. After the initial brainstorming, I typically start a book project with researching even before I begin any sketching. With the Web so readily accessible, it’s usually the first resource I turn to. However, depending on the story, it is also important to verify that those sources are accurate and trustworthy.

Muon Van’s *In a Village by the Sea* (Creston 2015) is a fictional story about longing for the comforts of home. The story is inspired by the author’s father and the author’s ancestral fishing village in Vietnam. Even though historical and geographical accuracy were not imperative for the final art, I still wanted to pay homage to the author’s culture. In this case I was able to do most of the research on the Web...
while drawing inspiration from my own travels to Asia and my own cultural heritage. I wanted to pair the spare lyrical text with highly detailed and lush illustrations. To do so, I gathered ideas and color palettes from online images and personal photographs of seascapes, vegetation, traditional housing, boats, clothing, and food from Vietnam and other parts of Southeast Asia. Researching can also spark some unexpectedly great ideas. While browsing images of fishing villages, I randomly came across a sweet photograph of a Labrador sitting on a pier that eventually became the inspiration for the family dog in the book.

Ada Byron Lovelace and the Thinking Machine by Laurie Wallmark (Creston 2015) is a biographical picture book about the world’s first computer programmer. Ada, a 19th-century English mathematician, wrote the first computer program long before computers were invented. She was a fascinatingly complex historical figure much like the complex ornate setting of the Victorian era in which she lived. I wanted the illustrations to be equally complex and rich in content. Since this was a biography, it was crucial that the illustrations accurately depicted her likeness, her surroundings, and her accomplishments. Even though her contributions to the STEM fields have been mostly overlooked, a growing amount of reference material about Ada is now available online and in libraries.

The Web was definitely a good starting point for research about her. Because there are quite a few websites about Ada, I was able to browse and compare notes from different sites to fact-check. To see many of the intricate technical machinery mentioned in the story, I was able to visit the Computer History Museum in Mountain View, California, and see a temporary working exhibit of Charles Babbage’s Difference Engine. The author, who has done extensive research on Ada for this book, was a wonderful resource as well. In addition, I had a good selection of books available to double-check the accuracy of images and information found on the Web. As I read half a dozen books on Ada, I discovered many captivating anecdotes about her life. I found out that she had a kaleidoscope collection, played the harp, was fluent in French, and had a pet cat. I was able to incorporate those tidbits into my illustrations, hoping to make her seem more authentic and more relatable to the reader.

Marissa Moss’s Kate Warne, Pinkerton Detective (Creston 2017) is a biographical picture book about America’s first female detective and her first successful undercover case. The scarceness of information about Kate’s life that I was able to find is a testament to the fact that her existence has indeed remained a mystery. Even the authenticity of the few photos of Kate undercover has been questioned. Due to the lack of reference materials about Kate, I took a different approach to researching Kate’s life than I had when researching Ada’s life. To prepare to illustrate the book about...
Kate, I realized that I would have to rely on information about the time period in which she lived and about other well-known people from that era.

While working on the illustrations for *Kate Warne, Pinkerton Detective*, I performed a bit of detective work myself, piecing together information about the time period and its inhabitants so I could form a complete picture and have a better understanding of Kate’s life and surroundings. What would Kate wear? What did downtown Chicago look like in the 1850s? How did transferring money work on the Adams Express train? While these are concrete facts and details that I can convey in the illustrations—women’s attire of the 1850s, architecture from downtown Chicago during that time, a bank chest from the Adam’s Express Company, and even a hint of Kate’s involvement in thwarting the attempted assassination of Abraham Lincoln on his way to Washington for the inauguration—the rest of the illustrations were completed with a sprinkling of creativity and a dash of imagination. That was the fun part! In the end I hope that my illustrations portray a sense of mystery along with enough historical accuracy to bring Kate’s case to life.

During my school visit presentations, kids are often the most surprised to learn that as an illustrator, not only do I draw pictures but I also read a lot of books. Learning and exploring different topics while I research for a picture book and then relaying that knowledge to the reader through my illustrations are the most rewarding parts of my job. Very much like the feeling when I opened a brand new coloring book as a kid, I still get excited when I read a new manuscript. The possibilities are endless!

April Chu began her career as an architect with a degree from the University of California, Berkeley, but decided to return to her true passion of illustrating and storytelling. Her picture books have received starred reviews from *Kirkus*, *Booklist*, *School Library Journal*, and *Publishers Weekly*. Ada Byron Lovelace and the Thinking Machine (*Creston 2015*) won a 2015 California Reading Association Eureka! Gold Award for Nonfiction Children’s Books, and was included in *Booklist*’s 2015 Top Ten Science and Health Books for Youth; *Booklist* Editor’s Choice: Books for Youth 2015; and National Science Teachers Association’s Outstanding Science Trade Books for Students K–12: 2016, a list assembled with the cooperation of the Children’s Book Council. April currently lives and works in Oakland, California. For more information, visit <www.aprilchu.com>.