IMAGINING THE FUTURE

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"The implementation of the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts affords school librarians and their planning committees an opportunity to reinvigorate their roles in the school as curators of the school library collection, innovators in the use of instructional technology, and leaders in instructional planning."

Finding Inspiration in the Common Core — pg 19
Imagine the future.  
Imagine. The future!

Although the same words are used in the above two lines, the punctuation positions the first as a task and turns the second into a vision. The space between sentences in the latter creates a place for dreams to grow, while the former creates a vision of big paper wall charts for the future to be sketched and plotted. In the first, the future is around the corner, the dim shape visible and school librarians planning for its arrival as if it were an eagerly awaited guest. In the second, the future is simply out there, an amorphous cloud that portends both positive and negative experiences. It’s a bit scary. It’s easier, in some ways, to take out the punctuation. This allows the school library profession to treat the future as if planning for it was on the administrative checklist: one of the many tasks we must do to manage library programs, as if it were just another lesson plan for the class we face tomorrow.

School librarians are good at tasks. We get a sense of fulfillment and satisfaction from organizing, structuring, and managing. We are skilled at brainstorming at conference sessions about the future, and, with the satisfaction of a job well done, look around at walls lined with the largest Post-it chart paper filled with matrices, timelines, and goal charts. The future is planned for; check that one off the to-do list. In fact, our fondness for organizing, structuring, and managing may be characteristics that lured us to the job in the first place.

The dispositions, responsibilities, skills, and self-assessments listed as job requirements for school librarians also ensure that, as a profession, we are very good at organizing information, managing the logistics of location and access, and charting the progress of information use. Over the years, we have assimilated new tasks, new formats, and completely new roles into the basic structure of a school library and its program. In organizational management, this process is called “institutional isomorphism,” which acknowledges the myths, rituals, and pressures that make it very difficult to change the functioning of any institution.

Looking back over the decades, it’s easy to see how school libraries have grown and changed using resources and formats that were impossible to predict once upon a time, yet were placed into the structure of the library without changing it. Those management
skills and our history of assimilation make many in our profession uneasy when looking to the future.

The fact that we are so good at visualizing, planning, and implementing makes me worry. Our history shows that, although we have accepted and sometimes embraced new roles and resources, we still force those new elements into the existing structure. If we imagine the future, will we not be tempted to force that future into preset roles and tasks? If the reality of the future doesn’t fit the vision that we have created, will we be able to cast aside the vision to which we’ve given our blood, sweat, and tears, and readily accept the future that will exist? Our history works against us.

Think about it. Remember the story of audiovisual materials—those filmstrips, films, and other media that the 1960 standards used as both a prediction and a cautionary note. In those standards, the profession was warned that instructional materials in different formats were coming, and the prediction was accurate (AASL 1960). We added AV materials to our catalogs, our instruction, and our administrative roles. Our shelves, though, in most school libraries, remained inviolate, as the materials were contained in locked back rooms, away from any chance of contaminating the sanctity of the books. Even when the film format segued to videotape and then to DVD—formats that rendered obsolete those foolish arguments that these materials were impossible to shelve and were very expensive to lose—we still held those resources in back rooms locked away from patron use.

As the delivery format of video is changing to streaming and other virtual containers, we have to face the fact that, for the most part, we have allowed an entire medium to evolve, grow, change, and wither without ever fully integrating it into our collections. But when we imagined the future of video, we also saw it as contained, shelveable, and only for teachers. Our students move in a world of video contained in their back pockets and available on demand, except in school, where that world is locked away from them.

AASL’s Role

Strong professional associations can provide a framework for these kinds of visioning activities. The futuristic vision we have in our school libraries is constrained through the lens of our programs, opportunities, and resources. Even the most far-seeing of us has a narrow viewpoint when looking from the platform of our own libraries. As an organization of strong, committed librarians with roles that

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**Imagining a different program gains impetus by catching glimpses of other programs on the road ahead, just around the bend.**

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stretch the breadth and depth of school librarianship, AASL can stretch our vision in three important ways.

**Standards and Guidelines**

To ensure that students and staff are effective users of ideas and information is the mission that has guided us for decades (AASL and AECT 1988, 1998). Still a strong statement of why libraries exist, the mission has stretched us and helped us redefine what it means to be an effective user and what containers for ideas and information might look like. The mission leads to AASL’s Standards for the 21st-Century Learner (AASL 2007). The common beliefs in that document give us areas to consider and skills, responsibilities, dispositions, and self-assessments to bring into a forward-thinking school library program. Finally, Empowering Learners outlines the principles and characteristics of a strong school library program. When we stop to imagine, the mission, standards, and guidelines still lead us to the future’s horizon.

**Networking and Sharing**

School librarianship can be an isolating profession. Instead of departments and grade levels, the school librarian meets the needs of all grade levels, all subject areas, and all students. Being everything to everybody also means that it’s hard to find a strong connection to a group of people within the school. The field has created multiple ways to share outside of the building, though. AASLForum and other electronic discussion lists, like ALA Connect, and spaces to share ideas abound. Imagining a different program gains impetus by catching glimpses of other programs on the road ahead, just around the bend.

**Learning and Growing**

Ahh...conference season. Even in the age of virtual connections, school librarians still pack their bags and head for Camelot. The face-to-face learning that happens during and between sessions still packs conference halls with attendees by the thousands. Virtual conferences and webinars are plentiful, but don’t seem to have the draw that sitting beside other
If we stop making plans that force-fit the future into our existing worldview and just let our imaginations wander unfettered by current structure, what kinds of libraries will we see?

Librarians in packed sessions seems to. Because of our isolation in our buildings, school librarians forge a path beyond the limits that constrain classroom teachers. We actively strive to learn from each other on the multiple fronts that make up school librarianship.

The Endless Possibilities

Looking at an airport magazine, I was captivated by an advertisement for a 3-D printer. Imagine! A printer that uses poly-fiber material to print a three-dimensional object. Imagine! Students in science could develop futuristic models and “print” them. Students in social studies or math could create scale models of historic buildings and see them come to life. I was so captivated by this ad that I could not leave the page for several minutes. Similar to the stages of grief, I went through the stages of futurism while staring at the page.

Normative—Instinctively, I put this new device into my world of known objects. Oh, it’s just another printer with raised lettering. No printer can possibly print something truly three-dimensional, so this has to be a normal printer, just a bit fancier.

Disbelief—As I read through the ad copy again and again, I refused to accept the obvious. Yes, it both said and illustrated the 3-D characteristics, but no printer can print in 3-D. This has to be a joke. Maybe it just prints out multiple pages and the user can construct the image out of folded paper.

Intrigue—This first stage of acceptance turns the mind in other directions. How does this work? What does the product look like coming out of the printer? Does it slowly form, like the old dot-matrix printers that went back and forth on the same line to create a bold print? Or does the printer form the object inside and just spit it out fully formed?

Imagination—Wow, look at what this can do. What could we do in science classes? What would DNA modeling look like? Think about art or architecture!

Allure—I want one!

The problem with planning for the future is that we tend to ignore the possibilities that present themselves beyond what we think is possible. Dick Tracy, talking into his watch in the old comic strip from the last century, seemed to be a fantasy beyond the scope of imagination, yet now we can see Tracy’s communication device as yet another example of fantasy turned reality.

If we stop making plans that force-fit the future into our existing worldview and just let our imaginations wander unfettered by current structure, what kinds of libraries will we see? If we stop and imagine, what learning and teaching tools can we dream up? What information resources and what containers can we visualize?

As a time capsule for school librarianship, we have to just imagine, without planning, without organizing, and, most importantly, without forcing those fantasies into the current structures of school libraries today. We can’t have iPads sitting in closets because we can’t figure out how to check them out; we can’t deny e-books because we have nowhere to place the barcode, and we can’t continue to spend time on wasteful procedures such as inventory when it does not account for the thousands of resources we use in virtual format.

Stop. Imagine! The future awaits.

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It’s early September, and school librarians across the country are back in school. Some of us are returning to programs that benefit from strategic planning initiatives, with clear goals and objectives for the year created by a library advisory committee (LAC), a group of educators, students, and parents who support our school library programs. Those of us without strategic plans are prioritizing our tasks and attempting to meet the needs of our school communities based on our own knowledge, beliefs, and experience. In both cases, we are guided by a vision of what we want our programs to be. We imagine the future, and we make plans to get there.

School librarians work with a variety of media and tools, including new technologies, to reach our goals for student learning. To guide us, we have various documents from AASL, including Empowering Learners and Standards for the 21st-Century Learner, plus state and national standards, including the Common Core State Standards. This issue of KQ is all about the benefits of collegial strategic planning that seeks to clarify the role of the school library program with the goal of increasing student learning.

The issue kicks off with the article “Plan for Success: The AASL Planning Guide for Empowering Learners.” It leads us through a process of planning for the school library program through this online tool from AASL.

Essential to this planning process is the establishment of an LAC. This issue features a trio of articles on the use of LACs in planning. Janie Pickett shares her experience of establishing an LAC in a new school, and Nancy Cravey details how her school library’s LAC helped implement the Common Core State Standards. If you are among the 90 percent who reported in a recent survey that they don’t have an LAC (One Question Survey Results 2008), you will want to read Meghan Harper and Jennifer Schwelik’s guide to creating one.

Numerous authors in this issue talk about having a vision and goals to guide planning. Mary Keeling shares the story of how school librarians in one school system worked collaboratively on a mission statement for school library programs that supported the educational mission of the school system.

School librarians’ plans are imbued with our best hopes for our libraries, our programs, and, most importantly, our students. Through engaged, inquiry-based learning, access to high-quality relevant literature and information, and use of the latest technologies, school library programs help prepare students to become literate, informed citizens and lifelong learners. An award-winning team of a school librarian Kay Wejrowski and her principal Mat McRae shares examples of a vibrant collaborative effort focused on student reading and learning. Jennifer Robins and Patricia Antrim discuss Response to Intervention (RtI) and the role school librarians play in planning and supporting interventions for individual students. The activities involved in collaboratively planning lessons and units with a teacher team are the subject of “Pass the Chocolate: Planning with Teachers.”
The work of bringing imagination to reality and undertaking the steps to a desired future requires making designs to get there. Frances Bryant Bradburn shares the steps involved in Design Thinking and challenges us to consider both the spaces where we work and our evolving roles in those spaces. IdaMae Craddock offers a means of bringing the real world into school through community assessment of students’ work as we help students imagine and plan for their futures in our communities.

As we imagine the future, we are always cognizant of new technologies shaping our work spaces, our roles, and our students. Sylvia Knight Norton outlines a process for technology planning, underscoring the leadership role of the school librarian, while Melissa Johnston reminds us of the necessity of incorporating and supporting other technology leaders in today’s schools.

Four online exclusives (available at <www.ala.org/aasl/aaslpubsandjournals/knowledgequest/archive/v42no1>) offer additional insights into planning. In “Strategic Planning and AASL: Envisioning Our Future and Remaining Relevant,” Susan Ballard, immediate past president, shares AASL’s strategic planning process to help advance the school library profession. In “Makin’ It Real: Building a Bright 3-D Future for Planning,” Bob King introduces three tools from instructional design and architecture and suggests we look for the added real-world dimension in our work. In “Making Time for Professional Development When There Is None,” Michelle Luhtala shares how technology tools were used in a planning and assessment process that also served as professional development. Wendy DeGroat and Steven Yates, guest editors of the January/February 2012 issue of KQ on futurecasting, revisit their view of the future and invite us to make wise plans for collection development and technology as we look ahead to the future and imagine what kinds of literacies our students will need.

The features in this issue explore how to plan effectively for meaningful school library programs. A constant theme that emerges is that of collaboration in program planning. To create highly effective programs that meet students’ and colleagues’ needs—resulting in improved academic achievement—we, as school librarians, must solicit the input and assistance of the greater school community and the support of the building principal. As educational leaders, we work closely with our school communities to articulate the library program’s mission, providing the foundation for program development. Our tasks are to assess the current program, address the changes confronting it, and clearly understand and define users’ needs. This information is critical to create realistic and attainable goals and objectives that identify our school’s teaching and learning priorities and provide direction for the school library program as we help students learn and grow.

The school year starts with such promise for the full year ahead. It’s easy to have big dreams and to see the potential for growth in our students and our school library programs. But soon the school year sweeps us up in its momentum of schedules and quarterly expectations, and our lofty dreams are replaced with daily tasks and demands. An artist friend of one of us recently posted the following as her status on Facebook: “Arg. Having ideas for art and having none of them work when you try to put them on paper is terrible.” Her post aptly captures the tension inherent in the theme of this issue, the pull between imagination and the reality of making, implementing, and re-evaluating plans.

School librarians are artists. We work with tools and resources to create opportunities for student learning. We imagine futures for our students, our school libraries, our programs, our schools, and ourselves. Imagination requires work and planning to put ideas on the drawing board, ideas that will eventually lead to innovation and positive results for our students. The most important resource we have in this endeavor is collaboration with our stakeholders and colleagues.

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School librarians can allow change to happen to them and quietly accept the outcome, or they can manage change and use it to strengthen their programs and the academic achievement of their students.
To Plan or Not to Plan

Change happens. Changes and challenges facing school librarians are occurring at a rapid pace. School librarians can allow change to happen to them and quietly accept the outcome, or they can manage change and use it to strengthen their programs and the academic achievement of their students.

School librarians throughout the country struggle to determine how to enact meaningful change that will strengthen their programs. They seek ways to increase collaboration with classroom teachers, to prepare their collections to meet the needs of the new Common Core State Standards, and to offer highly effective programs that prepare students to master information literacy and technology skills. Some deal with inadequate staff and inadequate or outdated facilities, collections, and technologies. Others try to identify methods to adopt AASL’s 2007 Standards for the 21st-Century Learner. Some look for new models for delivery of school library programs. Most grapple with the gradual transition from print collections to digital collections.

What is the solution? How can a school librarian provide the leadership needed to successfully navigate these changing times?

To be effective, educational programs require leadership, planning, execution, and assessment. The school librarian, as an educational leader, must engage in strategic planning to create a program that focuses on the learning and informational needs of the entire educational community. Yet many school library leaders do not formalize their programs through planning.

Without a clearly defined mission and measurable goals, many school library programs continue to be viewed by their educational communities as places where students borrow books or drop by to check their e-mail. Teachers and administrators often lack the ability to define their school’s library program because the role of the program, while perfectly formulated within the mind of the individual school librarian, is not discussed, shared, and embraced by the entire school community.
THANKFULLY, HELP IS AVAILABLE IN THE FORM OF THE AASL ONLINE TOOL “A PLANNING GUIDE FOR EMPOWERING LEARNERS, WITH SCHOOL LIBRARY PROGRAM ASSESSMENT RUBRIC.”

With no articulation of the program’s role in teaching and learning, the school librarian is often marginalized and is not able to collaboratively teach the important information and technology skills that students and teachers need to be successful.

Planning Made Easier

Thankfully, help is available in the form of the AASL online tool “A Planning Guide for Empowering Learners, with School Library Program Assessment Rubric.” This online planner provides the direction and tools needed to create an educational program based on the 2009 Empowering Learners program guidelines. The planner guides the school librarian and the school library’s stakeholders through the planning process, from mission to assessment (2013b).

AASL has partnered with Britannica Digital Learning to make the online planner easily accessible at a reasonable cost. For $40 for the first year’s subscription and $20 for each year thereafter (with discounts for AASL members and bulk purchases), the school librarian gets access to a powerful tool that involves the interested parties in creating a vital program that meets the needs of the entire educational community (AASL 2013a).

Prior to embarking on this planning journey, a substantive conversation with the building principal will add meaning and weight to the process. School librarians know the importance of building a trusting, supportive relationship with the principal. Discussing the plan with the principal, pointing out that it will result in a more effective program that will lead to higher student achievement, is critical. Asking the principal to serve on the planning team and garnering his or her support for the plan will signal to the school community that this planning is worthwhile.

Perhaps the most beneficial aspect of using the online planner is the involvement of community representatives in the process. The voice of the lone librarian often goes unheard in schools. The process used in the online planner involves the formation of a planning team, including teacher, administrator, parent, student, and staff representatives. This team provides the school librarian with a forum to share his or her vision of an effective school library program and with opportunities to educate colleagues and other stakeholders about these vital programs. As the team members work through the planning process, they become more informed about the role the school library program plays in teaching and learning, and they become advocates for its development and success. Using the online planner, the team collaborates with the school librarian to create meaningful goals and objectives and prepares a plan of action to accomplish them.

Empowering Learners: Guidelines for School Library Programs lays the foundation to enable school librarians to create a program in which they can teach to AASL’s Standards for the 21st-Century Learner and help students reach the benchmarks documented in Standards for the 21st-Century Learner in Action.

In embracing the learning standards and program guidelines, school librarians are able to define the role of the school librarian and the role of the school library program. It is crucial that educators and parents understand these two roles. The school library program touches every member of the school community, so involving representatives in the planning process facilitates program change and growth that better meets stakeholders’ needs. It is imperative that everyone in the school understands that a correlation exists between effective school library programs (staffed by trained professionals) and increased academic achievement (Scholastic Research & Results 2008).

Let the Planning Begin

The online planner involves several key steps that help the school librarian articulate the purposes for planning. This is the point where
challenges and changes that need to be addressed are considered. This is also the point where the librarian begins to think about key individuals to serve on the planning team and represent groups of stakeholders. The librarian records thoughts about the selection of team members, what their participation will contribute to the effort, and their responsibilities. The librarian then chooses those individuals whom he or she believes will best serve the planning team.

Once the team is in place, the first meeting provides the opportunity for the librarian to share his or her vision of the school library program, outline the planning process, and create a timeline. The team begins the work of creating the program’s mission statement and developing the program goals and objectives. Empowering Learners: Guidelines for School Library Programs states, “The school library program is built on a long-term strategic plan that reflects the mission, goals, and objectives of the school” (AASL 2009, 29). Working together, team members carefully examine the school’s planning documents and craft library program statements that support them.

Information Collection
The team’s next task is to gather meaningful information about the existing school library program. This information is used to create a baseline assessment of the program. Team members gather statistics (class visits, schedules, circulation, database usage, collaborative planning, classes taught by the librarian, and more), conduct interviews with stakeholders, and administer questionnaires. The online planner includes the School Library Program Assessment Rubric, which assesses the program based on the guidelines found within each of the four chapters presented in Empowering Learners: “Developing Visions for Learning,” “Teaching for Learning,” “Building the Learning Environment,” and “Empowering Learning through Leadership.” Team members collect and analyze the data. They compare the data to the program’s mission statement, goals, and objectives, and, in so doing, they identify the steps needed to improve the program.

Plan of Action
Brainstorming strategies for program improvement, the team members compile an action plan that includes the critical steps needed to improve the program. Once the goals and objectives for each action step are identified, team members must examine each one to determine the needed resources, the individual or group who will assume responsibility for the step, the timeline, and the information that will be collected to assess whether the step has been successfully completed. The goals and objectives are entered on action plan worksheets and planning charts in the online program. The completed plan of action is then shared with the entire school community, and the work to achieve the goals and objectives begins.

Does Planning Work?
As work progresses and changes are made, planning team members will want to know if their efforts are making a difference and if the school library program has become more effective. Interviews and surveys are conducted, and the online assessment rubric is applied again to determine the results of both the planning process and the effectiveness of the school library program.

Planning is key to improving and strengthening programs, to managing the enormous changes occurring in education and technology, and to meeting the challenges wrought by downturns in the economy. Updating the plan, implementing it, and continuing to assess it provide the school librarian with the framework needed to create and maintain a relevant and vibrant school library program.

For more information or to subscribe to A Planning Guide for Empowering Learners, visit <www.ala.org/aasl/planningguide>.

Nancy E. Larsen teaches part time at Wayne State University, School of Library and Information Science, in Detroit, Michigan. She received the Michigan Association for Media in Education’s 2004 Ruby Brown Award for Individual Excellence. She has experience as a school librarian at all K-12 levels and has been a school librarian in New York, New Jersey, Wisconsin, California, and Michigan.

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FEATURE

FIRST STEPS with a Library Advisory Committee

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Implementing a library advisory committee (LAC) is one of those fundamentals taught in the Master of Library Science program: gather shareholders, create consensus, and build a community (Hughes–Hassell and Wheelock 2001; Johnson 2009; Salmon 1996). But the day-to-day reality of K–12 schools often is not conducive to vision building, and if there is no administrator support for such a committee, faculty and student groups brought together by the school librarian are often loose and work sporadically.

In August 2012 I took a new position as head librarian for a Missouri public high school, and, in the new setting, I found administrative support for innovation in the school library program. Possibly librarian heaven! Suddenly, ideal goals such as having a library advisory committee were possible to achieve. The theoretical purpose of such a committee (community ownership and direction) and the practical benefits (community support and enhanced communication) were within reach.

**Imagining the Future—Together**

A school library program should aim higher than one individual can dream or plan for—the vision should be as big as the school family together can imagine. A library advisory committee provides a way to design library goals that school leaders, faculty, and students develop together.

Specific campus goals vary but always target student learning. The school library can and should be integral in meeting those goals. But developing the means to that end takes working together and talking together. What do students want to see in their school library program? How can the library support administrative goals? These answers can best be designed and then communicated in a mutually supportive environment. Together, participants in the LAC can bring a synergy—as well as an energy—to imagine and shape the school library’s future.

**How We Started**

The first few months of the new school year were focused on learning the environment and meeting immediate needs such as circulation of materials and formal class instruction. Daily procedures were learned as needed. But one issue seemed to have no easy answer: How can we balance oversight of and service for unsupervised student traffic while maintaining a welcoming learning environment?

Sharing this question with the administration returned a suggestion from the campus principal that we create a library advisory committee. The vision was to build support, share information, and provide input for new directions in the library. Campus principal Deborah Asher shared that her vision had been for the committee to serve as a forum to discuss ways to best meet the diverse needs of the students and to provide a rationale for decisions made. Beginning with the understanding that the library belonged to everyone in the school, the LAC would build an atmosphere of support and service that would ground the library program in that collective ownership. Refreshingly, Ms. Asher sought to cut through the often slow and tenuous process of waiting for the collective administration to make and communicate decisions. Instead, the committee could serve as a group of professionals and library users to make consensus decisions, giving a voice to both teachers and students.

**Getting to Work**

Once the idea was proposed, the details of designing and populating the committee were left in the hands of the library staff, as was planning for its first meeting and agenda. Just what did we want the committee to do? Yes, there were some immediate and specific issues to discuss and consider, but in the longer term, what were the possible goals and

Beginning with the understanding that the library belonged to everyone in the school, the LAC would build an atmosphere of support and service that would ground the library program in that collective ownership.
guidance that the committee could provide? How could we design the school library program for the future? Until the group met face to face for the first time, it was difficult to imagine the outcome.

First, we had to consider who would serve on the committee. Strong supporters of the library, both faculty and students, were obvious candidates. Administrative supervisors stepped forward to participate. But other voices needed to be heard as well: staff members who sometimes expressed frustration with existing policies and students who were infrequent users of the space and collection. Each of these different viewpoints could bring rich insight and help design more inclusive service.

We began by directly contacting specific staff members to ask if they were willing to participate: the language arts department chair and two of her faculty members who consistently used the library for co-instruction and recreational student use; the engineering faculty who made frequent suggestions for collection resources. Additionally faculty members volunteered to participate, and they joined us, in addition to those personally invited. Morning snacks and drinks were provided, and, after the first nervous introductions, the committee got to work.

**Committee Dynamics**

The meeting began with an organizing rationale for the committee: to create open and transparent guidelines that would meet the needs of students and staff most effectively. Discussion began with the issue of unsupervised students coming to the library. What did the committee feel would be a reasonable policy that would welcome the most users but maintain a learning environment?

Eventually, community participation would be sought, but, to accelerate the work, faculty and student members made up the initial group. After several weeks of publicizing the committee, the first meeting took place in early November. About a dozen individuals showed up in the library despite the early, before-school hour. Several

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at large. New ideas beyond the agenda topics were raised, and the seeds for the second committee meeting were laid before the first meeting had finished.

LAC participants brought an exciting mix of interests and vision for the library, and the energy in that first meeting confirmed the initial mix of participants. In the following weeks several faculty members who had not originally participated expressed their interest in joining the group. And additional students asked—and were welcomed—to join in.

Looking back, I realize that student voices brought a healthy counterpoint to the traditional top-down policy of creating and implementing procedures. Those teen perspectives were surprisingly in favor of strict expectations and high standards of behavior. If anything, the library staff generally favored more relaxed approaches to support student traffic, but through the months that followed the first LAC meeting, we have achieved less than we hoped but much more than we could have done without the group collaboration. The potential for coming years is strong: to continue on this path of collaborative consensus to innovate and implement in the future, always with the goal of supporting achievement among all our students.

Specific future tasks for the committee align with Sheila Salmon’s suggestions (1996, 7) and include articulating short- and long-term goals for a library program that is increasingly visible throughout the campus; communicating those goals to the school, district, and community; and continuing inquiry to make the library relevant to and integrated in student life. At the close of this school year, the LAC and library staff have positive expectations for the future.

The decision to form the LAC has proven a wise one. The administration has felt empowered to speak directly with library staff for suggestions and requests; the librarians have appreciated the administration’s open-door policy for the librarians’ own suggestions and questions. There is a greater sense of congruence in our separate activities and combined goals; we are co-laborers with the single objective of enriching the campus to positively impact student learning—first steps to a librarian’s heaven.

Looking Forward and Making Designs for Future Work

The results of the LAC work have been compelling. Possibilities raised have been exciting and have exceeded the library program’s immediate ability to respond to the ideas. As a result of growing participation and use of the library program, the library staff has been expanded and service has been increased. Overall, the vision and potential have been extremely energizing to the library and school alike. Increasingly, the library program looks like it belongs to the entire school, and no one librarian could have had the impact that this committee has worked to create.

But we are a real school, real people, and imperfect in our work. In the months that have passed since the first LAC meeting, we have achieved less than we hoped but much more than we could have done without the group collaboration. The potential for coming years is strong: to continue on this path of collaborative consensus to innovate and implement in the future, always with the goal of supporting achievement among all our students.

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Works Cited:
Finding Inspiration in the Common Core

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Finding Inspiration in the Common Core

An Uncommon Opportunity to Refine the Role of the School Library and Technology Planning Committee

Opportunity to Reshape the School Librarian’s Role

Staff development began two years ago. We learned about the “shifts” in instruction and were told to expect an increase in rigor. We watched videos and read passages and analyzed standards. We knew that at the beginning of the 2012–2013 school year we would be teaching to the Common Core State Standards.

Despite all the preparation, it has been a learn-as-we-go process, not because we were not given the tools we needed to prepare, but because, until you jump in, you have no idea how deep the murky water below you really is. Suddenly, veteran teachers felt like first-year novices. Rookies wondered if anything they learned in college was relevant. And those of us in the school library focused on how to help.

I have over a dozen years in an elementary school library under my belt. I knew the old curriculum and could confidently design lessons that integrated information and technology skills with other subject areas. The Common Core State Standards did not scare me, though at times they frustrated me. What I began to see after the first few weeks of instruction, though, was that adoption of the standards could also provide me with an opportunity to reshape my role in the school and involve more teachers in the development of the school library program. One means of reshaping my role as I involve more teachers in the school library program is the library and technology planning committee. Using the Common Core State Standards, I developed a vision for how my planning committee could become a dynamic team in the school.

The implementation of the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts (see <www.corestandards.org/assets/CCSSI_ELA%20Standards.pdf>) affords school librarians and their planning committees an opportunity to reinvigorate their
roles in the school as curators of the school library collection, innovators in the use of instructional technology, and leaders in instructional planning. By focusing on these three key areas the school librarian and the members of the library and technology planning committee can continue to build a library program that is central to instruction in the school and focused on long-term goals.

Collection Curators

As school systems adapt to the instructional changes that the Common Core State Standards bring, school librarians are looking at their collections more critically. The library and technology planning committee is a natural partner in the task of re-evaluating the school library collection to find and fill the holes that the Common Core State Standards are exposing.

The members of the planning committee represent every grade level and instructional area in the school. This is the perfect time for the school librarian to engage this team in the process of collection development if that is not already a role that defines the planning committee’s purpose at the school. Just because a school does not own every book on the Exemplar Texts list (see <www.corestandards.org/assets/Appendix_B.pdf>) does not mean that the school library’s collection is subpar, but titles on which teachers had relied for years may no longer meet their needs.

With the emphasis on more complex literary texts as well as on informational texts (see <www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/CCRA/R>), teachers need guidance and support to find the books that fit the new standards for teaching English language arts (ELA). The school librarian and the library and technology planning committee can work together to create lists of recommended texts that will be unique to the lessons their teachers are designing and the needs of their students. This creation of custom, optimized lists is possible because the librarian and the committee will be able to not only consider what is being taught in the classroom, but also the cultural and social experiences that their students bring to their learning.

Having a long-term vision and plan for addressing the collection-development needs that may become apparent will allow the school librarian and the planning committee to anticipate future requests. In addition to helping teachers by creating resource lists of books the school currently owns, the school librarian and the planning committee should be working together to create or update a collection-development plan. By enlisting the aid of the planning committee in collection development the school librarian gains allies in the never-ending search for funds. A team of voices requesting funding from the school administration is more powerful than the lone voice of the school librarian. As the implementation of the Common Core State Standards brings changes to the instructional practices of schools, so too does it bring opportunities to involve the library and technology planning committee in the process of assuring that the school library can continue to provide the resources that teachers need.

Technology Innovators

Instructional technology is another key area where the school librarian and the library and technology planning committee can be leaders as schools implement the Common Core State Standards. This partnership is ideal for evaluating the resources to which schools have access, determining if they are being used appropriately and effectively, and deciding what resources will be purchased or used in the future.
If the school has an instructional technologist or someone in another technology position, that person should be a member of the library and technology planning committee.

In the Common Core State Standards, students are expected to be able to use instructional technology tools to gather, organize, and present information (see <www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/W/introduction>). The library and technology planning committee, working with the school librarian, is the team that in many schools can most easily assist teachers with the task of teaching these skills and develop a plan for addressing technology needs. This plan should encompass the tools that are available and desired as well as the ways technology are used and taught across grade levels. A technology plan will assist school administrators and leadership teams with decisions about how to allocate funds for technology and help ensure that this money is spent equitably across grade levels. Having a prioritized list of technology needs is also helpful if the school is applying for grants or seeking other sources of funding, such as donations from the PTA or local businesses.

Additionally, a comprehensive school technology plan should include an instructional component. Since the library and technology planning committee membership includes representatives from all grades and subject areas, it can easily work as a vertical team to evaluate how technology is being used across grade levels and determine if students are entering the next grade with the technology skills they need to succeed. A matrix of skills and tools that students will have mastery of or will have begun working with in each grade should be included in the technology plan now that technology is embedded into every subject. The planning committee can lead the school in the effective use of technology and provide training sessions for teachers who need to hone their skills so they can better instruct their students. By knowing what tools the school has, how they are being used, and what the school needs, the librarian and the library and technology planning committee can be powerful voices in advocating for additional funds and training.

**Instructional Leaders**

School librarians and teachers are redesigning lessons to meet the rigorous standards of the Common Core State Standards (see <www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/introduction/key-design-consideration>). As with collection development and evaluating instructional technology, the library and technology planning committee offers the school librarian partners in planning and designing lessons. The committee is a ready-made vertical team that can help the school create a long-term instructional map that includes integrated technology skills. If the school has a curriculum specialist on staff, that person should be recruited to be a member of the planning committee because his or her in-depth knowledge of the curriculum and relationship with teachers will be valuable assets to the team. Whether the school library is on a fixed or a
flexible schedule, using the library and technology planning committee as an instructional planning partner can make it easier for the school librarian to plan with individual teachers or grade levels. The first year the goal may simply be to meet quarterly and map out the ELA standards on which each grade level is focusing so the school librarian can adapt her lessons. After that first year, the quarterly map can be revised and expanded to include more subjects. The school librarian can then take this map into planning sessions to help focus the discussion and use planning time more efficiently. If the school has an established instructional planning team, the library and technology planning committee can be the voice for technology and information skills integration. An instructional map can also help the planning committee in its efforts to create resource lists for teachers, look at gaps in the school library collection, and create a comprehensive instructional–technology plan.

School librarians and their library and technology planning committees have an opportunity to be leaders in shaping instruction, teaching technology, and collecting resources as their schools redesign their lessons and adapt to teaching the Common Core State Standards. By creating a clear vision of the planning committee as a partner in long-term planning, the school librarian will be able to enlist the help of teachers who share the goal of creating a cohesive instructional environment with the school library at its core.

Work in Progress

I am slowly implementing my vision. My library and technology planning committee developed a technology plan like the one described. We will re-evaluate it each year as we acquire new tools and our students develop their skills. School librarians in our school district have been working on creating lists of books to supplement the Exemplar Texts and support instruction. During the 2013–2014 school year I plan to work with my planning committee to combine those lists with resources we used in lessons during the school year that is winding down as I write this. We have also updated the school’s collection-development plan to incorporate the need for informational texts on all reading levels. I have hopes that we will soon begin developing a school-wide curriculum map to help teachers in all grades and specialty areas plan their instruction. Our curriculum facilitator is a member of the library and technology planning committee, and her input and support in that process will be invaluable.

The staff development related to implementation of the Common Core State Standards and best practices will continue as we strive to be better teachers. The veterans will gain back their confidence, and the rookies will see the relevancy of their education. And we school librarians will continue to find ways to support teachers, teach students, and improve library programs.

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To learn how to collaborate with school stakeholders, check out AASL’s Instructional Partnerships: A Pathway to Leadership. The Best of KQ publication provides background knowledge, research-based evidence, and examples of partnerships in action. Visit <www.alastore.ala.org> to order.
FEATURE

SCHOOL LIBRARY CHALLENGE

CHANGING PERCEPTIONS, CREATING SUPPORTERS, AND GAINING ADVOCATES WITH LIBRARY ADVISORY COMMITTEES

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"The library advisory committee came to bat for my library position. They were the community members who rallied support [and] approached the Board of Education against the plan to eliminate my position, resulting in retaining both the librarian and clerical positions when I retired," said one former high school librarian we met at a conference.

This situation is, unfortunately, what many school librarians face as they retire or move to other positions: the uncertainty that the school library programs they have worked tirelessly to develop are at risk. For the school librarian, the development of a library advisory committee (LAC) is a strategic investment of time and energy to develop grassroots support for the library program and maximize advocacy efforts with library stakeholders.

Historically, the concept of an LAC as a best practice for school librarians is well-documented. LACs are established to gather input in the design and development of the school library program. The composition of the LAC, mode of participation, and activities vary according to community need. LAC agendas range from specific concerns to broad-based goal setting and vision cultivation. However, the main goal of all school library advisory committees is to provide insights to assist the school librarian in making informed decisions regarding the provision of resources and services in the library. LACs may provide guidance for programming, advocacy, policies, public relations, and fund-raising.

LAC membership may vary depending on the librarian’s goals and level of desired interaction from school library stakeholders. The school librarian serves as chair and chief organizer of the LAC. LAC members represent library stakeholders and, therefore, should represent various perspectives, areas of expertise, and connections to the library. A broad-based LAC may include representatives from the student body, teachers, administrators, parents, district librarians, community members who may represent local business or the community at large, a representative from the public library, and a local university faculty member or an academic librarian.

Including community partners such as the YMCA, public library, or other social-service agencies who serve the youth population in the school can help the school library identify possible connections for sharing services or resources and maximize the flow of information and communication among the school librarian and LAC members. Including teachers may foster collaborative efforts and create building-level advocates for the school librarian’s important role in the learning process. Participation in an LAC may provide teachers with an unprecedented bird’s-eye view of the day-to-day challenges and joys that school librarians encounter as they work to serve all students and educators through the school library (Woolls 2004, 74).
Emphasize that, as advisors, the LAC members’ role includes bringing to the school librarian’s attention issues the librarian may not realize are problems. Addressing these issues proactively establishes the librarian as a problem solver.

In some situations, school librarians may establish an LAC that represents one constituency and primarily serves as a source of advisory information on a specific need or area of library service. For example, an LAC comprised primarily of students may offer guidance on library programming and collection development and offer insight into those services that affect student interests. A small or in–house population of LAC members offers the school librarian opportunities to quickly gather informal input as well as take advantage of time during the school day to poll student LAC members.

The advantage to expanding LAC membership is that the breadth and depth of input, communication, and outreach with powerful community members can be maximized. In addition, a large LAC provides opportunities to develop an expansive constituency that will be able to address larger, more complex issues such as school library funding and advocacy for school library positions. Best practice suggests that an expansive LAC should include: the entire library professional staff, the principal (or the principal’s designee), teachers (at least two), parents (at least two), students (at least two), the on-site curriculum specialist or teacher–development specialist, district office staff (at least one), a public librarian, at least one business partner, and at least one community-at-large representative, plus a school librarian from another school, perhaps a private school in the area.

Advantages to including outside expertise, including university faculty or academic librarians, may not seem apparent to those who have limited knowledge of the work of academic faculty. The stereotypical view of the faculty member toiling away in an ivory tower is actually rather the opposite of reality. Academic faculty, by nature of their positions, are likely to be actively involved in conducting research on the latest issues concerning school librarians, managing e-content, and incorporating 21st-century literacy standards. University faculty and librarians often participate and provide leadership in state and national professional organizations predominately concerned with advocating for legislation, funding, and establishing standards for the broader library profession. LACs can benefit from the expertise, interest, and professional connections university faculty and academic librarians contribute to the dialogue.

Roles and Responsibilities of LAC Members

The school librarian, with support from administrators, must emphasize that the LAC is an advisory and support committee, and final decision making remains the responsibility of the librarian and school administrators. LAC members should participate in the creation and development of the LAC mission with emphasis on the member roles and responsibilities. These activities enable LAC members to gain firsthand knowledge of the group’s role in supporting the school library and become invested in the overall success of the group.

Best practices include meeting on a regular basis, such as quarterly, with clear goals and expected outcomes. Initial issues for consideration by the LAC should concern the health of school libraries while avoiding controversy and volatility. An issue such as providing support and advocacy between the school and the public library summer reading program might be a good place to start, for example. Beginning the LAC with a neutral problem that is best resolved with community participation provides a focus for the group while avoiding entanglements, helping the group gain its initial momentum.

Emphasize that, as advisors, the LAC members’ role includes bringing to the school librarian’s attention issues the librarian may not realize are problems. Addressing these issues proactively
establishes the librarian as a problem solver. Advisors may serve a regular role in troubleshooting immediate problems or engage in long-term problem solving. Other specific activities might include: reviewing the mission statement, playing a key role in establishing a strategic plan for the school library (including setting priorities for the library program and helping to allocate librarian and staff time accordingly), establishing policies, exploring financial support opportunities under the guidance of the school librarian, and even helping to plan for budgeted expenditures. The LAC will serve an invaluable role when it comes time to request funding. Members of the LAC can and should be your strongest advocates, as it is difficult for others to construe their efforts as self-serving or biased.

Other suggested activities may include:

- Conducting a needs assessment to determine additional resources or services needed
- Conducting regular student/faculty surveys to gauge customer satisfaction
- Developing a strategic plan with these survey results in mind
- Collecting relevant data and using this data to prepare/submit regular reports to building/district administration showing the school library’s direct positive impact on student achievement
- Preparing budget requests based on needs assessments
- Developing collection-development plans based on the school’s curriculum (and a related collection map)
- Identifying strategies for facilitating collaboration between classroom teachers and library staff, and identifying collaborative instructional strategies
- Advocating for the school’s library program
- Developing short- and long-range goals, which might include service, resource, and technology-integration goals specifically
- Assisting in responding to challenged materials

**Tips to Consider in the Formation of an LAC**

Forming an LAC is a strategic move to create advocacy for the school library program. Here are a few tips to get your LAC started:

- Establish internal support from professional and clerical library staff members
- Establish internal support from building- and district-level school administrators
- Establish the role and responsibilities of the LAC members
- Determine length of terms, types of members, leadership roles
- Determine the number of meetings per school year, who will take minutes, and how communication among members will be facilitated and encouraged
- Invite members through personal phone calls and conversations
- Establish the agenda for the first meeting with input from school administrators
- Ask one or more of the school district’s administrators to welcome the LAC members to the initial meeting, thank them for their willingness to contribute to the success of the district’s students, and mention the importance of school libraries to the district’s academic mission

- After the initial meeting, provide minutes to all LAC members, school library staff members, and school administrators; in the minutes include attendance and note the next meeting date, time, and place

- Include information on the LAC in the library manual and listing of school activities, and include the meeting schedule on the school and/or district calendar as well as the library website; include the LAC in communications that document the district’s outreach to the community

- Provide a press release to the public relations director for the school district, to the high school newspaper staff, and to the other communication outlets acceptable to school administrators

According to a 2012 survey by Library Media Connection, 90 percent of school libraries do not have library advisory committees. Creating an LAC for your school library program is a strategic move, creating strong and committed advocates. The LAC will support your school library program in the good times and in the stressful times. Make a commitment with your library advisory committee advocates to keep your school library program off the chopping block (Dickinson 2012, 35).

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Recommended Reading


AASL

Looking for more guidance on how to advocate for your school library program? Check out AASL’s advocacy tools and resources at <www.ala.org/aasl/advocacy>, including infographics, position statements, and research and statistics.
Mission statements are expected elements of business plans and corporate communications. Yet, practice in creating them and monitoring their impact varies and skeptics wonder about their usefulness. A survey of business literature provides a context for school library mission statements.

Mission Statement Defined
Mission statements define the nature, purpose, and role of organizations; focus resources; and guide planning. Some theorists maintain that mission statements drive strategic planning, while others claim they merely reflect institutional reality. Educational missions reflect sponsors’ goals, describe present reality, and communicate how the institution delivers what constituents want (Williams 2008; Morphew and Hartley 2006). Mission statements in K–12 education reflect community priorities and typically include themes of cognitive, social, and civic development. The effect of mission statements on performance is unclear, but some suggest that the degree of commitment to shared purpose distinguishes high-performing schools from failing schools (Khalifa 2011; Stemler, Bebell, and Sonnabend 2011; Williams 2008).

The mission’s unit of definition is important because the mission creates and communicates a sense of shared purpose. Any differentiation of missions within an organization must harmonize with the organization’s overall purpose. A school library’s mission statement aligned with the organization’s mission can be a powerful tool to express the role of the library as a part of the school’s shared purpose and commitment.
Mission Statement as Communication Device

Business communication researchers have described mission statements as persuasive communication devices (Williams 2008). Others document a belief that the process of developing a mission statement fosters communication and commitment to a shared organizational purpose (Stemler, Bebell, and Sonnabend 2011). The process requires participants to negotiate the meaning of words, phrases, and concepts, an activity that invests generic-sounding language with deep meaning for members of the community. Through these discussions, members of a group come to understand how all members contribute to the enterprise.

For example, in a school that had been without a librarian for five years, teachers did not fully understand the role and functions of a school library. They knew the library was important but could not articulate a distinct educational role for the school librarian (Krueger 2009).

Richard Turner investigated theory and practice of school library policies (including mission statements) in England and Wales. Ideally, the school library’s mission statement and policies reflect the school’s character, priorities, and curriculum goals and are collaboratively developed in the context of other school policies. Further, the library’s mission statement and policies demonstrate that the school librarian understands how the program supports the school’s curriculum. Finally, the policy is endorsed by the administration. Turner stated that “A school library policy produced...
Mission statements serve two purposes in communication. First, the act of crafting a mission statement brings people together to negotiate and clarify roles and responsibilities. Second, the mission statement communicates an intent to serve the community by defining an understanding of the needs of its members; the skills, resources, and capacity needed to fulfill those needs; and an expected outcome that will benefit the community.

AASL Purpose, Values, and Mission

Information Power (1988) briefly outlines the history of school libraries since 1920, including summaries of the mission of the librarian and the purpose of the library program. For more than thirty years, AASL has encouraged local school librarians to engage in sound planning practices. In 1975 AASL recommended that librarians conduct a planning process to determine their sites’ needs and offered guiding principles to support decision making (AASL 1988). In 1988 AASL proposed “the mission of the library media program is to ensure that students and staff are effective users of ideas and information” as the starting point for program design and maintained that this mission statement continued to be relevant in 1998 (AASL and AECT 1998, 6). In Information Power (AASL and AECT 1988, 1998), Empowering Learners (AASL 2009), and planning guides to support those resources (AASL 1988, 2010; Adcock 1999), building-level librarians were encouraged to develop a mission statement and program goals in partnership with the principal and faculty. In the Planning Guide for Information Power school librarians were advised to “think about the philosophy of [the] school district and determine the influence it will have on the direction of the library media program” (Adcock 1999, 10). Empowering Learners recommends that “the school library program [be] built on a long-term strategic plan that reflects the mission, goals, and objectives of the school” and recommends that the school librarian collect input from the school community and work in partnership with the faculty and administrators (AASL 2009, 30).

AASL has also defined the values and ethics of professional practice for school librarians. Michael Gorman stated that a group’s values arise from their beliefs, are relatively stable over time, and indicate preference for a particular course of action. “In application, values are useful and usable because they are standards by which we can assess what we do; measure how near we are to, or how far we are from, an objective; and compare our actions and our state of being to those of others and to the ideals represented by our values” (Gorman 2000, 7). Examples of AASL’s value statements include the common beliefs in the 2007 Standards for the 21st-Century Learner document (see <www.ala.org/aasl/standards-guidelines/learning-standards>) and AASL position statements (see <www.ala.org/aasl/advocacy/resources/position-statements>).

Azaddin Salem Khalifa noted that the failure of mission statements to improve performance may be related to a confusion of concepts. He recommends organizations distinguish between mission, vision, values, and identity and deal with each separately (2011).

As units of larger organizations, how should school libraries frame their missions? Diane Oberg has equated school libraries with special libraries, which support the parent organization’s goals. She argued that “the ‘enterprise’ of the school is curriculum-driven teaching and learning, which means that the ‘enterprise’ of the school library is to contribute to the curriculum-related needs of the teachers and students in that school” (2009, 11). Allison Zmuda and Violet H. Harada have also urged school librarians to regard their own work as “the school’s work,” because the learning that happens in the school library “is at the heart of the school’s purpose” (2008, 11). The librarian must engage in collaborative conversations to support the mission of the school through the library program. Through these negotiations of purpose the librarian becomes aware of a dynamic tension between the needs of the school enterprise and the mission and values of the school library profession as expressed in the documents published by AASL.

As units of larger organizations, how should school libraries frame their missions? A real-life example illustrates an effective approach.

Newport News Practice

Newport News Public Schools (NNPS) is a medium-sized urban school district with thirty-seven schools serving 29,000 students from diverse ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. The district has long had strong district leadership for its library program. School board policy documents, departmental manuals, and organizational routines reflected AASL guidelines for the planning process and accountability for documenting the library program through statistical reports of...
instruction, circulation, and materials added. By the mid-2000s, the district’s Library Media Services department had adopted an inquiry-process model (Keeling 2009), and the district office had changed our reporting documents to measure inquiry instruction. The new reports documented whole-class instruction in inquiry, literary enrichment, and technology use; individual student visits; librarian participation in collaborative planning; and the number of staff developments offered by school librarians. Circulation statistics were reported separately by the library management system. We also began to mirror the district’s planning process for school improvement. The district’s 2010–2013 strategic plan set targets for student achievement, advancement, and youth development. We designed the Library Media Services planning document to mimic the district’s goal setting and reporting documents and to align site-level library strategic plans with school goals (see figure 1). The Library Media Services department continued to collect monthly instructional and circulation statistics, and asked school librarians to submit quarterly progress reports on their annual goals.

**Mission Statement Reflects Practice**

Through the 2000s NNPS school librarians sharpened their focus on student learning. By 2010 it was time to revise our mission statement to reflect our current reality and communicate our instructional intentions.
In October 2010 author and curriculum consultant Allison Zmuda led librarians and teachers from five high schools in the development of a mission statement for the NNPS school libraries. We used this exercise to invite teachers into the conversation about the instructional role of the librarians and to clarify our vision of student learning in the libraries. We expected that each school would implement the mission with regard to its particular culture, but we believed it was important to share a common mission in the district to create more opportunities to embed information-literacy instruction and common instructional practices into the curriculum.

Using a process described in Librarians as Learning Specialists: Meeting the Learning Imperative for the 21st Century (Zmuda and Harada 2008), Zmuda led the group in examining mission statements from other school library programs, discussing our work in Newport News, identifying current practices, defining a desired outcome for students, assigning relative values to learning activities, and negotiating the meanings of words and phrases. We hammered out this first draft:

The mission of the [school library] media center is to develop the curiosity, creativity, and knowledge base of our students so they collaboratively build learning networks to analyze works of others and to create and communicate works of their own. To that end, students will become effective, ethical, and discriminating users of information and technology. (Zmuda 2011, 45)

Figure 2. Newport News Public Schools library services mission statement.
The draft was posted on a wiki for review and comment. Elementary and middle school librarians continued to refine the statement. The final version (see figure 2) says what librarians do to help students become curious, creative, collaborative learners.

Conversations Clarify the Mission

In the 2011–2012 school year curriculum supervisors developed program materials for the district’s implementation in 2012–2013 of Virginia’s Uniform Performance Standards. These standards base a large part of a teacher’s performance rating on measures of student growth. Because Virginia districts develop their own assessment tools, NNPS set out to develop assessments of student growth in 21st-century skills such as information literacy, critical thinking, communication, and problem solving. We began by developing for each curriculum area a mission statement that any non-specialist could easily understand. These statements would clarify our purpose, help us identify which skills to assess, and help us explain the value of our work.

A facilitator started the process in a workshop. On sticky notes, supervisors wrote brief statements about the purpose of each content area; these notes were put on chart paper around the room. During the meeting, we synthesized ideas in first drafts and discussed our insights. In further work to refine the draft and to grasp the relative importance of my colleagues’ ideas, I loaded my colleagues’ twenty-three statements about the library program into Wordle <www.wordle.net>, a Web 2.0 application that generates a word cloud from text, showing frequently used words in larger font sizes (see figure 3). The resulting statement is expressed in the student’s voice and states desired actions:

Library instruction empowers us to read for pleasure, use information to explore questions and ideas, engage in the global community, and share our understandings in new ways.

This exercise affirmed the role of library instruction in our curriculum and implemented some of Turner’s best practices for library policies (2006): dialog with other members of the community, peer review, placement within the context of other district policies, and endorsement by senior administration. As a curriculum exercise, it has the potential to strengthen the connection between library instruction and the district’s larger curriculum, thereby strengthening the librarian’s role as supporter of the enterprise of their schools (Oberg 2009). By seeing our work through the eyes of others, we could translate our mission into everyday language that communicates clearly with our non-specialist constituents, including parents, community, and board members.

Conclusion and Next Steps

Our experience confirms the value of a mission statement as a communication device that reflects, affirms, and inspires while communicating the current reality of our practice. We revised our mission statement after we had implemented a district-wide inquiry-process curriculum, and we developed our statements through professional conversations. We found that we needed to clarify and expand what we meant by “effective users of ideas and information,” and, as we did so, we reaffirmed the extent to which our goals align with the district’s purpose of preparing students for their future work in college, careers, and as citizens.
The next step for our library program is to continue to strengthen our connections with the district’s curriculum. Librarians are working on an extended K–12 rubric for the inquiry-process model we teach. We also need to continue to develop ways to assess student growth as they “read for pleasure, use information to explore questions and ideas, engage in the global community, and share...understandings in new ways.”

Like other library programs, we need to change our reporting practices to include measures of student growth in response to our efforts. Statistical reports typically measure what we put into a program. We must figure out how to demonstrate our impact on student learning at the local level—the outcomes of the school library programs. Finally, we must commit to examining our programs on a regular basis to ensure that all our actions support and extend the work of our schools.

A Final Note

The mission statement for school library programs provided by AASL, “to ensure that students and staff are effective users of ideas and information,” must serve as a starting point for local school libraries. By using the common beliefs expressed in AASL’s Standards for the 21st-Century Learner document as a conversation starter with stakeholders, school librarians can invite others to construct meaningful mission statements that reflect the educational enterprise of our institutions and shared vision of participants.

Together, administrators, school librarians, and teachers can develop a mission to define the library’s purpose for that specific school, its character and purpose, and its curriculum goals. The conversation can only strengthen teaching partnerships and commitment to a shared purpose.

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DEVELOPING A CULTURE OF READERS THROUGH EFFECTIVE LIBRARY PLANNING
Our school library is the center, the hub, of learning in our school community. That didn’t happen by accident. The collaborative vision of the principal (Mat) and the school librarian (Kay) and the support of our entire staff enabled us to realize our goals. Long-range planning and annual benchmarks allow us to improve each year.

For eight years, we have worked together as principal and school librarian at Swan Valley High School in Saginaw, Michigan. While the principal was named AASL’s 2012 School Administrator of the Year and our library has received both state and national accolades, the big winners in our library programs are the students.

In 1974 (one of us was in education in the 1970s, and one of us was in elementary school), David J. Campbell published the book *If You Don’t Know Where You’re Going, You’ll Probably End Up Somewhere Else*. The advice in this book was relevant to career planning and goal setting at the time it was written, almost forty years ago. In 2007 the book was revised and reprinted because many of its lessons are still relevant today.

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While Campbell’s book focuses on life preparation and career choices, much of his advice can be related to educational and library planning as well. Campbell claims, “Unless you know what you want from life, you are not likely to stumble across it.” Furthermore, he states that, “What most people want … more than anything else, is the opportunity to make choices” (2007, 9).

The same can be said of our schools and school libraries. Without a vision for what we want our school and library to look like and a working plan to make that vision a reality, we would probably end up like some of our neighboring schools, with shuttered libraries or those that are open but lack professional librarians.

We knew what we wanted our library to look like.

Both of us, in our roles as principal and school librarian, share the vision that the library should be the core of all learning in the school. From an administrator’s viewpoint, if a program succeeds, it will be supported. If it’s done right, it will be done again. By the same token, if it is done poorly, the program will be cut.

Success starts with fulfilling a need. Together with the entire staff and the building’s school improvement team (a committee comprised of administrators, representatives from each department, and parents), our educators examine student data and test scores and establish goals for our school to focus on. Prior to each school year the two of us work collaboratively to determine both annual and long-range goals for our library program, goals that support the school’s improvement goals.

When the school library is a place where all are welcome, kids like to be there. When the library is a place that students know they will get help, without judgment, they make it their home. When passersby feel like they have to peek in the school library to see what’s going on in there, we’ve hooked future readers. This is a shared philosophy, to the extent that every morning Mat personally opens the library at 6:00 a.m. for students. Our library is open throughout the day and well after school. We even have elementary school children join their high school siblings after school on a regular basis, since the other school libraries in our district are not open outside of the school day.

The library needs to be involved in every aspect of the school.

Whether sponsoring distracted-driving programs or fund-raising assemblies for a safe “After Prom” program, the library, as the center of the academic and social curriculums of the school, should be at the forefront of all school activities. That prominence could mean holding “Just Dance” preliminary competitions at lunch to determine what students compete in the finals at an all-school assembly or deciding which class gets “Cupid Shuffle” and which class gets stuck dancing to Soulja Boy for the all-school flash-mob contest. It could also involve organizing working bees for grounds clean-up or teams of kids to paint and landscape at Habitat for Humanity houses in the city. Being at the forefront of school activities could also involve raking at senior citizens’ homes and shoveling snow in the winter.

Our community comes to the school library when they have a need, and we do our best to help them. We know that if we can give all of our patrons what they want and need they’ll keep coming back. They, in turn, become partners in student growth and achievement. Community and student needs become opportunities for other students and community members to serve. Cross-age tutoring and partnerships that improve our neighborhoods enhance learning experiences for our students.

We want to create a culture of readers.

As a school, we realize that our students’ test scores and achievement data will not see significant improvement unless our students’ reading increases and, thus, improves. Our school improvement team set a goal to have every student in our school read a minimum of one additional book in each class during each marking period. Kay followed up with teachers, codeveloping lessons and securing funding to purchase books that correlate with each discipline. Authors, interdisciplinary activities, and promotions encourage and enhance this experience for students.

We believe that our students should start each day reading. Every freshman comes to the library the first day of school to check out a book. Then freshmen are required to read at least ten minutes a day in Freshmen Transition class. The transition teachers and school librarian coteach throughout the twelve-week program, instilling an awareness of the importance of reading while developing the habit among our youngest teens.

Students discover that there’s a lesson in every book. “I just read this book, and I think you may want to take a look at it.” That statement comes from teachers, students, and parents. Sometimes Mat uses the
lessons in the book mentioned for professional development ideas, and sometimes Kay will approach teachers to create lessons that can be co-taught as part of specific disciplines. Collaboration, among everyone involved in our library, helps us stretch our limits, creating independent readers in a community where reading is valued.

What else can we do to support our curriculum?
As part of the school library program, videoconferences are set up with Holocaust survivors (social studies), Day of the Dead celebrations (Spanish), and live open-heart surgeries (anatomy), taking students’ learning experiences to a whole new level.

Chemistry students read *Radioactive Boy Scout*, biology students read *Jurassic Park*, and family relations students read the memoir *Crazy Love*. Each of these classes follows up with lessons that support reading, literacy, and their own curricular standards. Spanish students read books with a Mexican theme. Art students investigate the work of the masters.

Every senior is required to complete a senior project, based on the anchor text of his or her choice. Each student researches, prepares a paper, and then completes a project on his or her topic. The library program assists students with this process; this help ranges from providing linking texts and resources to setting up interviews and community projects that support each topic. That assistance could mean taking students to meet a Hall of Fame hockey player for an interview or heading up a work crew on Saturday for painting and landscaping at a Habitat for Humanity housing project. Whatever the need, we find a solution.

Change doesn’t happen over night.
When we began working together, we knew we wanted the library to be a catalyst for change. We knew that we had to develop a ten-year plan for our library program—a plan that would be revisited each year—and establish annual goals as part of that plan. We started with one or two areas of the collection to update at a time and focused on implementing one or two interdisciplinary projects each year.

Each year, Mat outlines professional development for our school. When it comes to literacy and technology, he comes to the library for help. We capitalize upon our assets—our students and staff—to provide regular training sessions for staff. At staff meetings and in-services, students serve as teachers to work with instructors in integrating technology into classroom lessons. Students assist staff with video editing for flipped lessons, teach staff how to use cell phones as learning tools, and even help teachers learn to tweet.

Annually, the staff meeting prior to National Reading Month is dedicated to library programming. We collaborate on what teachers need to know, and professional development lessons are developed for that session. To determine what resources to address, we examine needs and how we can improve student growth.

Recently, we taught the staff about new tools provided through the Michigan eLibrary and the Learning Express piece of this grant-funded program. Teachers began investigating and using the resources. After feedback from teachers, Mat recognized the need for another library in-service session this year to further train all teachers in using the testing tutorials, ACT materials, and technology applications so they can better integrate the products into their classroom lessons.

**WE BELIEVE THAT OUR STUDENTS SHOULD START EACH DAY READING. EVERY FRESHMAN COMES TO THE LIBRARY THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL TO CHECK OUT A BOOK. THEN FRESHMEN ARE REQUIRED TO READ AT LEAST TEN MINUTES A DAY IN FRESHMEN TRANSITION CLASS.**

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We can always do better.

As principal, Mat does not believe in status quo. No matter how well a program functions, there is always room for improvement. The school library program is an ever-changing example of that. Our themes and promotions are fresh each year, drawing on a different aspect of our school curriculum and student interests.

Everyone is a decision maker in our library. Students, teachers, and community members all have a voice in our library planning. Whether they are suggesting a book, theme, or way to improve, all stakeholder input is welcome. Recently, a teacher mentioned that she met someone on vacation in Gulf Shores, Alabama, who knew a writer who may be willing to come to our school. That’s all it took. We contacted that playwright, and he willingly set up a writer’s workshop for our students.

After staff had been taught how to access our e-books, everyone spent some time at a staff meeting exploring the resources. Teachers recognized features that will help their students, and Mat remarked, “We need to get more e-books in our library.”

When it comes to resources, free is best, but we have to maintain a budget.

If you can get by once without something, you may never see it again. No truer statement could ever be made when you talk about school budget line items.

When funding cuts have to be made, at our school the library is always spared. We may have to institute “pay to play” for sports and eliminate athletic busing, but the library budget, meager though it is, has been maintained.

District line-item budgets allow funding for books, periodicals, technology, and supplies. At our school the librarian has free rein over how these monies are spent. Most of the time, to meet current needs, some funds from one category are used for a different category.

Honor the best in the profession with an AASL award. AASL awards and grants recognize excellence and showcase best practices in the school library field in categories that include collaboration, leadership and innovation. Applications for the AASL 2014 awards season are now available online. Visit <www.ala.org/aasl/awards> to apply.
We advocate partnerships and, to support our library programming, apply for many grants, ranging from the Michigan Humanities Council’s Great Michigan Read program to grants from foundations and national contests. We also request much-appreciated donations from local businesses and councils. Every grant or donation we receive is targeted for enhancements to library programs and does not replace district funds, which are essential to our operating budget.

Want support? Make the program one they can’t live without.

An effective school library program is one that can’t be done without, and when library cuts are rumored, people kick and scream to save the program. Effective school libraries provide students with choices. Library programming designed to improve students’ educational opportunities results in more choices for students, which, as Campbell states, is what most people want from life.

Choices for students—what book to read, what genre to explore, what topic to pursue for a senior project—often open doors for students and their futures. Experiences with authors, volunteer activities, and organizing school assemblies help our students grow. Reading about and discussing the experiences of others, and then exploring possibilities for positive resolutions of problems facing the global community cause our students to learn about lives beyond their own, and to investigate the world from new perspectives. Planning for these “a-ha!” moments is the job of the school librarian, principal, and entire educational community.

Both of us agree that, without the partnership we have established, our school library program would not exist as it does today. Through professional development for teachers, modeling of best practices, an inviting collection, and a welcoming atmosphere, our library has become a place where learning is centered, where imaginations are stretched, where information is sought, and problems are solved. Most of all, it is a place where everyone belongs, and readers emerge.

**Works Cited:**


Kay Wejrowski is the school librarian at Swan Valley High School in Saginaw, Michigan. Matt McRae is the principal at Swan Valley High School and the 2012 AASL School Administrator of the Year. Swan Valley High School Library is the recipient of the 2013 AASL National School Library Program of the Year award, the 2012 MAME Library Program of the Year award, the 2011 Library of Michigan Citation of Excellence, and is a 2012 Follett Challenge winner.
PLANNING FOR RTI

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The goal of RtI is to provide personalized, just-in-time intervention in reading and math for students who are in danger of falling behind their peers. Teachers and librarians in RtI schools use data to determine student needs and evidence-based practice to improve student achievement (Missouri Dept. of Elementary and Secondary Ed. 2013). Because RtI focuses on making every student a successful reader, it aligns well with the goals of school librarians.

RtI instruction is divided into tiers. Tier 1 instruction is given to all students. Tier 2 is given to students who benefit from extra, more personalized instruction in small groups. Tier 3 involves the school’s most effective teachers, who provide intensive, individual instruction for students who don’t succeed in tier 2. RtI involves setting aside a time period during the school day when students receive this extra instruction. The RtI period might be offered daily or less frequently as determined by the needs of the students. Students who are not behind academically receive enrichment during the RtI period.

The success of RtI adoption can obscure the complexity of putting RtI into practice. RtI takes up to five years of careful, intensive, collaborative planning to implement effectively. Planning is needed for RtI processes that run continually and simultaneously: training staff, scheduling interventions, assessing student progress, implementing the interventions, and evaluating the RtI effort as a whole. RtI is a school-wide effort in which administrators, core-content teachers, teachers in other content areas, and librarians work as collaborative partners. Because RtI calls for additional library resources, such as hi/lo readers for tier 2 and 3 instruction and information-rich enrichment activities for tier 1 students, it provides the opportunity for school librarians to take a central role in planning.

The Benefits of RtI

The commitment of time and resources for RtI is likely to continue because recent research shows that it raises student achievement (Hattie 2012). The federal government supports the effort by funding sites like What Works Clearinghouse <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc>, National Center on Response to Intervention <www.rti4success.org>, and RTI Action Network <www.rtinetwork.org>, which provide training, resources, and reviews of possible interventions. Many state governments also provide support and training for RtI.

Anecdotes from practice also indicate that RtI works. In responses to our 2011 survey (Robins and Antrim 2012, 12), school librarians described the following benefits:

“RtI promotes reading.”

“We are making data available now, something we didn’t do very easily in the past.”

“Before, in a regular day, you couldn’t give that individual attention to students.”

“RtI opened my eyes to the absolute needs a lot of these kids have.”

Additional benefits were reported in our 2013 survey:

“Students do much better with directed and small group instructions.”

“Teachers report that a significant number of students who would have failed classes are passing.”

“Students are taking more ownership in their work and are wanting to do their best.”

In our 2011 and 2013 RtI surveys, we discovered that 54–55 percent of school librarians were not included in RtI planning, but when a school includes the librarian, classroom teachers have a partner who has much to contribute.

Planning to Plan

To do the planning necessary to implement RtI, librarians and others have to plan the planning. This task is referred to as “articulation work” (Schmidt and Bannon 1992). School leaders and the teachers involved determine when planning will take place. If a school uses a professional learning community (PLC) structure (Dufour, Eaker, and Dufour 2005), the PLC might be conscripted for RtI planning. Planning may occur during vertical team meetings and department team meetings. Teachers and leaders determine the size and compilation of the planning teams and how members will rotate among different groups. Planners determine how to govern sessions, what notes and records to keep, and what information to share with the school community. If technology is used, school librarians might take the lead as they are likely to be most familiar with available tools for group work.

Planning is not always done in a formal way. RtI has a way of working itself into routine conversations in
the lunchroom, the lounge, and the hallway. These discussions contribute to what occurs in the formal meetings. A positive side effect of frequent planning is that team members have a way to share their strengths and their needs. A librarian responding to the 2011 survey described how relationships and trust are built. “They know what each other brings to the table.” She credits these relationships with reducing the time needed for planning in her school.

Planning Interventions

When the articulation work is done, arranging for staff training is often the first thing for planning teams to consider. Training on RtI objectives is needed from the start. Training on the use of the assessment system was mentioned several times in the 2011 survey. Some school librarians reported that they, as technology leaders, provided this training for teachers. Others mentioned teaching teachers about Lexile levels.

The process for scheduling student interventions takes considerable planning. RtI is not a “pull-out” program. Most school schedules include a time period for RtI. At the elementary and middle school levels all students are typically involved in either interventions or enrichment during their RtI time. RtI periods can be scheduled every day or as infrequently as two or three times a week. At the secondary level a class period can be used to give students extra assistance. Our surveys revealed that the time set aside for RtI changed often based on the school calendar and the readiness of teachers and students.

How and when students are assessed must be planned. Universal testing at the beginning of the school year was frequently mentioned in the 2011 survey. Teacher referrals and classroom test scores are also used to identify students in need of intervention. RtI involves a cycle of assessing, intervening, and reassessing. Having recurring cycles of the same duration creates a rhythm that simplifies the scheduling process. The length of time for a cycle varies from school to school; however, experts (Dexter and Hughes n.d.) recognize that it takes several weeks to determine whether interventions work. Spending an entire semester for a cycle might be too long to have the needs of all students met in a timely way.

RtI is dynamic, and that characteristic is what makes scheduling complicated. Individual students move from needing interventions to not needing them and vice versa. The interventions also change, as do the teachers providing them. Interventions might be for individual students or groups of varied sizes. This reality means locations also might need to change. During the intervention period, if some teachers are working with individuals and small groups, other teachers will be working with groups larger than their normal class size. Because of the dynamic nature of RtI, scheduling is a complex, ongoing activity.

Planning with School Librarians

School librarians bring to planning meetings unique abilities beyond their skills as teachers and curriculum planners. Their technology skills come in handy when learning to use assessment systems. They are skilled at using data to evaluate reading levels and helping teachers see how these data aid decision making. Because they are expert users of research, they can find interventions that are evidence-based.

By attending planning sessions, the librarian can ensure that the resources needed for interventions are available. This preparedness includes having a large collection of books for struggling readers. This can also mean providing higher-level books. As one 2011 survey respondent explained, “Students are more willing to take a risk and read something different” (Robins and Antrim 2012, 11).

With RtI, teachers in special subject areas like art and music might feel left out since RtI often focuses on basic reading and math skills; however, by recognizing how these other educators contribute, the school librarian can work with teachers to plan richer lessons. One school librarian surveyed in 2011 explained how this worked in her school: “The
music teacher collaborated, too, and taught poetry and choral reading, repetition, rhymes; it was fun. The next year the students were reading on grade level.”

Planning for Success
Planning is also needed to determine how well RtI is working in a school. RtI program evaluation provides a way to report problems and solutions. It ensures that no one is left out of the process and that teachers and librarians understand their roles. Assessment methods and interventions change often. Evaluation makes sure they both are done with fidelity, making it possible to accurately tell what is working.

A way to tell if RtI is successful is to look for improvement in individual students’ achievement and behavior. According to a respondent to the 2013 survey, “Some kids have really appreciated the extra attention and one-on-one time RtI provides. It has improved their attitudes and grades, knowing that someone is concerned about their work/progress.”

Scores on standardized tests also help planning teams evaluate how well RtI is going. The results are not immediate, but they are cumulative. A librarian, in response to the 2013 survey, explained, “Our [state test] scores have gone up over the last few years and we have achieved 14 out of 14 points on the state annual performance report for the past two years. That is a big accomplishment for our small rural district.” Ultimately, the way to tell if RtI is working in the early grades is when fewer older students need interventions.

Conclusion
As this overview shows, the planning for RtI is intensive but worthwhile. School librarians contribute their expertise by training teachers to master technology and to collect and use data for assessment and decision making; librarians also offer research-based strategies for interventions. They provide interventions for large groups, individual students, and all group sizes in between. They use information and literature to enrich curriculum during RtI activities. Their skills contribute much to collaborative planning. Likewise, RtI presents opportunities for librarians to increase their visibility in a school. Best of all, through RtI librarians have another way to contribute to student success. As one respondent to the 2013 survey of school librarians and RtI reported, “Students are proud of the little steps and gains that they have been making.”

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PASS THE

planning with teachers

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"We need chocolate," Areyanna, a second-grade teacher, proclaimed during one intensive planning meeting with her grade-level colleagues and the school librarian. As the school librarian, I always had a basket of chocolate on the table when teachers met to plan with me. I had learned the value of food from several of my mentors. Advertise food when you want teachers to join you after school to preview new books or get a quick technology update. Brew a pot of coffee every morning, and teachers will stop by for a quick chat that might lead to a collaborative lesson.

Food, in this case chocolate, had the effect of offering small gifts that helped sustain a community of practice—a team of teachers and a librarian—in planning together. A delicious finding in a year-long study of collaboration found the crinkle of candy wrappers in every meeting; often at a difficult point in the meeting, someone would inevitably ask that we "pass the chocolate."

What Planning Means to Teachers

These are among the small things that we do as school librarians to facilitate community and collaboration with teachers. We prepare for planning meetings with curriculum objectives, library materials, and chocolate. We consider the work of coming together to talk about curriculum objectives, unit plans, and student learning to be collaboration. For teachers, this collaboration is the work of planning what they will be teaching in the next few weeks. Teachers were concerned with "What are we doing on Monday?"

For teachers at an elementary school where I served as school librarian, grade-level or team planning was considered critical to the success of teaching and student learning. As we talked, teachers were filling out long-range planning maps and daily boxes in their individual plan books. In practice, their plan books were essential tools checked by principals and left for substitutes. A plan book broke the day into discrete boxes of time that structured the school day.

Often timeframes were dictated by administration: so many minutes of reading instruction, and so many of math. Some blocks were known as the "specialists' block" that teachers considered their "planning time," but those chunks of time were often usurped by other demands—either personal or administrative—and didn’t always offer a common time to work with others at the same grade level.

In this school we were fortunate to have a monthly afternoon block of time for grade-level planning that included the school librarian and took place in the library where needed resources were often literally at arms’ length from teachers as they planned for instruction.

What School Librarians Know about Planning

Planning is the practice that enables collaboration. Carol Brown (2004) found that one of the most important environmental factors related to successful teacher-librarian collaboration was regularly scheduled planning meetings. With all the discourse in school librarianship about collaboration, there is surprisingly little discussion of teacher planning.

For teachers, planning is the taken-for-granted work necessary for teaching. In their methods classes, pre-service teachers learn about planning lessons and disciplinary units of study. Linda Lachance Wolcott (1994) looked at the meaning of planning to classroom teachers as it impacted the school librarian. She found that teachers plan for a variety of reasons including a need to prepare for instruction and to satisfy administrator requirements that teachers prepare and submit written lesson plans.

Planning focuses on various increments of time, ranging from a single lesson to a day, a week, a grading term, and a school year. Teacher planning is a mental activity, nonlinear, and influenced by written curricula, textbooks, and other published materials. The latter finding that teachers rely on the materials at hand for planning suggests a role for the school librarian in the provision of resources to assist teachers in planning.

A Case Study of Planning

A case of planning between a school librarian and a team of second-grade teachers across a school year was a subject of my research. I was particularly interested in what planning sounded like—what kinds of talk teachers and the librarian engaged in to do the work of planning. School librarians hear a lot about collaboration, but we have few models of what it actually entails.
Accustomed to integrating 21st-century standards with content standards, school librarians are also able to make connections that cross content areas.

I was the school librarian at the time, and I recorded, transcribed, and analyzed eight collaborative planning meetings across an entire school year. Teachers were also interviewed at the middle and end of the year about their meanings of planning. Teachers placed a high value on this shared time. As Brittany, the novice teacher on the second-grade team said, "Planning together saved my life this first year."

Analyzing the transcripts from that year of collaborative planning, I looked for patterns in the talk and found common activities that I labeled "orienting," "coordinating," "making connections," "making sense," and "drifting." Each activity was present in every planning meeting and in all planning for instruction. The activities and suggestions for school librarians related to each are described below.

**Orienting**

Orienting is talk that brings the members of a planning team together. Questions such as "What do we need to plan today?" or statements such as "Okay, we have decided to use this book" are ways for team members to check in with each other, get started, summarize a decision, or move on to a new topic. Anyone on the team can initiate this activity, but, often, the school librarian can serve as an outsider to reflect back to a group. "I hear you saying you have decided..." or "What do we still need to do?" The activity of orienting took up little time but was key to facilitating decisions and moving forward.

This activity requires sensitivity to group process and careful listening for what team members are saying, as well as the ability to recognize when more discussion is needed or when the talk needs to be redirected back to a topic. Teachers in the case study valued the librarian for helping to keep them on track during planning.

**Coordinating**

In collaboration, coordinating is an essential activity that involves coordinating schedules to share resources including the school library and librarian. Today, teachers’ schedules are very prescriptive. Elementary schools have blocks for literacy, math, lunch, and resources or specialists, with little discretionary time during the school day. Even when the school librarian has a flexible schedule, teachers and the librarian still have to be creative to find common times for students to visit the library as a whole class, in small groups, or for individual browsing and checkout.

In this study, a decision was often made for the librarian to provide either the "teacher-directed reading" or the writing lesson within the teacher’s literacy block. Coordinating involves knowledge of each other’s schedules. School librarians can facilitate this activity by learning about classroom and grade-level schedules as well as about pacing guides.

**Making Sense**

Making sense together best represents the value of collaboration. This is the activity in which team members probe each other’s thoughts to understand curriculum, pedagogy, and student learning and often find understandings that no one might discover alone.

Newcomers or outsiders have a particular contribution to make to this activity because they don’t possess insider knowledge.
or shared past experiences. The school librarian can leverage this “ignorance” to ask questions about the meaning of a curricular goal, how it has been taught by teachers in the past, or “What do we want students to know at the end of this and how will we know they know it?”

Often team members may take for granted that they have the same ideas, and these questions uncover unexamined assumptions and bring forth best practices. Key questions about assessment, learning objectives and strategies, and students’ prior knowledge and interests emerge in this activity and lead to new ideas, resources, or strategies.

**Drifting**

The talk about chocolate that opened this article is an example of the activity of drifting. Drifting might be considered off task, but it represents one of the ways that team members get to know each other when personal or family information is shared. Talk about other staff members, school activities, or community events might be considered outside of the agenda of planning, but drifting is a means to share important information. Humor, like chocolate, serves to break the tension and provides momentary relief from the hard work of planning. Talk that drifts is often brought back with orienting talk. Both activities may be essential to the structure of a good model for planning.

**A Good Model for Planning**

These activities—orienting, coordinating, making connections, and making sense—look a lot like common problem-solving or decision-making models that include identifying a problem, gathering information, choosing steps to take, drawing conclusions, and then returning to refine or restate the problem. Wolcott (1994) found that teachers do not plan in the linear manner prescribed by instructional designers. My research also found that, while these activities were always present in planning, they never fit a regular or linear pattern. Additionally, the activity of drifting may be important to provide space or breaks from the pressures of planning together. Drifting from the topic was a means of drifting together, learning about each other, and forming social bonds. When the analysis of these activities was shared with the participating teachers, they agreed this was “a good model for planning.”

**“We Know What Each Other Knows”**

While all of the activities of drifting, orienting, coordinating, making connections, and making sense were important to planning, the activity of “making sense” best represents the kinds of professional learning enabled by collaboration. Through making sense, team members challenge each other to reflect on the meanings students will make of resources, lessons, and learning objectives. In the process, teachers share practices that worked (or not) in their own classrooms and seek ways to improve past practices. In a recent survey, teachers identified collaboration with colleagues as the most highly valued type of professional learning experience and identified “helped me create new lessons, materials or instructional strategies for immediate use” as the number one way a learning experience impacted their practice (National Center for Literacy Education (NCLE) 2013, 11). The NCLE survey also found that where there were higher levels of collaboration reported there were also a higher level of trust and increased spread of best practices.

Teachers in my study placed a similar value on collaborative planning with the school librarian as a way to learn about resources, get lesson ideas and strategies, and build a cohesive team. As one teacher remarked, “I think we have that trust because we plan together, and we know what each other knows.”

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REDESIGNING OUR ROLE WHILE REDESIGNING OUR LIBRARIES

Frances Bryant Bradburn
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Since my 2008 retirement from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, I have been privileged to work with schools and school systems across the state as they have implemented high school and middle school 1:1 programs. These 1:1 initiatives have consisted of a variety of formats: 24–7 district-provided devices, bring your own devices (BYOD), classroom carts, or a combination of all three.

One of my greatest frustrations is the gradual erosion of school library programs in this otherwise exciting instructional shift. Not only are my school library colleagues fighting to retain their professional identities, they are also struggling to maintain the library itself. Too often both teachers and students view the technology in their classrooms and on their persons as the all-knowing information facilitator/provider. Additionally, electronic books, video streaming, and databases are supplanting many of the physical resources in the school library. How should we re-imagine our roles and our school libraries in this new learning environment?

A timely session by David Jakes at Tech Forum Atlanta 2013 in March has spurred my thinking. During his session, Jakes walked participants through the Design Thinking process and provided a valuable webpage of resources for future reference. (See the list of recommended resources for URLs and other information about the resources mentioned here.) Since that March 1 session, I have noted many other resources that address, either directly or indirectly, this librarian/library redesign conundrum. Follett recently posted the winners of its Follett Challenge, a contest that seeks to reward innovative school library programs. All six winners articulated in some way this change in school library function and form. Bretford has published an iPaper Making Agile Learning Spaces by Tim Springer. T.H.E. Journal has featured articles in 2012 and 2013 about new learning spaces. The most thorough resource is IDEO’s Design Thinking for Educators Toolkit, 2nd ed., a walk-through of the Design Thinking process complete with examples and a downloadable workbook. All of these resources address the elephant in the room—how technology is changing education in general and school library programs and facilities specifically. The Design Thinking process provides a way to imagine the future and make plans to achieve it.

It’s easy enough, I suppose, to advocate for a library redesign, but does redesign get to the heart of the problem? Why aren’t teachers and students using the school library? Why am I suddenly relegated to tech support? Do we even need a school library—or school librarian—anymore? The intriguing thing about Design Thinking is that it attempts to address the real issues and then helps us think through and plan a viable solution.

If we are unable to articulate who we are, more importantly, who we are becoming in this constantly changing technology-based environment, how can we plan to create a space that allows and enhances our best professional selves?

An important caveat is necessary. At this point I have not actually walked through the entire Design Thinking process with one or more school librarians. Not only that, when I propose this process, everyone is interested, but most just want to cut to the chase—make a smaller circulation desk, put up a white board for collaboration, add more power outlets, and reconfigure tables. I understand their haste, but I wonder: Do these piecemeal efforts really address the question “Why are teachers and students no longer using the school library or me appropriately?” And what is appropriate use anyway? What is it about Design Thinking that could take us to the heart of the problem?

When I talked with David Jakes that cold March afternoon, he immediately said, “Have them address their role first.” The more I thought about it, the more I realized he was exactly right. If we are unable to articulate who we are or, more importantly, who we are becoming in this constantly changing technology-based environment, how can we plan to create a space that allows and enhances our best professional selves?
The five components of Design Thinking (IDEO 2012) can be summarized as discovery, interpretation, ideation, experimentation or prototyping, and evolution. Design Thinking provides a novel perspective on planning for new school library spaces to enable new roles for the librarian. Let’s look at each process in detail.

Discovery

David’s and my conversation fits perfectly into the first component of the Design Thinking process—discovery. Yes, it’s time-consuming, but it’s the most important aspect of the process. It’s also the first of the two processes that we do independently, before the more fun-filled, exciting parts in which we work together with other school librarians or with our library and technology advisory committees (LTACs) to brainstorm and plan solutions. The discovery phase forces us to ask the tough questions: What is our role right now? What do we want it to be? What do our customers and other stakeholders want it to be? How does the design of the library support and enhance that role?

It’s fine for us to talk to each other, comparing notes, but Design Thinking focuses our conversations on others—our teachers, students, partners, competitors. During the discovery phase of Design Thinking, we would schedule focus groups with teachers and students. We might want to have one-on-one conversations with our most honest colleagues and students—both library users and non-users. Important chats with the principal, supervisor, and tech director (if he or she is not our immediate supervisor) are mandatory. Nothing will change without their blessings and support! Consider a couple of wild cards as well—perhaps the technician who serves the school, one or two parents, or a public library colleague. What do they think of the program? What do their children think? Listen carefully and with a thick skin. The most critical comments are usually the most important.

This is a good time to examine our schedules, not the ones on the website or the sign-up schedules, but the actual hour-to-hour schedule throughout the week. Use large poster paper marked with the days of the week and gridded to reflect a.m./p.m. or class periods. (Yes, you can use a spreadsheet and keep the grid electronically, but putting it in front of you, writ large, can focus you as nothing else can!) Write everything you do, each task color-coded if you can manage it, throughout the week. (Color-coding will help during the interpretation phase.) Likewise, record the numbers of people in the school...
library. Just choose various times during the day and don’t be afraid to log zero users. Honest reflection, especially if you can attach customers to tasks throughout the day, is part of this process.

During this week, observe what is happening in your school library. Jot down what you see, taking pictures of how students and teachers are actually using your space. Where do they congregate? Who are they talking with? What are they doing? Use this stage of the process as an opportunity to talk with kids informally about why they are there, what they would like to see in their library. Perhaps they have friends in other schools who share stories about their school libraries. Are your students envious of a certain program or work area offered there?

Simultaneously, look around you. Are there doors to the outside? Could you adapt an outside space as part of the “greater library footprint”? What about meeting rooms? Is an old computer lab languishing now that you’re a 1:1 or BYOD school? Take photographs of these areas, including the ones that are unused or underused; the photos might spark ideas later.

This may also be a good time to visit other programs and facilities either face-to-face or virtually. Many videos and virtual tours are available; colleagues may have already rethought their services and/or facilities. You may want to think beyond your grade level. What about college or university libraries in the vicinity and a well-respected, vibrant bookstore nearby? Can these other spaces offer ideas or solutions that spark your creativity?

**Interpretation**

After you’ve gathered your data, it’s time to analyze and reflect. In IDEO’s *Design Thinking for Educators Toolkit*, it is suggested that you organize your data by categories: motivators, frustrations, and interactions (2012, 41).

- What motivates students and teachers to come to your library? Use your services? Why do they choose to ask you rather than the technician or a classmate/colleague?

- What are their frustrations? Too many classes scheduled simultaneously? Not enough power outlets? Are the rules too strict? Listen carefully. Are they really saying something else such as inadequate technical support? No high-tech equipment to complete a sophisticated graduation project? No place to sit and chat? Is your space (or your demeanor) too welcoming or not welcoming enough?

- Who interacts with whom in your library? Are student library assistants or student help-desk personnel primarily interacting with each other or with students and teachers who need their services? As the school librarian, where are your primary interactions—with teachers, with administrators, with students, or with the technology?

What themes arise as you analyze this data? Is your library a social or academic hub? Are your services primarily technical in nature? Are they focused on information literacy? Are you still book-centered? What does the use of your library’s space or the interactions you have...
with teachers and students, say about the kind of school library program you have? Where and how do you spend your time? Are you spending time on tasks that students, volunteers, or assistants could do? How much of your time are you engaged in collaborative or instructional activities? Are there spaces in your school library that are under- or over-utilized? Do others see space use as a problem, or do they support your instructional role regardless of venue?

Don’t be tempted to see things as good or bad; simply see them as the reality they are.

Are you finding any major ah-ha’s? Don’t be tempted to see things as good or bad; simply see them as the reality they are. Instead of thinking in terms of defending current circumstances or focusing on limitations, it will be more productive to begin posing the question “How might I...?” based on the themes and ah-ha’s you are finding.

Ideation

Now is the time for teamwork! Yes, now is the time to join with other school librarians or convene your LTAC to begin the exciting part of the Design Thinking process: imagining, brainstorming, and thinking outside the box.

Since you did both the discovery and interpretation alone, it’s time for you to talk with the larger group about what you learned. You have exciting information to share: you’ve learned so much, and it’s only natural to want to share your stories. And your stories will trigger other participants’ thoughts as well. I would suggest organizing your mini-presentation around the themes that arose or your ah-ha’s discovered during the interpretation phase. Depending on the number of participants (whether you’re in a group of fellow school librarians or leading your LTAC through this process), set a time limit. Everyone who conducted a discovery/interpretation challenge needs to share, but this is the beginning of the group process, not its culmination.

Once everyone has presented, it’s time to brainstorm. If you’re leading your LTAC, you’ll all brainstorm together; if you’re in a large group of colleagues, you may want to divide into smaller groups for richer discussions. Once brainstorming is complete, the fun begins. Select the group’s most promising ideas and begin to sketch them out. That’s right—literally draw them on big sheets of chart paper. Right now, the sky’s the limit. Dream, plan, and create your ideal space, your ideal role. It’s a group dream, sometimes outlandish, sometimes idealistic, and even, perhaps, impractical. But it’s a happy process that will spark creativity.

And that’s a good thing because you will soon have to face reality. What is possible within your budget, within your square footage, within your job description and administrators’ expectations? It’s time for a reality check and then development of a prototype.

Experimentation or Prototyping

At this point you’ve collected data about the current state of your school library and your role as the school librarian, and you’ve developed an ideal and shared vision of what and how you would like to change. The next stage, prototyping, involves developing a trial to put these plans into action. Sketch the design using whatever works best for you and your colleagues, whether it’s a computer graphic, links to websites of library furniture vendors, or an art student’s rendering. What you really want here is a vehicle for the larger discussion. Involve as many new people as possible—students, teachers, parents, and administrators.

To find possible allies or problems, listen carefully to the “Yes, buts...” Going back to the drawing board will be frustrating, but less so if you remember that it’s all part of the Design Thinking process and to be expected. And remember, much of what you are doing here is defining, redefining, or re-establishing your role. The library space is important, but your role has the highest priority.

Evolution

Design Thinking is not static. If done correctly it is a process, one that, especially in this world of constantly morphing technology, will continue to evolve as well. Our roles and our spaces will change with that technology; it will be important to remember to focus on the agile, rather
Dream, plan, and create your ideal space, your ideal role. It’s a group dream, sometimes outlandish, sometimes idealistic, and even, perhaps, impractical. But it’s a happy process that will spark creativity.

Conclusion
Design Thinking is only a means to an ever-evolving, agile school librarian, school library program, and school library facility. The design process requires us to first ask questions that get to the heart of our role in the instructional process, to reflect on what we are currently doing, to elicit feedback from our stakeholders, and to collaboratively re-imagine the school library space. Prototyping allows us to try out these new and exciting ideas with deliberate attention to our role in the educational mission of the school. A design process ensures that we remake our libraries as learning spaces that clearly support our role and our patrons, rather than the latest trends. As we engage with others in design thinking, we can become proactive in understanding our future roles and reshaping our spaces to promote and enable that vision.

Works Cited:

Recommended Resources

Frances Bryant Bradburn is the former director of instructional technology for the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. She is currently a 1:1 consultant for the NC New Schools and the Golden LEAF Foundation who lives in Brevard, North Carolina. She was awarded the NCLA Distinguished Service Award in 2007, the NCAECT Service Award in 2008, and North Carolina Association of School Librarians Distinguished Service Award (now known as the Frances Bryant Bradburn Distinguished Service Award) in October 2008. The former editor of North Carolina Libraries and former member of the AASL Board of Directors, Frances reviews young adult titles for Booklist, and has written a variety of journal articles on both media and technology.
community assessment
in teaching the research process
Authentic assessment, while a seemingly simple concept, is, in reality, quite complex. In fact, the chart Bruce B. Frey, Vicki L. Schmitt, and Justin P. Allen created comparing the definitions of authentic assessment in research spans several pages (2012). However, what is agreed upon is that, for an assessment to be authentic, it must have some relationship to the real world. Doris Bergen’s much-cited 1994 article “Authentic Performance Assessments” has the “real world” as one of three criteria for determining authenticity even at the elementary level.

While most of these defining researchers focus on the quality of the task—its complexity, the formative assessments, the complex relationships, the activities and portfolios—the teacher remains the ultimate authority in defining a quality product. However, if the

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purpose of education is, indeed, to create citizens of the world, how might school librarians help involve more of the real world in community assessment of student projects?

What Is Community Assessment?
Community assessment is the concept of using our wider professional communities to provide authentic assessment to our students. It means using the knowledge available in our immediate surroundings and through Web 2.0 tools to enrich our instructional processes. It means using retirees, experts, and volunteers from professional organizations and advocacy groups to comment on and evaluate the quality of our students’ work. After all, “the school library program promotes collaboration among members of the learning community” (AASL 2009, 19).

In the age of social media, however, a learning community can be as vast as our imaginations and as valuable as gold in providing both summative and formative assessments to our students. Furthermore, including community members in assessment of student work provides a real-world connection for students and allows students to imagine a future for themselves as productive members of those communities. These connections might provide students with a path to planning for their futures in those communities.

How Can School Librarians Help?
The school library is a critical component in the implementation of community engagement in the research process. Not only are school librarians in contact with all teachers and administrators, our school libraries are often also community hubs. Homeowners’ associations, community meetings, religious gatherings, and events of all types can happen in the library. This circumstance puts school librarians in the unique position of being able to make connections between teachers and the community.

As natural gatherers, we are prone to curate. We should not limit ourselves to just books and papers. Social capital built by librarians should be leveraged to engage our students and our communities in learning. Referencing a database of volunteers willing to help would be an invaluable service to students and teachers in both the planning and the execution of research. For example, a retiree coming in to run a homeowners’ meeting might also be an avid gardener. When planning research projects with teachers, the school librarian can be aware that this retiree would be an excellent person to contact to provide formative assessment to a student doing a project on native plants.

In *Empowering Learners* we are also charged by AASL (in the chapter on effective practices for inquiry) to “[integrate] the use of state-of-the-art and emerging technologies as a means for effective and creative learning” (2009, 25). Our database of contacts can be expanded through simple steps, such as e-mailing appropriate resources, or through a larger, more complicated scavenging of websites to learn who the experts might be. While time-consuming to compile, once created, these contact lists can be an invaluable service to our students in providing authentic assessment of the content, process, and product of their research.

Will Community Members Get Involved?
Community members are willing to get involved, and making the effort to approach them can pay off for our students. Taking the leap into community assessment requires a great deal of courage; but community assessment can change the tone of a project to such an extent that it should be incorporated into most major units in the curriculum.

As a school librarian, the first time I attempted integrating community assessment, my collaborative teacher and I started with an excellent and explicit rubric. In our planning, it was critical to create a formula that was specific enough for anyone to be able to use. Summative assessment with the community hinges on the clarity of expressions of product expectations.

A well-written rubric, honed by feedback from students and colleagues, is a necessary part of the process of creating a research product. With a quality rubric, a community member can walk into a presentation and easily provide authentic and relevant feedback to students.

Our rubric allowed two teachers and an administrator with no knowledge of the research process to authentically assess student presentations. Assessors’ comments, written directly on the rubric, helped students understand how well they had conveyed their information to audience members who lacked background knowledge.

While the teacher had the ultimate authority to assign a grade, having the community involved in summative assessment lent a significant amount of gravitas to the proceedings, prompting one student to wear a tie and all students to take their work seriously. While relevance and rigor are always apparent to the teacher, adding third parties to
In the age of social media, however, a learning community can be as vast as our imaginations and as valuable as gold in providing both summative and formative assessments to our students.

the classroom puts both concepts front and center for students. This teamwork required to involve community members in effective assessment also creates and cements relationships among colleagues.

Another practical application of this concept was creating a gallery walk with a teacher finalizing a campaign-poster project. Having completed the research process, we engaged in summative assessment by laying out posters on top of bookshelves with the rubric taped next to them. We then invited students in the library to comment on the posters, noting what they saw. Teachers, support staff, and administrators also commented on the posters.

As the school librarian who had advocated for this type of community assessment, I experienced quite a bit of trepidation that the comments would be overwhelmingly negative, terse, and/or trite. “Good job” does not help a student understand how the quality of a product is viewed in the immediate community, and I feared that the feedback, instead of being summative and productive, could be relatively useless. In an environment where instructional time is precious, I may have asked a teacher to invest time and effort into a project that would not only be a waste, but also potentially hurtful for our students.

To my relief, during the two days the posters remained on display, they collected a wealth of positive and productive comments. By and large, the comments centered on diction, as in, “The diction is strong on this poster”; format, “The arrangement of graphics is powerful”; and content, “I need to know more about this issue to understand your poster.” The most negative comment centered on copyright, “Copyright Fail / Watermark Win!” This comment, while negative, sent a strong message to the author about the unacceptability of plagiarism.

Not only were the comments from the public productive, the knowledge that this type of summative assessment would be done increased the quality of students’ products. Further, the process engaged both students and colleagues in curriculum and with people outside their immediate assignment areas, building relationships and helping to solidify a whole school community.

Should Community Members Get Involved Earlier in a Project?

Community assessment can also lend a hand in the formative stage of a research project. Rather than submitting work to a teacher, early in the process students could submit their projects to an interested community member and get real-world feedback from professionals in
While relevance and rigor are always apparent to the teacher, adding third parties to the classroom puts both concepts front and center for students. This teamwork required to involve community members in effective assessment also creates and cements relationships among colleagues.

their fields. Local engineers talking with robotics students, reporters from the local newspaper talking with journalism students, and nurses helping students aspiring to be medical professionals are just a few examples. All these specialists can help students with the content of their research, providing guidance that an educator may not be able to give—especially when dealing with controversial topics.

In dealing with controversy, it often helps to couch the issue in personal terms. For example, Karen was interested in researching gay adoption. After she gathered some background information, she contacted the local chapter of the Gay-Straight Alliance. Using Skype, she was then able to interview a local couple who had recently been through the experience. They answered questions she had created based on her previous research, provided redirection, commented on the quality of the product thus far, and added a personal face to the issue. For engagement and ownership of new learning, that personal connection to the research is critical to millennial students. The formative assessment provided by the community is invaluable.

While librarians are experts in many areas, we cannot possibly be experts in everything. We are conduits of information. We can comment on the quality of sources, writing, and formatting; however, commenting on the content is much more difficult. But experts and dabblers alike can comment on the content. If a student is researching free-speech legislation, calling on a lawyer would help. For the student, this contact with an expert outside the school is more authentic, more relevant, and more helpful than any comments we might make. Creating the connection is as easy as a Skype call or as in-depth as a face-to-face interview. Either way, a relationship is created. If this student decides to pursue an internship in his or her post-secondary life, the contacts already created will provide guidance. If the interaction is negative, it is still valid feedback—either confirming that the student has no interest in further pursuing the subject or that the student’s work is not of sufficient quality for the community’s standards. In the case of the lawyer, he or she benefits through the contact with a potential future colleague and through raising expectations for the student in a variety of professional ways.
A personal relationship, though, is not always the goal. Sometimes students just need the best information possible. In teaching the research process, one of the key points has always been finding the best source. While AASL’s standard 1.1.4, "Find, evaluate, and select appropriate sources to answer questions" (AASL 2007, 4), is one of our most concisely worded goals for students, trying to find the most germane, current, and reliable sources is not easy in the Information Age. This difficulty is especially true considering that, according to Moore’s Law of Obsolescence, the half-life of knowledge is growing shorter all the time. In some fields—especially technology and science—what an author writes today is no longer true by the time the book ships from the publisher. For example, a student currently researching cyber warfare may be interested in regulations and may come across the NATO Tallinn Manual, not understanding that advances in the field of hacking in the past week make that research inapplicable. In addition to reading, the student should contact groups like EvilZone hacking and security online community to understand the mechanics of cyber hacking. This group of more than 100,000 hackers may enlighten the student about recent developments. Now the student has the option of editing the manual itself as a research product. This group would also be an excellent forum for editing and guiding the students’ drafts. While the feedback may not be entirely positive, productive, or pleasant, it will convey the community’s standards to the student, providing guidance and next steps, and assessment of the final product.

For older students interested in a particular field, this connection and understanding are critical as they make decisions about and prepare for their post-secondary lives. In the example above, a student—as a future network engineer, security specialist, or systems analyst—will find knowledge gained from practitioners to be invaluable and engaging. Having existed in this virtual reality, even for just a little while, a student will be vastly more prepared for what awaits him or her in actual reality. In fact, instead of just imagining themselves as members of a professional community, students would have experiences and solid plans laid out for them by the very community they seek to join.

What Are Other Benefits?

Advertisers around the world take advantage of the need for connection by using social media to engage celebrities with the ordinary public. Social-media marketing creates a trust relationship with the public that makes marketing products both expedient and effective. An entire field of study, “consumer engagement,” is dedicated to creating relationships with customers. Engaging students is critical; we should take advantage of the innate human desire to connect in meaningful ways with others by connecting our students to their communities. In doing so, we also engage the community in the school using this classic marketing method. As school librarians, it is one of our core beliefs that, “Learning has a social context” (AASL 2007, 3). This dual and personal engagement in research can go a long way toward building community support for the school community in general and the school library in particular.

Whether summative or formative, virtual or personal, community assessment means engaging the people around us to enhance our instruction. By placing student work in front of college professors, professionals, other teachers, and experts in a variety of fields, we are tying the community closer to our students and schools. The connection prepares our students more thoroughly and completely than anything we could possibly create alone. In our quest to ensure that students and staff are empowered, let us help them be empowered and confident in their skills as they walk out the doors of our high schools and into our communities.

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TECHNOLOGY PLANNING: DESIGNING THE DIRECTION TO GET THERE
A strategic plan for the school library program designs a learning environment that includes technology for the higher-level thinking skills, attitudes, and responsibilities in AASL’s Standards for the 21st-Century Learner (2007). Empowering Learners, AASL’s national guidelines for school library programs, states that the school library program is “built on a long-term strategic plan that reflects the mission, goals, and objectives of the school” (2009, 29). School librarians develop a technology plan for the school library program that reflects teaching and learning for today’s education. The school librarian’s leadership in the overall process and the written plan itself can influence future strategies for teaching and learning with technology that can go well beyond the school library program.

Empowering Learners describes a framework for a 21st-century learning environment where “technology is woven throughout” (AASL 2009, 10). This level of technology integration in the school library program should be reflected in any technology plans for the school or district. I’ve been the school librarian on district technology planning committees, participated in writing a state technology plan, provided technology-planning guidance as a state E-rate coordinator in two states, and reviewed all the school district plans as a certified state-level technology plan approver. All too often in my career I have read
school district-level technology plans in which the only reference to the school library was a mention of the automated card catalog.

School librarians can influence the integration of technology in a meaningful way—and advocate for the school library program—through a technology plan that reflects external and internal goals. You may not have been part of the district-level technology planning, but that doesn’t stop the planning so essential to the administration of an effective school library program. A technology plan can provide opportunities for the future. The school library plan describes needs and strategies you can use as the basis for a grant proposal or in your response when your principal says there is a source of funds available if you write—by tomorrow—about the impact you could make with technology.

The technology plan as a written document provides evidence the school library program is integral to teaching and learning with technology in the school environment. The collaborative process for developing a dynamic technology plan can also highlight the leadership of the school librarian.

Community of Practice

The process of creating an effective plan for using technology in your school library fosters understanding and goals through a comprehensive approach that includes stakeholders. Planning for educational technology is a social process (Picciano 2011). Leaders for successful technology initiatives frequently note the learning is more about the people than the technology. Find the people who can help connect the school community’s needs and wants to your knowledge about the school library program. A school library advisory board or another formal group may already include the representation of stakeholders you need to develop an effective technology plan for the school library program. If you lack a formal community group, a collaborative approach that involves colleagues, students, and parents will help ensure an understanding of aspirations, commitment to the plan, and continuity as technology and needs change.

Enlist the school community to understand what technology is being used or why it isn’t being used. Seek out colleagues who are knowledgeable about assistive technology and accessibility issues. Explore the literature for articles about new technology for teaching and learning in school libraries and discuss with colleagues. Ask what isn’t available in your school now and reflect upon why it is needed.

Start technology planning for the school library program by reviewing the technology already present and how it is used currently in the school library, and then envision what new use or technology could positively impact learning in your school. Dream big! How would you teach multiple literacies in an ideal environment? The planning process helps you develop a long-term vision to benefit the school community. Think about what you have read, seen, or heard in the enthusiasm of a colleague or student for technology to support the school library program’s goals for teaching and learning.

Proposing ideas amidst tough economic times may be difficult, but—to be prepared for unforeseen opportunities that may arise—you should explore strategies for added capacity or new technology. Be realistic, but don’t get bogged down in the negatives of limited staff or finances as you brainstorm about technology and how you want to use it through the school library program. Rather than assume you do not have the capacity to meet your goal, look at how you might break the goal down into smaller pieces, implement changes over time, or coordinate with another program. With some strategic thinking, a planning group might be able to modify a goal rather than eliminate the goal entirely.

Technology Plan

Many of the technology plans found in school districts are formatted to meet the original requirements for funding under No Child Left Behind Title IID (funding
Technology plans often cover a three-year period. The third year of the plan may be less specifically described than the first year, but a plan with a three-year horizon provides a long-term vision—a direction for how to get there. Follow the criteria or format for writing technology plans in your district and make sure the plan meets funding sources’ guidelines. Technology plans for E-rate funding include four requirements: goals and strategies, professional development, an assessment or inventory of current technology or services, and an evaluation process to monitor progress toward the goals in the plan itself (E-rate Central 2013). Additionally, a plan should include information about costs, timelines, and other budgetary considerations that can be used for determining implementation and sustainability.

The following components and key questions should be considered as you develop a technology plan for the school library program.

**Goals and Strategies**

Goals establish the framework for a comprehensive technology plan. Goals should align with the overall mission of the school library program in ways that are consistent with the community’s vision for teaching and learning with technology. What are the goals of your school library program? What are the primary goals in your school or district technology plan? How can you maximize existing resources and coordinate plans for new resources or coordinate with the professional development in a larger initiative within the school?

Consider the impact on facilities planning. What are the space and wiring needs, or furniture implications for the school library? Reflect upon how the technology can be used to support the library program’s core values such as ethical use or equitable access. Providing equitable access is more than making hardware and software available. Through the school library program, school librarians provide “diverse sources of information that match curricular needs, lend themselves to units of inquiry, and are of high interest to students” (AASL 2009, 39). Determine how the library program can support technology use with high-quality content in a virtual collection to meet the needs of all learners.

Goals, as in almost any planning, should be specific, measurable, and describe what it is you want to accomplish. Identify and develop strategies to meet these goals. Your strategies may include collaboration with other educators, influence classroom pedagogy, or be more apparent in the school library itself. How will you promote and encourage these strategies within the library and in the school?

**Professional Development**

A professional development strategy in the technology plan ensures that staff will know how to use new technologies as well as develop more effective uses of current technology to facilitate learning for students. What do library staff and teachers already use? What would they be...
just as rubrics enable students to understand what is needed before they start an assignment, an established evaluation process helps to keep plan implementation on target.

willing to use? Will they be required to use any new technology? The professional development strategy is also an opportunity to emphasize the school librarian’s role as a technology leader and to offer informal or formal interactions “to sustain and increase knowledge and skills” (AASL 2009, 43).

significant staffing implications. The plan should include these costs even if the line item is outside of the school library budget. The E-rate program no longer requires that a plan include a budget sufficient to acquire and support elements of the plan, but budgets are part of a school librarian’s responsibility when administering a school library program.

Assessment and Evaluation
Although evaluation is typically described at the end of a technology plan, your process for developing a plan should start with an assessment of past and present use of technology (Papa 2011). An assessment provides an inventory or picture of what is available. Use the assessment to develop an evaluation process that provides expectations for the technology plan. Just as rubrics enable students to understand what is needed before they start an assignment, an established evaluation process helps keep plan implementation on target.

A plan is useful for identifying needs, explaining how new resources would be used, and justifying why an item is not appropriate for your program. Unfortunately, it is not unusual to find unopened and unused equipment in a school where purchases were made without considering how the technology could support the goals, strategies, and professional development of a technology plan. A comprehensive technology plan is prepared for change. If the school library is offered technology, you are ready! You have already

Budget
Budgets are used to determine the benefits versus the cost of implementing or maintaining a strategy. What would it cost to meet the goals you have set? Does your yearly budget for the library reflect the strategies in your technology plan? Include software, hardware, professional development, maintenance agreements, and any

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developed a plan for what you need and how you will use it to benefit teaching and learning.

Describe a process to regularly evaluate the plan itself. Although the technology plan may encompass only three years, a lot can happen over the life of a plan, and even the most effective technology plans may need a mid-course correction. Individual projects may need to be modified to meet financial constraints. The technology changes; staff members are reassigned; and new initiatives are proposed. An evaluation process should provide assessment of progress toward goals, an awareness of opportunities, and the flexibility to respond to changes in the school library or school environment. With regular review and response, a technology plan can be a living document that maintains the validity of the overall planning process.

Influence for Leadership
Technology is central and often transparent in the daily transactions, services, teaching, and learning found in today's school library programs. A plan for technology and related strategies for its use is essential to understanding and designing a school library program as described in Empowering Learners. Demonstrate how the library program impacts teaching and learning through technology. Provide the narrative and data you need to support requests for technology. Write the plan to show technology as integral to each goal.

Technology plans provide a direction you can communicate to decision makers. I recommend that a technology plan for the library not be separate from a plan that is written for the overall library program. You can quickly pull out relevant information for use during a school-wide planning process if you write the library plan with an awareness of format and requirements in other school or district plans. A technology plan approved by the school board and other decision makers may not guarantee an adequate budget for implementation over the next three years. It does, however, highlight the importance of sustaining necessary support as difficult decisions are made.

Planning technology for the school library program is critical to developing a learning environment that produces successful learners skilled in multiple literacies. A well-written plan can determine how you will integrate technology into the library program and meet the needs for teaching and learning in your school. My experience as a reviewer of technology plans has shown that the school librarian's unique perspective as leader, instructional partner, information specialist, teacher, and program administrator can significantly influence the direction of a technology plan—and its successful implementation.

As a technology leader, the school librarian plans a school library program for teaching and learning that fits into the plan for the school or district. The school library program may have only a few computers, a classroom-sized computer lab, or the ubiquitous computing found in a one-to-one school environment, but whatever the level as it currently exists in your school library, don’t let the direction for technology use be determined by happenstance or a remote district plan. Communicate the technology plan for the school library program to district technology leaders. As an active participant in developing a technology plan at the higher level, the school librarian contributes to determining how technology is used throughout the school, instead of focusing only on how much “stuff” the school library might receive. Through the technology plan, a school librarian can positively influence the direction for students and teachers to use technology for teaching and learning.

Sylvia Knight Norton was the state-level coordinator for school libraries and technology planning for over a decade in Maine. She has been a state E-rate coordinator in Maine and Florida. She is currently the internship coordinator for the School of Library and Information Studies at Florida State University where she is enrolled in the doctoral program. She is an elected member of the ALA Executive Board.

Works Cited:
SCHOOL LIBRARIAN + TECHNOLOGY SPECIALIST

Partnership for Effective Technology Integration

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Why Technology Integration Leadership?

Empowering Learners: Guidelines for School Library Programs provides direction in creating school library programs for the twenty-first century. School libraries should be “built by professionals who model leadership and best practices for the community to ensure that learners are equipped with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in the technological society of the 21st century” (AASL 2009, 45). School librarians are charged “to play a leading role in weaving such skills throughout the curriculum so that all members of the school community are effective users of ideas and information” (AASL 2009, 46). It is this “weaving” or integration of technology into the curricular areas where school librarians, based on their knowledge of pedagogical principles and school curriculum, technology expertise, and collaborative experience, can serve as leaders and valuable assets to their schools.

The explosion of technology and information has resulted in major changes in education in the twenty-first century, and as educators it is the responsibility of school librarians to prepare students for their future and to help them “develop information skills that will enable them to use technology as an important tool for learning, both now and in the future” (AASL 2009, 13). This responsibility means that students must be taught the skills they need to go beyond simply knowing how to use technology tools to understanding how to apply them in learning, as well as to create and communicate new knowledge (AASL 2007; Partnership for 21st Century Skills 2009).

Students cannot be expected to benefit from technology if their teachers are neither familiar nor comfortable with it. The role of school librarians is now one that emphasizes teaching information skills to students directly and, more importantly, in collaboration with other educators. To create engaging and relevant learning experiences for students, school librarians serve as instructional partners in the process of teaching critical literacies; librarians accomplish this task by working with teachers to model and partner in guiding instructional design and offering expertise on the integration of emergent technologies (AASL 2009; Everhart, Mardis, and Johnston 2011; Hanson-Baldau and Hughes-Hassell 2009; Johnston 2012; Shannon 2002).

Providing leadership in technology integration for the purposes of learning is paramount, and responsibility for leading this movement to prepare learners for participating and succeeding in our global society is placed with school librarians (AASL 2009, 2010; ISTE 2010; NBPTS 2010).

Or is it?

Role of the Instructional Technologist?

School librarians were once the sole person responsible for technology in schools, but now the increased presence of instructional technologists has resulted in school librarians who may no longer be seen as the technology integration expert in the school.

SCHOOL LIBRARIANS WERE ONCE THE SOLE PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR TECHNOLOGY IN SCHOOLS, BUT NOW THE INCREASED PRESENCE OF INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGISTS HAS RESULTED IN SCHOOL LIBRARIANS WHO MAY NO LONGER BE SEEN AS THE TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION EXPERT IN THE SCHOOL.

In response to the demand for further definition of the role of school librarians in technology integration, in 2010 the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) released an advocacy statement, “The Role of School Librarians in Promoting the Use of Educational Technologies,” which attempts to define and describe the relationship between the school librarian and instructional technology.
“School librarians…support the use of technology throughout the school by working closely with the school’s technology coordinator or fill the role of technology coordinator when a separate position does not exist; serve as information literacy and educational technology specialists in their schools; address educational technology and information literacy skills instruction embedded in the curriculum; provide technology training for teachers…to prepare students to succeed in higher education, the work place, and in society; help students develop important digital citizenry attributes to demonstrate responsible use of information and technology; provide leadership in the development of local information and technology literacy standards.” (ISTE 2010, 1–2)

Complex Relationship

In my recent research the complex relationship between the school librarian and the IT emerged as a factor in school librarians’ leadership enactment in technology integration. The relationship was found to serve as an enabler when the relationship is collaborative and as a barrier when the relationship is competitive (Johnston 2012). As the lines blur between these two roles, school librarians may feel threatened by instructional technologists. School librarians were once the sole person responsible for technology in the schools, but now the increased presence of instructional technologists has resulted in school librarians who are no longer seen as the technology expert in the school and are excluded from technology decision making. Additionally, a competitive relationship may arise from territorial battles over technology as a resource and over access issues, as instructional technologists are often given an increased level of authority over technology and serve as gatekeepers who restrict even school librarians’ access by controlling filters and passwords.

As this instructional technologist role expands to include working with teachers to integrate technology into the curricular areas, school librarians may feel that they have to compete to retain their place as leaders in technology integration. A lack of clarity and definition in the two roles has contributed to the competitive relationship with instructional technologists. Survey respondents confirmed this problem with comments about lack of control in technology decision making, being excluded from working with teachers when technology was involved, not being allowed to conduct technology-related staff development, and having technology taken away from them—all circumstances that have led to no collaboration between the librarian and the IT in some schools (Johnston 2011, 2012).

Yet school librarians who noted a collaborative IT or reported serving in the dual role as school librarian and instructional technologist were found to be highly involved in technology integration leadership more often. This finding demonstrates that when school librarians do not have to contend with a competitive, threatening instructional technologist they are enabled to be involved in technology integration leadership more often, while competitive instructional technologists can constrain accomplished school librarians’ involvement with leadership of technology integration (Johnston 2011, 2012).

To collaborate, it is important for these professionals to develop an understanding of both roles and in what areas they overlap. The results of limited research in this area indicate the importance of collaboration between school librarians and instructional technologists as they work as a team to benefit students and teachers. However, further research is needed to clarify and define the role and responsibilities of each member of this team (Johnston 2011, 2012; Nguyen 2007; Seavers 2002).

A Tale of Two Relationships

Scenario One

When the new school librarian Ms. Jones started working at Riverside Elementary School, the IT Ms. Ramsey welcomed her as a new instructional partner. The IT suggested they begin their new partnership with a discussion about each other’s views on technology and the roles that each of them could play in fostering an effective learning environment. This initial communication and negotiation of technology responsibilities provided the foundation for a partnership through which the school librarian and the IT could work together to provide the very best for their students and teachers for years to come. At faculty meetings Ms. Jones and Ms. Ramsey presented themselves as a team; they frequently planned together and had brainstorming meetings related to curriculum needs. Ms. Jones kept the IT informed about instruction that was part of the library program, while Ms. Ramsey kept the librarian up to date on technology projects in the school, especially as the projects affected instruction.

Most importantly, the two served as advocates for each other. When a teacher would approach Ms. Ramsey
about working on a technology project with her class, Ms. Ramsey would immediately suggest involving Ms. Jones. For example, when a fourth-grade teacher approached Ms. Ramsey about helping her class create movies based on their research of famous people from the Civil War, Ms. Ramsey asked, “Are you working with Ms. Jones on the research portion of this project? She has some great lessons that will not only help students find information by using databases and various websites, but also teach students how to use various programs to organize and present what they find. We can help students do their best work if the three of us work together on this project.” Likewise, when Ms. Jones was approached by teachers about the research portion of a project, she would ask, “Have you talked to Ms. Ramsey about this project? I know she has some great ideas on how students could use a variety of technology resources in this project. We could all work together to maximize the project’s impact on students’ learning.”

The effort put into collaborating and the focus on doing what was best for the students made this relationship work well. The biggest winners were students and teachers, who had the best possible learning and teaching experiences.

Scenario Two
When the school librarian Ms. Jenkins was selected to head the library at a new school, she was introduced to Ms. Paul who would be the IT at the new school. These two professionals were both known for their innovative integration of technology in support of learning. Yet, instead of communicating and forming a partnership, these two professionals soon found themselves at odds. The communication was one-sided, as Ms. Paul was very controlling of every aspect of technology access and use; she set a precedent for dictating the rules. Ms. Jenkins came to resent her own lack of control, and communication deteriorated even further, resulting in no collaboration.

To collaborate, it is important for these professionals to develop an understanding of both roles and in what areas they overlap.
These two operated as separate, isolated entities. They even made a point of working independently on separate projects with teachers, each handling the technology on their own without involving the other. As a result, students and teachers suffered from this competitiveness because they did not get the rich teaching and learning experiences they could have had if the school librarian and IT had worked together as a team to encourage development of 21st-century skills.

**In Practice**

The two real-world scenarios demonstrate the difference in what can be accomplished with students and teachers when the school librarian and the instructional technologist work together instead of competing.

Drawing from the research and practical experience, strategies that can be used to develop a collaborative relationship with instructional technology specialists were identified.

- **Define roles, responsibilities, and expectations:** Discuss and define these up front to avoid territorial battles over technology resources and access. Have an open mind and be willing to compromise.

- **Communicate:** Set the tone for a good working relationship by always keeping the lines of communication open, with frequent face-to-face meetings as well as e-mail exchanges.

- **Face-to-face time:** Find a time when you can both meet to brainstorm ideas and plan for instruction based on curricular needs.

- **Operate as a team:** Present together at grade-level and faculty meetings, and work together to conduct professional development for teachers.

- **Update each other:** Keep each other informed about what you are working on with teachers and brainstorm ways to optimize instruction and maximize learning.
Conclusion

School librarians have a vital role to play in efforts to ensure that students are equipped with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed and participate in the digital society of the twenty-first century. This role presents an opportunity for school librarians to become vital contributors to the teaching and learning process, but school librarians are just one component of this process. Therefore, to provide engaging and meaningful learning experiences for students, relationships must be forged with classroom teachers and with instructional technology specialists.

Works Cited:


Melissa P. Johnston is an assistant professor at the University of Alabama in the School of Library and Information Studies, after spending thirteen years as a school librarian in Georgia before completing her PhD at Florida State University’s School of Library & Information Studies. Johnston’s research interests include school librarians as leaders, the school librarian’s role in technology integration, and the education of future school librarians. She is a member of the AASL Best Apps Committee, AASL Distinguished Service Award Committee, and the ALA Research & Statistics Committee. She is also the AASL Research Award Subcommittee chair and an ALA Council Member at Large. She is a monthly contributor to the blog Building a Culture of Collaboration <http://cultureofcollaboration.edublogs.org>.
When you think “professional development,” what image does that bring? For many, including ourselves, it’s sitting in an air-conditioned room listening to someone drone on and on about something that has nothing to do with working in a school library. So what do you do? Complain or take charge of your own professional development and develop a plan of action? We go with the second option—make a plan!

Now that can sound like a daunting task, but it’s a reality for many school librarians. Budget cuts, time constraints, and the new requirement for professional development for recent teachers are issues many school librarians face. But have no fear; with a positive outlook and a game plan, you will be on your way to stay up to date with the current technology and developments in the field of school librarianship.

You need to ask yourself: What do I want to learn this year or in the next five years? Write down your yearly and five-year plan to help keep yourself on task. Ask yourself: What are my strengths as a school librarian and what skills do I need to work on? Do I need to learn about technology, Common Core State Standards, leadership skills, grant writing, or literature? What do you want your students to know? The possibilities are endless and overwhelming. By having a plan, you have small goals that seem more doable.

One inexpensive and easy way to acquire new skills, meet other school librarians, and receive professional development credit is to join your local organization or affiliate for school librarians. Many organizations meet three or four times during the school year, and many members are presenters at workshops. Joining a local group is a great way to meet school librarians who are facing the same challenges since each of us is usually the only school librarian in a school and some of us are the only librarian in the whole district.

Apply for a grant to attend a national conference. Some school districts even have money for you to attend a conference. Some state libraries have professional development grants for school librarians as well. You never know until you ask. Attending an AASL or ALA conference is an excellent way to attend various workshops and Tons of resources are out there for us, and many of them are free. Let’s face it; we are the experts on finding resources for our kids and teachers. It is time to find and use the resources that will help us!

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sessions, listen to great authors, and meet librarians from around the world. If you cannot attend in person, why not attend virtually? More and more conference planners now give us a chance to attend virtually at a lower price.

Summer is often a convenient time to get refreshed and learn something new. Many regional library councils have summer-school sessions tailored to school librarians. Or you can stay in a college dorm during the summer and learn from library leaders. For example, every August at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, the Carol A. Kearney Educational Leadership Institute is held.

Tons of resources are out there for us, and many of them are free. Let’s face it; we are the experts on finding resources for our kids and teachers. It is time to find and use the resources that will help us!

One free way to keep learning is to use social media. Find your experts and see who they are following. ALA Think Tank on Facebook and #TLChat on Twitter are great places to start. For more suggestions about starting your own PLN, consult the November/December 2012 issue of _KQ_, which contained excellent ideas. It even contained an article explaining how I (Kelly) started my own PLN (“My Crazy Road to Finding My PLN”).

Available resources are so extensive that exploring them can take up lots of time. Schedule some learning time; it might be ten minutes a day, an hour a week, an hour a month. Start small and don’t be afraid to quit following people who are not meeting your needs. Remember, this is about your learning!

Free webinars and conference sessions are sometimes made available after conferences. For example, for at least six months after the annual Midwest Education Technology Conference twelve workshops are available online for free. Also, notice the keynote speakers and their topics, and then choose experts to follow on social media. On eCOLLAB, AASL also offers professional development resources, including webinars, free for AASL members. Subscribe to see what is available!

_Booklist, School Library Journal, Library Journal_, and Demco offer free webinars on a variety of topics. Sometimes a certificate of attendance, book lists, and/or slides of the webinar are available; even if you were not able to attend, often you can view the webinar later.

Of course, a wealth of resources are available from AASL. To get started, take a look at the resources linked to the Learning Standards and Program Guidelines page <www.al.org/aasl/standards-guidelines>; among them are the Learning4Life resources, the Standards for the 21st-Century Learner lesson-plan database, _A 21st-Century Approach to School Librarian Evaluation_, the "AASL Learning Standards and Common Core State Standards Crosswalk," and lists of best websites and best apps for teaching and learning. Pick one, and learn all about it. Then share what you’ve learned!

Take hold of your own future; apply for grants, awards, and leadership opportunities. If your school library needs more books or technology, apply for a grant. Applying for a grant has a reputation of being hard and scary. Simply follow the directions and try. You would be amazed by how many people do not apply for grants or scholarships to attend conferences. Extensive lists of grant opportunities are available at the Follett Library Resources website <www.titlewave.com/intro/grants-cat.html> and at <www.grantwrangler.com>. Be a leader and share your successes! ALA supports an Emerging Leaders program and a large number of awards. Take advantage of those opportunities.

So, in your monthly, yearly, and five-year plans don’t forget to include time for you to learn and grow. Tie professional development to a goal in your evaluation. Be brave; write a proposal to speak at a conference! Don’t underestimate what you can bring to our profession. Be a leader in our profession and share your knowledge with others. Publish articles in school library publications. Share your successes! Motivate others. Be a role model. Everything you learn will help the kids!

Charlie Kelly is a high school librarian in Kenmore Town of Tonawanda Unified School District in upstate New York. She was a 2012 ALA Emerging Leader. Recently she was the cochair of the 2013 NYLA/SSL Conference in Rochester, New York, and is president of Rochester Area School Librarians.

Kelly Werthmuller is a middle school librarian. She has a master’s degree in educational technology from UM–St. Louis and is a National Board Certification candidate. She is part of ALA’s Class of 2012 Emerging Leaders and vice president of the St. Louis Suburban School Library Association.
No matter where I spoke, or what the occasion, when it came to the Q&A part of my book presentations, nearly every question was about one thing: my Seeing Eye dog Hanni.

I was twenty-five years old and on my honeymoon when the spots first showed up.

"Retinopathy," the eye specialist told us when we arrived home.

During my months in the hospital for eye surgeries, a social worker suggested I keep a journal. Good idea. Only one problem: my eyes were patched shut. My husband Mike came to the rescue. He bought me a cassette recorder. I recorded dozens of tapes, full of daily thoughts and impressions. If nothing else, keeping an audio journal helped fill my days.

Eye surgeries didn’t work. The spots grew. A year later, I was blind.

I was the assistant director of a university’s study-abroad program, but I lost my job when I lost my sight. The Americans with Disabilities Act wouldn’t be passed until four years later, in 1990.

Mike arranged a low-interest loan from a friend and bought me a very expensive Christmas present that year: a talking computer. Revolutionary technology combined special screen navigation software with a speech synthesizer to parrot the letters I typed. I could hear—and fix—typos as I went along, and when I was finished, I could check grammar and spelling errors by manipulating the keys to make the synthesizer read a page of type by character, word, line, or paragraph.

Transcribing my hospital cassettes onto my new computer turned out to be an ideal way to learn word processing. Writing new entries provided me with cheap therapy, and, boy, did I need it! I had already tried finding inspiration from audio books by blind authors, but most of them wrote about finding God or performing amazing feats, like sailing across the Atlantic alone or climbing Mt. Everest. Until then I wasn’t thinking in terms of writing a memoir. But maybe the world was ready for a book by an unathletic pagan who’d gone blind. Only one way to find out: start writing it.

It took me three years to write my memoir, ten years to find someone to publish it. Long Time, No See was published by University of Illinois Press in 2003. My first essay—about how I choose my wardrobe and why it’s important to me—aired on NPR that year, too.

Mike helped me set up <bethfinke.com>—a website easily accessible by sighted and nonsighted readers. After Long Time, No See was published,
I had already tried finding inspiration from audio books by blind authors, but most of them wrote about finding God or performing amazing feats, like sailing across the Atlantic alone or climbing Mt. Everest. Until then I wasn’t thinking in terms of writing a memoir. But maybe the world was ready for a book by an unathletic pagan who’d gone blind. Only one way to find out: start writing it.
I may have been born at night, but it wasn’t last night. I knew my next book should be about dogs. Not a memoir, though—and not just any dog—a picture book for young children about a Seeing Eye dog who doesn’t always like his job.

Other dogs get to play Frisbee in the park, but day after day, this dog has to follow commands and lead a blind woman around. She doesn’t always go where he wants to go, either. And speaking of going...other dogs get to lift their legs on any tree they want, but this dog has to wait until his human companion takes his harness off and gives him permission.

The book would be a sequel of sorts: Long Time, No Pee.

The rejections came quickly. Most arrived via postcard, which meant poor Mike had to read them aloud to me. Months passed. As more magazines and newspapers began accepting stories online, I was able to pitch my ideas using my talking computer. I wrote articles for the Chicago Tribune and Dog Fancy magazine and got a gig teaching weekly memoir-writing classes for senior citizens. I couldn’t read essays if they were printed out, so writers who wanted edits and suggestions had to learn to e-mail their essays to me. "If I could learn to use e-mail," I’d tell them, "so can you!"

I’d almost forgotten about Long Time, No Pee when a note from Blue Marlin Publications popped up in my inbox. Francine Rich, the publisher there, liked my writing. "But the story needs to be about you and your Seeing Eye dog," her message insisted. "The kids will be meeting you and Hanni during school visits, so the book has to be about you."

I agreed to rewrite the manuscript, but not in the first person. "How about I write it from Hanni’s point of view?" Francine loved the idea, and after months of sending rough drafts back and forth, we came up with a manuscript—and a new title—we both liked: Hanni and Beth: Safe & Sound.

Now to find an illustrator. "Usually I involve authors in the decision about illustrators," Francine told me. "But you can’t see. Is there a way we can involve you?" By then, Mike had been describing things to me for twenty years, and we felt confident he could describe sample drawings to me.

After the artists’ bids came in, Mike, Francine and I all agreed Anthony Alex LeTourneau should do the illustrations. We live in Chicago, and Tony lives on a hobby farm hundreds of miles away in Minnesota, and to make the illustrations as authentic as possible, he needed to meet Hanni and me. I arranged for a roundtrip bus ticket from Chicago, and Hanni and I took a ten-hour bus ride to Minneapolis. Tony met with us at a coffee shop halfway between the Twin Cities and his farmhouse. After spending the day drawing us, photographing us, and observing us walking around outside, he exclaimed, "People here think we’re from Hollywood!"

In some ways, they were right. In its first year of publication, Hanni and Beth: Safe & Sound received the prestigious ASPCA Henry Bergh Children’s Book Award. When the ASPCA flew Hanni and me to California to receive our award at the ALA Annual Conference that year, we felt like stars.

Beth Finke is the author of the award-winning memoir Long Time, No See (University of Illinois Press 2003) and Hanni and Beth: Safe & Sound (Blue Marlin Publications 2007), a winner of the ASPCA’s Henry Bergh award for children’s literature. Her story “One Smart Dog” was included in an anthology published by National Geographic School Publishing last year. A recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts Creative Writing Fellowship, Beth teaches weekly memoir-writing classes for senior citizens and works part-time at Easter Seals headquarters, moderating their blog. She is married to Mike Knezovich. They have one son, Gus, and live in Chicago with Beth’s new Seeing Eye dog, Whitney. Hanni is thirteen years old now, happily retired, and living with friends.
Extent and Nature of Circulation

("Average" figures denote the average number of copies printed each issue during the preceding twelve months; "actual" figures denote actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date; September/October 2011 issue). Total number of copies printed average 8,633; actual 8,756. Sales through dealers, carriers, street vendors, and counter sales: none. Mail subscription: actual 7,806. Free distribution actual 950. Total distribution average 8,633; actual 8,756. Office use, leftover, unaccounted, spoiled after printing average 65; actual 65. Total: average/actual 9,124. Percentage paid: average 97.68; actual 89.15.