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David E. Robinson, EdD

From Me to We: Seeing Is Believing  
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As the leaders in the makerspace movement it is important for school librarians to work diligently to ensure that makerspaces are integrated throughout the curriculum.

Expanding School Library Collections: The Makerspace Edition — pg 8
If “reading is the core of personal and academic competency” (AASL 2018, 13), then collection development is the heart of what school librarians do. Many theorists and practitioners have written and presented insightfully about collection development and curation; so what more can I say about these topics?

Shaping, managing, and promoting the school library collection is one of the key features that distinguishes school librarians from other educators. The work of developing a school library collection transcends grade levels and curricula and involves an enviable level of responsibility, creativity, and autonomy. Many school librarians take enormous pride in the quality of their collections. School librarians are fluent in the use of measures and protocols for selecting, weeding, cataloging, and providing access to quality materials. Some school librarians exercise tight control over the selection process, while others rely on user-centered selection practices, such as buying books and resources from educator, administrator, or learner request lists.

Is there one best way to do collection development? Is it about the book, or is it about the reader? Should materials be acquired “just in case” or “just in time?” Do you prefer to provide access or to own materials outright? Does it have to be one way or the other?

Improving Community

R. David Lankes argues that the proper mission of a librarian is to improve the community through knowledge creation, and that knowledge is created through conversation (2011, 2). The media is secondary to the conversations about it. What kinds of conversations are you having about ideas, problems, stories, learning, and educator and learner needs in your building? With whom are you having these conversations? How do these conversations shape the collection decisions you make as you acquire titles, provide access to online resources, and plan to meet your community’s information needs?

If we are serious about using collection development as a tool to improve our learning communities, then we must think deeply about why we select, acquire, aggregate, or index resources the way we do. Conversation becomes feedback and an important source of assessment information for the ongoing work of providing access to information and ideas.

Collection Development and the AASL Standards

AASL’s National School Library Standards affirm existing collection development strategies and impel us to consider how to deepen our collection development practice. Many traditional collection development strategies gain
additional meaning when they are interwoven with the learning practices they support. For example, the Create Domain of the Curate Shared Foundation in the AASL Standards Framework for School Libraries states:

The school library promotes selection of appropriate resources and tools for information use by: 1) Demonstrating and documenting how resources and technology are used to address information needs; 2) Providing opportunities for all members of the school community to develop information and technology skills needed to promote the transfer of information-related problem-solving strategies across all disciplines; 3) Implementing a dynamic collection policy that includes selection and retention criteria for all materials within the collection; 4) Designing and providing adequate, appropriate space for library resources, services, and activities. (AASL 2018, 95)

This set of competencies addresses how learners will use the school library’s resources and space; the collection itself cannot be considered separately from the community it serves. As school librarians assess and reflect on their collection’s impact on the community’s efforts to create knowledge, they develop competencies in the Grow Domain of the Curate Shared Foundation:

The school library engages the learning community in exploring resources by: 1.) Describing, organizing, and promoting the collection for maximum and effective uses for multiple learning applications; 2) Maintaining a collection of sufficient breadth and currency to be pertinent to the school’s program of studies; 3) Supporting access through a schedule that allows use by learners and staff at time of need; and 4) Using local and external data to inform ongoing adjustments to the scope of the resource collection, and its audiences, formats, and applications. (AASL 2018, 95)

Developing a collection for a community is further addressed in the Share Domain of the Curate Shared Foundation: “The school library facilitates the contribution and exchange of information within and among learning communities by: 1) Providing an environment in which resources that support the school’s curriculum and learning goals can be collaboratively selected and developed” (AASL 2018, 95). This competency suggests that the school librarian create and sustain a collegial environment that invites professional colleagues to collaborate on the development of the collection. This practice is entirely different from tightly controlling the collection development process or buying books that other educators and learners request; rather, members of the learning community share responsibility for identifying needs, negotiating priorities, and allocating resources to address information needs. The extent to which the community is involved in developing, using, and evaluating the effectiveness of resources is a measure of the school librarian’s success.

This issue of Knowledge Quest details how colleagues have expanded their view of collection development through technology. Each of these innovations is grounded in the needs of the community. In using technology these school librarians empower learners to deepen their understanding through digital communication, curation of learning experiences and informational resources, engaging in makerspaces, and using open educational resources and databases. Technology not only extends our learning power, it also makes learning accessible to all through the devices and software of assistive technology. These innovations provide exciting new ways to think about how we provide access to learning resources to improve our learning communities through knowledge creation.

Mary Keeling is district supervisor of school libraries for Newport News (VA) Public Schools where she has developed and led implementation of a district-wide inquiry process model. She was a 2015–2016 Lilead Fellow, chaired the 2015–2018 AASL Standards and Guidelines Implementation Task Force, and has written for many school library-related publications. She wrote “Supporting You, Supporting the Standards: AASL’s Implementation Plan” in the November/December 2017 issue of Knowledge Quest.

Works Cited:

The school library is an extension of the classroom. It is also a safe space learners use to make discoveries academically and personally. If the school library does not have the resources learners need, the library will be empty. If the school library is full of resources, but they are inaccessible to learners, the resources are useless. Curation is at the heart of every school library.

Every school system should have a collection development policy to assist with curation. The goal of this policy “must be to provide the library with a collection that meets the appropriate needs of its client population within the limits of its fiscal and personnel resources. To reach this goal, each segment of the collection must be developed with an application of resources consistent with its relative importance to the mission of the library and the needs of its patrons” (Johnson 2014). A collection development policy keeps the focus on the collection to support teaching and learning, not on the personal views of the school librarian.

While the philosophy of the collection development process has been the same for many years, there are more types of resources available for school librarians to consider incorporating into their collections, like digital tools. Digital tools enable school libraries to be vibrant, engaging hubs of learning with online accessibility 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Incorporating these tools into your collection provides learners with more ways to learn and engage with information.

A collection development policy keeps the focus on the collection to support teaching and learning, not on the personal views of the school librarian.

With these resources school librarians can show learners how to select and organize information for a variety of audiences by:

1. Engaging learners in ongoing analysis of and reflection on the quality, usefulness, and accuracy of curated resources.
2. Formulating tasks that help learners to integrate and depict in a conceptual knowledge network learners’ understanding gained from resources.
3. Making opportunities for learners to openly communicate curation processes for others to use, interpret, and validate. (AASL 2018, 50)

By every measure your school library can be an incredible hub of information based on your allocated funding. It begins with collaboration and analysis of the current state of your school library collection. What are the needs of...
your learners? Have you obtained input from your learners and other stakeholders? Do current resources match your learners’ needs?

When curating the school library collection consider learners who physically visit the library space; use online resources at school or at home; and have visual, hearing, physical, and cognitive impairments and need assistive technology. To meet the needs of all learners, school librarians should analyze their school library and collection for:

- Engaging interactive learning resources that support the curriculum
- Types of databases to support the curriculum
- Other materials that can be added to the school library space to support learners
- Digital tools available for learners to showcase their learning
- Open educational resources

**Why should learners visit the school library?**

Providing a safe place for learners in the library includes a quiet space for individuals, collaborative spaces for groups, and areas for whole-class learning opportunities. The library is a safe haven for learners in the school that seek personal time. Safe place considerations also include diversity in the collection and the belief of inclusiveness for learners.

When curating the school library collection school librarians must consider learners with visual, hearing, physical, and cognitive impairments. Learners need resources that allow them independence and the ability to participate in the learning process.

**How can you transform learning via the resources you curate for the school library?**

In this day and age a school library is more than just the books on a school library’s shelves. School librarians should consider making room in their collection for makerspaces. Makerspaces can occupy a specific location in the library or have the flexibility of a mobile cart.

In addition, school librarians need access to the pre-eminent communication tools to engage with their communities about their collection. With the plethora of resources available, school librarians should consider the best digital communication tools to communicate with learners and educators about their school library collections.

Breakout boxes are another resource school librarians should consider when curating their collections. Breakout boxes involve solving a series of puzzles or problems collaboratively with a group of peers. They can support academic learning and social and emotional learning, or they can be used as a fun cooperative activity.

**How can learners make connections using resources you curate for the library?**

School librarians should curate databases for their school library and use them in their instruction. Databases provide learners with a vetted repository to teach critical information-literacy skills and provide learners with the skill set to evaluate resources online for academic research and personal use.

Digitization of resources is rapidly increasing. However, the cost of these resources can create a digital divide for learners. The advent of open educational resources helps level the playing field and create equity, eliminating the digital divide regarding cost.

Curation is no easy task and requires time, energy, and money. Even on the tightest of budgets school librarians can curate a digital collection to meet the needs of all learners. Curation is at the heart of every school library. Successful school libraries include many stakeholders. By providing learners with thriving, vibrant school libraries, we are preparing them to be participants in their own learning now and in the future.

**Schenell Agee** has worked in the field of librarianship for more than sixteen years. She currently serves as the supervisor of library media programs and research with Prince William County Public Schools in Virginia. She earned a Master’s of Library of Information Science from the University of Southern Mississippi and a Master’s of Education in Education Leadership from George Mason University. She is a member of AASL and currently serves as the author co-chair for the AASL National Conference Committee.

**Works Cited:**


Expanding School Library Collections
The Makerspace Edition

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Expanding School Library Collections
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Weeding, updating, and expanding our school library collections is an ongoing curation process rarely seen by those we serve; yet it’s a critical management task that ensures our libraries are positioned to provide the best resources and services to our patrons today and in the future.

The Internet and the advent of e-books have launched our school libraries beyond brick and mortar, allowing patrons 24/7 access to the resources they seek. With these technological advancements, an often-iterated question arises as to the relevance of libraries and librarians now that access to information previously available through print, reference, and special collections in libraries is now accessible via handheld devices.

With this in mind, how can we best articulate and actively demonstrate to the world at large, and more importantly to our teachers, administrators, parents, and students, the critical role fully functioning, well-staffed school libraries play in the development and support of innovative teaching and actively engaged, critically thinking students? Makerspaces provide one avenue through which we can dispel this misinformed question of relevance.

**Going beyond “Ooh Shiny”**

Makerspaces hit the school library scene around 2014 and became the hot thing to incorporate into school library spaces. Many of us, including myself, jumped on the makerspace bandwagon, purchasing makerspace—y things and then wondering in dismay why the initial bubbling of excitement quickly fell flat. My own initial botched makerspace implementation was caused by short sightedness in visualizing a makerspace as a “thing” to have in the library, rather than a collection to be vetted and curated with the same care and regard as any other library collection.

Makerspaces and school librarians are poised to lead learners into the rapidly changing societal needs from the coming Fourth Industrial Revolution. While the Third Industrial Revolution ushered in computers and information technology, the Fourth Industrial Revolution distinguishes itself by the unprecedented speed with which new technologies extensively impact the way we learn, live, and work:

New technologies like artificial intelligence (AI), 3D printing, and robotics are emerging with the potential for having a transformative impact on industry, the economy, and society as a whole. The speed and scope of this technological transformation is exponential with the potential for unlimited possibilities and endless opportunities. What are the implications for schools, educators, and students? How do we redefine career readiness and better prepare students for an uncertain future? (Vander Ark, Schuler, and Swanson 2018)

When considering the development of a makerspace collection in our school libraries and beyond, it is crucial to our students’ lifelong well-being to go beyond the “Ooh, shiny” that comes with 3-D printers, robots, and LEGO walls and examine the overall purpose, learning goals, and scope of a makerspace, as well as its impact on future lifelong learning.

**Making Space for a Makerspace**

Determining the location of your makerspace should follow the same thought process used when deciding on the purpose, location, and arrangement of other library collections. Where is the best location for nonfiction books? What about chapter books and everybody books? What about genre–fied sections? Where are the storage rooms where professional books, kits, and electronic equipment are purposefully arranged in a manner that best serves the needs of patrons? The same thought to other collections should be made when determining where to put the makerspace.

When contemplating where the makerspace collection will physically be accessed by patrons there are several factors to consider. Will the makerspace be a static part of the physical landscape of the school library, or will it be mobile in nature? Will the overarching purpose of the makerspace be to serve as part of the school library, as a curricular support, as an after–or before–school program, as a club, or in some other capacity? Answering these questions will help define the type of space that best suits the needs of your particular makerspace.

Sandy Brand, librarian at Liberty Middle School in Madison, Alabama, repurposed a room inside her school library to serve as the makerspace. Students are welcome to use the makerspace before, during, and after school. Fueled by their own curiosity, students at Liberty Hill Middle School use this space to explore, discover, tinker, build, and learn as they pursue their own educational passions (Brand 2015).

Heather Fox, librarian at Amana Elementary and Community Library in Amana, Iowa, put wheels on her makerspace by transforming book carts into a mobile makerspace. Heather’s mobile makerspace provides flexibility for the makerspace resources to be used within the school library or in classrooms as a curricular support resource (Miller 2017).
While serving as the librarian at Stewart Middle Magnet School in Tampa, Florida, Diana Rendina completed a library renovation worthy of being featured on HGTV (although it wasn’t). Paint, new flexible furniture, whiteboard wall, epic LEGO wall, and repurposing the library space, including storage rooms, brought Diana’s makerspace vision to life (Rendina n.d.).

Elissa Malespina, former librarian at Somerville Middle School in Somerville, New Jersey, overcame a severe shortage of space in her school library by transforming the tops of the low bookshelves into a makerspace. This space worked well in the middle school environment as students could easily see and work with the items displayed (Malespina 2016).

Gwyneth Jones, librarian at Murray Hill Middle School in Howard County, Maryland, repurposed empty study carrels to create cozy makerspace cubbies (Jones 2015).

Darcy Coffta, Innovation Center Director at Berwick Academy in South Berwick, Maine, tore out the circulation desk in her library to create room for a makerspace. Darcy decided that laptops and smart devices could be used as self-checkout stations and repurposed the mammoth circulation desk, which was outdated, into a makerspace, making better use of that space (Follett 2019).

Look around your library and reimagine the space. What areas can be repurposed? Where could you weed other library collections that could help free up space? What areas have become obsolete and unnecessary given the new technologies available for use in our modern school library settings?

Lisa Mele, librarian at Van Hoosen Middle School in Rochester Hills, Michigan, turned extra bookshelf space into makerspace storage (Mele 2019).

Denise Gallegos, educator in Brownsville, Texas, lucked into one of those sturdy cardboard back-to-school-type display cases (with wheels) sitting in the back of a store waiting to be taken away with the trash! This rare find would lend itself perfectly as a storage unit for makerspace supplies (Gallegos 2019).

Let the Wild Rumpus Begin

Finding your footing when embarking on creating a makerspace for your school library can seem like an overwhelming task, especially with limited space and budgets. Before placing orders and hunting yard sales for makerspace items, slow down and take a moment to clarify the purpose behind creating a makerspace. Once your purpose has been solidified you can start working on procuring the needed supplies.

I have created a makerspace at both the high school and elementary school. As you can imagine, the purpose for each makerspace was vastly different. At the high school level my focus was to create hands-on opportunities to create, build, and print with a 3-D printer; apply coding skills to robots; and provide a place where students could take the time to explore their own passions through creating. With this purpose in mind I worked toward securing a 3-D printer, robotics equipment, Arduino and Raspberry Pi kits, a sewing machine, as well as games and arts and crafts materials.

At the elementary level the school library was part of the specials rotation. This type of schedule does not, in my opinion, provide the flexibility needed for a true makerspace. Knowing the skills and learning opportunities a makerspace provides for students, I was determined to carve out a way for students to not only receive regular library services, but also provide makerspace-inspired explorations. Through the development of centers I was able to achieve this goal for my students. During each library visit, students rotated through a variety of learning centers. Some of the centers taught students library skills, while others touched on different curriculum-connected makerspace activities, including green screen, robotics, augmented and virtual realities, coding, and more. Free center days provided students with the opportunity to revisit and further explore their favorite makerspace center activities.

At both the high school and elementary school I was fortunate to have some financial support from the administration. Additionally, I received rather generous donations from parents (and grandparents) as they learned more about the school library and our activities from social media, visiting and volunteering, and their children excitedly telling them about what they did in the library that day.

Other suggestions for securing funding and supplies include asking your PTA, parents, and local companies (especially those in the tech field); launching a fund-raising project through sites like Donors Choose; and sifting through yard sales and thrift stores. Additionally, be sure to search through the hidden rooms and storage closets at your school. You’d be surprised how many items have been relegated to storage that are valuable additions to your makerspace.

Edward Clapp, senior research manager on the Agency by Design initiative at Harvard University, states: “You don’t need a laser cutter or a 3-D printer” (Iasevoli 2018). While it might be exciting to procure a high-ticket item for your makerspace, school librarians
Teaching effective use of makerspace resources is not only a necessity regarding a school library’s budget, it’s also a requirement to maintain your sanity.

should examine the functionality and versatility of various items for learning opportunities before making purchasing decisions. Clapp goes on to say, “The most important [makerspace] tool for any teacher/librarian is the framework of thinking and learning” (Iasevoli 2018).

The Missing Piece

School librarians have long been the go-to person for a variety of classroom curricular supports, so it is only natural that, with the advent of makerspaces, librarians are poised to lead the way. As the leaders in the makerspace movement it is important for school librarians to work diligently to ensure that makerspaces are integrated throughout the curriculum, not squeezed in as a “library thing,” club, before- or after-school activity, or other limiting activity that sends a message that makerspaces are a separate entity with little to no connection to overall learning in a school.

Diana Rendina, media specialist/teacher librarian at Tampa Preparatory School, an independent 6–12 school in Tampa, Florida, adds that librarians and teachers working within the makerspace realm should “allow for open exploration and student choice in projects and pursuits” (Rendina 2019).

Two factors for successful integration of makerspaces into the overall classroom curriculum are collaboration and flexibility. Connecting and collaborating with other teachers in your school or district and establishing global connections provide teachers with a valuable support system and opportunities to gain inspiration from members of their professional learning network. Flexibility within the library schedule provides opportunities for relevant, timely, and relatable makerspace opportunities.

The following example details how a school librarian demonstrated collaboration and flexibility to meet learner and curricular needs:

Kristi Merchant, library media specialist at George Washington Carver Middle School in Tulsa, Oklahoma, demonstrated the importance of a flexible library schedule for relevant and timely learning collaborations when Kristy was having a casual conversation with a science teacher and an English teacher at her school. Through this conversation Kristi learned that the upcoming science unit was about animal habitats. Kristi had recently watched the movie Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them and mentioned the correlation of the beasts and their habitats in the movie to the upcoming habitat unit. Together the three concocted an idea for an interdisciplinary project. “Students could use the library to research real-life unusual beasts, and then have that beast interact with a character from the Harry Potter series.” Students could then let their creativity shine in the makerspace to create videos, craft, build, code, and so much more to bring their research to life. (USC Rossier School of Education n.d.).

Zero Waste

Teaching effective use of makerspace resources is not only a necessity regarding a school library’s budget, it’s also a requirement to maintain your sanity. Have you ever given a kindergarten student a bottle of glue? Enough said.
At a recent TCEA Elementary Technology Conference in Galveston, Texas, Jessica Varela, first-grade teacher at The Lamplighter School in Dallas, presented a session titled, “Design Thinking and Makerspace in the Primary Classroom.” To ensure effective use of makerspace resources, Jessica developed a badge system where “students can earn badges for the tools they become experts in and can then teach others, or use the tools unsupervised” (Varela 2019).

On a Facebook post, Jennifer Brower, innovation and media services specialist from Indiana, shared a design thinking approach to makerspaces to help keep resource waste to a minimum. For this particular activity students were tasked with creating a major cardboard project. Before building their project, students had to plan, test materials, create a prototype to a panel composed of teachers in the school, do a quick presentation about their prototype plans to a panel, and address any concerns the panel had regarding their plan. Only after panel approval were teams granted access to the actual materials needed to build their final project. Jennifer stated that she wanted students to at least have a plan and know what materials they would need for their project rather than just going all out and without a clear vision in mind (Brower 2019).

Colleen Graves, content creator at Makey Makey/Joy Labz, contributed to the same Facebook post as Jennifer, recounting that she once set out all of the makerspace supplies she had worked diligently to gather, sort, organize, and label over a two-week period of time. The first class to access the makerspace demolished and consumed the majority of the supplies. Following this incident, Colleen started giving kids an amount to spend to "purchase" their resources (Graves 2019). I love this idea from Colleen as it afforded her the opportunity to teach financial literacy through the makerspace.

That’s a Wrap

Adding a makerspace to your school library benefits the school as a whole and meets eight of the ten Future Ready Librarians Framework strategies. Specifically:

- Learner centered
- Use of space and time
- Budget and resources
- Community partnerships
- Personalized professional learning
- Collaborative leadership
- Curriculum, instruction, and assessment
  - Empowers students as creators
  - Builds instructional partnerships (n.d.)

Additionally, revisioning your makerspace as a library collection helps to meet the AASL qualities of well-prepared learners and dynamic school libraries. Specifically, by providing access to a well-managed makerspace collection, school librarians clearly connect academic knowledge and deeper understanding with this space and its resources.

If you haven’t yet created a makerspace in your school library start by creating a strategic plan. If you have already established a makerspace in your library, conduct a self-evaluation of your makerspace and set goals and next steps for the new school year.

Nikki D. Robertson is the project coordinator of digital learning at ESC 13 in Texas. Nikki is a veteran educator, school librarian, Google Certified Trainer, and past president of ISTE’s Librarians Network. She is the co-founder of the first EdCamp Atlanta and has also collaborated in the creation of and moderation of national and global professional development opportunities designed specifically for the unique needs of school librarians, including #TLChat LIVE! Twitter Chat Sessions and TL News Night. Nikki is the recipient of several honors, including an ASLA Ann Marie Pipkin Technology Award and the AASL Bound to Stay Bound Grant, and she was named the 2018 Program Pioneer Social Media Superstar by AASL. Nikki wrote the book Connected Librarians: Tap Social Media to Enhance Professional Development and Student Learning.
Works Cited:


Recommended Reading:


For your development as a school library leader, there is only one.

SAVE THE DATE

CALL FOR PROPOSALS OPENS IN FALL 2020

Next fall watch for the American Association of School Librarians’ call for proposals for concurrent sessions and programming at the 2021 AASL National Conference & Exhibition in Salt Lake City, UT.
FEATURE

Curating a Digital Collection
Databases, Collection Development, and Student Learning

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Where Do Databases Fit into a Collection?

When talking about collection development, school librarians often think of the books in their collections. Some may consider their library’s e-books as well. However, few think of the other area of their school library budget dedicated to an electronic collection: databases. Databases provide learners with a one-stop shop for cross-curricular, up-to-date, vetted information in a structured and easy-to-manipulate format for class projects. While search engines are an immensely valuable resource, databases provide a structure for educators to teach learners crucial information-literacy skills with fewer results. These benefits make a strong case for allocating a school library’s budget on databases or finding access to databases through other avenues.

Amy Gustavson and H. Clark Nall conducted a study of college freshman in North Carolina that indicated that “only 20.68% of students indicated their library research skills 4 or 5, the highest confidence ratings” (2011, 298). Regardless of the students’ confidence level, the average test score was only 51 percent. Additionally, the study found that students with prior group library instruction had the highest test scores, as opposed to those students who had individual library instruction. As demonstrated by this study’s results, library research skills need to be taught to students, especially those continuing on to higher education.

To be successful learners, students need to know how to use a database to find the information they need. Throughout this article we will illustrate how we use databases in our high school instruction, provide an overview of the databases available, and offer some troubleshooting advice to navigate databases. Additionally, we will highlight how database instruction ties directly to the specific Domains and Competencies in the AASL Standards Framework for Learners (2018).

One High School’s Approach to Databases

We teach in a high school (grades 9–12) located in a suburb of Washington, D.C., in northern Virginia. Our school opened in the fall of 2016, and we have both been with the school from its birth. The population has grown from 1,550 students in 2016 to 2,550 students in the 2019–2020 school year. Our database purchases have varied year to year depending on database usage and class projects we know will be coming through the school library in the coming year.

Collaboration with teachers on their recurring research projects is a critical factor in determining which databases we purchase each year. For example, we work heavily every year with our 11th-grade United States and Virginia history classes on an individualized research project from September through February, so we focus on databases with historical primary sources on topics we have seen students choose frequently. The students research a historical event of their choice around a yearly theme (AASL I.A.1,2; I.B.1). We also collaborate with every 10th- and 11th-grade English class on a vertically aligned pro/con research project. To help these classes out with their research projects we provide all classes with access to multiple databases and teach information-literacy skills throughout the project. We use databases for this instruction because they provide already vetted information and controlled results (AASL IV.A.1,2).

The databases provide a fantastic springboard from which students can begin their research. Students are able to jump in and get started on the project with their specific topic right away with information we know they can use, and won’t be overwhelmed by, before an individual research meeting with library staff occurs. The databases provide a controlled environment for students to practice the learning structure of information seeking. Additionally, we consider what our students will pursue from their various personal interests outside of classroom projects when building our scope of databases.

Incorporating Information Literacy Instruction into Student Learning

The process of research and information seeking is an organic, fluid skill set; however, learners and educators do not realize this fully until they venture into it. The process involves soft skills such as trial and error, forward and backward movement, and often altering an initial premise, which can cause students to become frustrated and self-conscious quickly. Using a database makes it easy for librarians to demonstrate and teach these soft skills on all levels in a framework that is not overwhelming.

School librarians can demonstrate how to select and use keywords without the glut of results from a search engine. Subject headings provided by the databases serve as an example of alternate terms and help familiarize students with more technical vocabulary structures. Limiter such as date, publication, subject heading, and resource format allow school librarians to help students narrow results.

Databases also provide abstracts and summaries, which allow students to practice making content judgments from a small portion of information. The abstracts can be opened in tabs,
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Trade publications, news articles, magazines, scholarly journals, peer-reviewed items, images, interviews, e-books</td>
<td>Explora Primary, Advanced Placement Source, Teacher Reference Center, ABC-CLIO</td>
<td>Number and variety of results, e-books</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>Op-eds, magazines, news articles, videos, reference articles, statistics, images, scholarly articles</td>
<td>Opposing Viewpoints, Kids Infobits, Biography in Context</td>
<td>Translating, leveled reading resources, visual subject headings</td>
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<td>Scholarly journals, peer-reviewed items</td>
<td>American Journal of Psychology, World Literature Today, Journal of Sports History</td>
<td>Academic research with access to a vast collection of reputable peer-reviewed journals</td>
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<td><strong>Lexis Nexis</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Congressional records, current and past court cases, SEC filings, business dossiers, biographical information, scholarly and new articles</td>
<td>Harvard Law Review, Congressional Record, New York Times</td>
<td>Business reports, intelligence, and statistics; current legislative issues and court cases; historic cases, both state and federal; global newspaper access; voting records</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>Transcripts, maps, articles, images, newspapers, general reference</td>
<td>Elibrary, CultreGrams</td>
<td>General information and reference resources</td>
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Table 1. A breakdown of the database options. When selecting a database for your school library, there are lots of variables to consider. Between the two of us, we have personally used each of these databases at some point in our professional careers.
which enable students to keep track of the most applicable resources and to discard ones that are irrelevant. By keeping multiple tabs open students can also scan across content.

Databases allow students to practice going back and forth between resources and adding new references, while eliminating previously found items that are not as relevant to their topic. This trial and error of research is essential for learners to understand that information skills involve flexibility and having to change course, which is not an indication of failure but good research (AASL V.B.1.2).

In addition to providing instruction on structuring information with databases, we also generate a slide framework in Google Slides to help students identify what information is needed, find appropriate resources, and apply them to a final product. The slides outline how to choose a topic, list possible supporting and dissenting arguments for that topic, demonstrate how to build a thesis like a simple math equation, and detail points to address in the body of the paper. These slides help students outline and organize the information they find in databases before they even start to write their final paper.

Teaching structure at the beginning of a student’s research career helps set the stage for instructing students on structured searching with Boolean logic and search strands in a search engine. Students will have learned the basic concepts of keywords, “and,” “or,” alternate terms, and date ranges within the framework of a less overwhelming system where all they have to evaluate is the pertinence of a resource to their topic (AASL II.A.2).

While many of these filters are also available in search engines, databases provide built-in scaffolding that will return limited responses when compared to the results from a search engine query. By using the “Advanced Search” function, students can build parameters into their initial search. We go through this initial search with students as a group, explaining what filters we are applying and why.

One of the most valuable lessons our students learn, regardless of the database, is to select the “Full Text” box when performing an initial search. Too many times we have had a student find an article that they really want to use, but only the abstract or citation is available. Additionally, most databases are equipped with leveled reading results. Databases also have translation features for students with a primary language other than English. In a text article, anywhere the search term is found, the term will be highlighted in red (there are no highlights on a PDF version of the search result). This adds another tool for students to quickly skim results to determine if it will be useful for their final product.

Databases provide structure in the organization of information as well. Citations are found at the bottom of each article and can be copied and pasted into a works cited or bibliography page. We talk about the parts of the citation and why they are important, but having the citation already formatted makes it easy for students to complete this vital piece of a research project. All databases allow users to cite, save, e-mail, or print the resource. Many databases targeted for schools are also designed to link to a Google or Office365 account.

One struggle we have encountered with long research projects (like the one from September to February with 11th-grade social studies) is that students tend to lose their resources. They don’t print their results, can’t remember the titles of references, or struggle to find the resource a second time. By teaching students to always save and sync their findings to their Google or One Drives, we ensure that they have access to these resources in the future while also modeling positive organizational skills (AASL VI.D.1.2).

Troubleshooting Tips

There are certainly drawbacks and challenges to incorporating databases logistically into classroom instruction on a large scale. We have a few helpful tricks that we employ to smooth out a few of these wrinkles.
“The databases proved to be an extremely valuable resource for our students when completing their research for National History Day, offering a number of reliable sources that students could then narrow down [and] ensuring that my students were utilizing academic sources, and I felt confident requiring my students to utilize primary sources since they could easily plug this criteria into the filter and find a number of confirmed primary source documents. All of this helps to prepare them for the type of research they will be asked to do in college.”

—Laura Shaw USVA Teacher at Charles J. Colgan, Sr. High School 2019
One of the most valuable lessons our students learn, regardless of the database, is to select the “Full Text” box when performing an initial search. Too many times we have had a student find an article that they really want to use, but only the abstract or citation is available.

**Password bookmarks:** We provide students with a bookmark with all our database usernames and passwords on it. We can generate four per sheet of paper. We encourage students to take a picture of the bookmark (after emphasizing that the passwords may not be posted anywhere due to licensing agreements) so they have the information if they are working at home.

**Domains for direct links:** Creating a domain with an intuitive naming convention helps students access materials easily. For example, databases.colganlibrary.com is much easier to access than providing students a long list of instructions to go to the school site, then the library site, then find a link to the databases, etc. Also, the more you use domains, the more students become used to them. Our students naturally look for sites using our “colganlibrary.com” domain. We purchase the domain through Google for $12.99 a year. We have the main address linked to our Weebly page and then have subdomains for links to the database page, each individual database, class pages for resource links and handouts, and even for the Google Slides mentioned earlier. Occasionally we run into a hiccup with the subdomain being blocked by the filtering system, but we’ve made great friends with the IT engineers, and they are always happy to quickly unblock the sites for us!

**Cookie clearing:** When using domain links occasionally students will get an error message due to too many redirects. We’ve seen this more using GALE, but it has also occurred with EBSCO. When the students are logged in and attempt to search, they either get an error message or are redirected back to the database’s home page. To fix this, you can go into the advanced settings in the database and clear the cookies. When you open the database and log in again, the problem should be fixed.

**Multiple tabs open:** By having students keep multiple tabs open, they are able to quickly scan across...
multiple databases, articles, etc. We encourage students to right click and open in a new tab for any result they think may be useful; we also suggest students not go through the articles until they have ten to fifteen tabs open. This ensures that they aren’t settling for the first result on the list but will dig deeper to find the resources that are best for their project. We use a similar strategy with search words or subject headings. We describe research as “going down the rabbit hole” and equate it to reading an article on Buzzfeed, then clicking another suggested article at the bottom, then another, and another, until an hour has passed and you aren’t sure what happened. This approach to research encourages students to pursue multiple perspectives and dive deeper into their topic and related subjects (AASL III.C.2).

Other access: Public and state libraries can be a fantastic asset. When deciding which databases to purchase, always compare those databases you’re considering with those that the public and state library offer. This ensures that there is limited to no overlap for the databases used across the different libraries so libraries can be the best stewards of their budget, while also providing resources for students who do not have access to public libraries. While it is a good idea to cross-reference institutions such as the public library for effective purchasing, librarians should still cover a broad content scope in the databases they purchase to ensure students without institutional access are supported with available resources. We provide public library card applications for students and deliver the completed applications to the public library for students to obtain library cards. If possible a joint purchase plan between public libraries and school systems would be an ideal way to cost-share and ensure all students have access to databases. In a social media poll of three library professional learning community Facebook groups, almost 30 percent of respondents specifically mentioned using databases from public or state libraries when asked about their school database use and purchasing (Elizabeth 2019).

Conclusion

Databases are a key component in the instruction of research and information skills. In this structured environment, students can experiment with various search strategies and build their confidence in their research skills while isolating them from the onslaught of information overload associated with search engine results. Budgeting for databases can certainly be a challenge, but their merits make them an important part of our collection development and a crucial tool in the instruction of our students.

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Works Cited:


Equal Access + Equal Opportunity = Success for All Learners

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Collection development is the core of every school library, and successful school librarians know that meeting all learner needs can contribute to their success. Successful school libraries curate print and digital resources and resources that all learners can access. Providing access to all resources is the heart of school libraries. A school library with an enormous collection of print and digital resources that is inaccessible to every learner, is equivalent to an empty collection. A school library that contains computers and learning management systems for teaching and learning but no assistive technology functionality is equivalent to one that provides no access to these resources.

When curating a collection, it is critical to know what resources will be needed to support learners of all abilities. Barriers prevent access. “No one should have to ask for access, it should just be there” (Matlin 2017). Learners need resources that allow them independence and the ability to participate in the learning process.

When curating their collections school librarians must consider learners with visual, hearing, physical, and cognitive impairments. While you may not have a learner currently in need of assistive technology resources, one may join the school at any time. You and other educators and administrators should develop a plan to acquire the necessary resources when such a student does walk through your doors. This ensures immediate learning engagement for these students, with no downtime waiting for resources. Accessible and assistive technologies create equity for all learners.

Collection development is the core of every school library, and successful school librarians know how to serve every learner. However, school libraries are not constructed in a silo. Successful libraries are steeped in collaboration. The school librarian should work with a team (other educators, reading specialists, special education teachers, school diagnosticians, etc.) to ensure a learner’s specific needs are fulfilled to support academic learning and reading for enjoyment.

**Resources to Support Students with Disabilities**

When considering learners with visual impairments, determine whether your print collection contains large-print resources. Most book jobbers offer large-print resources. If you do not see them listed, advocate for your learners and use jobbers that can support this area of the collection. Do you know how to obtain Braille resources? The National Center on Accessible Education Materials (NCAEM) is a great resource to locate state contact information for accessible education materials (AEMs) and accessible instructional materials (AIMs). (The terms “AEM” and “AIM” are often used interchangeably; these resources are meant specifically for use by K–12 learners.)

AIM should be available for students with disabilities as well as those who have been identified as needing extra help. According to NCAEM:

For students who do not receive special education services under IDEA, the disability civil rights laws—Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act—may require the provision of AEM to ensure an equal educational opportunity. So, a student does not necessarily have to have an IEP to receive AEM and other accommodations. (n.d.)

It is important to identify the appropriate state authority to work with to determine how to best support all learners with the appropriate materials. Your state authority may offer in-person visits and webinars to offer support for your school’s team.

Bookshare.org is a resource that supports learners with dyslexia, visual impairments, cerebral palsy, and other reading barriers through audio, highlighted text, Braille, and large-font materials. Bookshare is free for “qualified U.S. students of any age and schools through an award from OSEP (Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education). People with qualifying conditions who are not U.S. students, and organizations serving them, pay a low membership fee” (n.d.). Schools can register to support students needing these resources. A primary contact person is needed to manage the school account. The responsible person must agree to the Bookshare terms, download the form, complete it, scan the form, and e-mail it to get started.

The National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) is a resource through the Library of Congress that supports learners needing Braille, audiobooks, and magazines. Through a national network of cooperating libraries NLS circulates resources at no cost via postage-free mail or instant downloads. Any resident of the United States or American citizen living abroad who is blind or has a visual or physical disability that prevents them from reading or handling print materials may apply for this service (n.d.). Institutions may also apply for this service. Eligibility information can be found at [www.loc.gov/nls/about/eligibility-for-nls-services](http://www.loc.gov/nls/about/eligibility-for-nls-services).

Another resource is Learning Ally, an organization that serves to transform the lives of struggling learners by offering human-read popular fiction audiobooks and textbooks in English, science, social
science, history and art (n.d.). In several states the organization’s services are offered in partnership with a grant at little to no cost to institutions. However, school memberships are available nationwide for a sliding scale fee based on enrollment for a school and/or the division. A primary contact person is needed to manage the school account. An IEP or 504 is not required for students identified as having a reading deficit for schools that possess a school-based license. Students with dyslexia are eligible for the Learning Ally Audiobook Solution (n.d.). Individuals can obtain an annual membership for $135 per year. In some instances, discounts or fee waivers are available. Family users of this service must

ADA History

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law on July 26, 1990, by President George H.W. Bush. The ADA is a wide-ranging civil rights law that prohibits, under certain circumstances, discrimination based on disability. It affords similar protections against discrimination to Americans with disabilities as the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which made discrimination based on race, religion, sex, national origin, and other characteristics illegal.

Rulemaking for the ADA dates back to 1991, and the latest update became effective in January 2017. The latest rule “further clarified a public accommodation’s obligation to provide appropriate auxiliary aids and services for people with disabilities.” These enhancements to the ADA are meant to ensure equal access and equal opportunity to support accessibility for all learners.

Equipped with this knowledge, as a collaborative member of the school leadership team, you can ensure all learners have resources and access to meet them where they are in the learning process.

Other Terms and Definitions

- **Accessible educational materials (AEMs):** print- and technology-based educational materials designed to be usable across the widest range of individual variability.

- **Accessible instructional materials (AIMs):** print-based educational materials converted into specialized formats required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (e.g., Braille, large print, audio, and digital text).

- **Individualized education program (IEP):** a written plan that is individually developed for students identified as having a disability under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The plan is developed, reviewed, and revised in accordance with IDEA regulations by a duly constituted IEP team of educators, parents, and student (when appropriate). An IEP is based on achievement, assessment, and evaluation data and contains the goals that will guide the delivery of special education and related services.

- **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA):** a federal law governing the rights of children with disabilities to receive a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) in what is termed a least restrictive environment (LRE).
have documentation of a learning disability, visual impairment, or physical disability preventing usage of traditional print material.

A competent authority is required to certify eligibility for these services. Examples of competent authorities that can certify eligibility in the Commonwealth of Virginia may include, but not limited to:

**Low Vision/Blindness**
- Family doctor
- Ophthalmologist
- Optometrist
- Special education teacher
- National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, or similar government body outside of the United States

**Physical Disabilities**
- Physical/Occupational therapist
- Family doctor or other medical professional
- Special education teacher

**Other Disabilities**
- Clinical psychologist
- Family doctor
- Special education teacher
- Psychiatrist
- Neurologist (AIM VA n.d.)

Often in the K–12 setting, the special education team coordinates with medical practitioners to confirm eligibility.

**Resources to Manage Accessibility**

School library websites contain a plethora of information and resources, and these websites must be curated for all learners. Have you considered if your school library website complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) (see sidebar)? The interface of the web content and information must be presented in a format that all learners can access. Check the following key components to ensure your website meets the needs of all learners:

- Use headers on the webpage but keep them simple and professional.
- Tables should be used only for data, not layout design.
- All documents for webpages should first be processed through an accessibility checker in the computer management system.

The accessibility checker is critical to ensure documents are fully accessible online. This feature allows the creator to check the online content accessibility and resolve accessibility issues before the content reaches the learner. Computer management systems such as Apple and Microsoft have accessibility functions you can employ to make your learners’ experience enjoyable for teaching and learning.

To run the accessibility checker in Microsoft Office, click the "File" tab on the main menu toolbar at the top; click "Check for Issues;" and then click "Check Accessibility." For those using the Office 365 version of Word, you can access the accessibility checker from the "Review" tab on the main menu at the top. To enable the accessibility checker on a Mac, in the Apple menu, select "System Preferences," then select "Accessibility." Next, select and turn on the features you want to use.

This feature will show errors and warnings and how to fix errors in the accessibility checker panel. Common errors found in the accessibility checker include alternative text needed for images and alternative text or header rows for tables.

All images should have an informative description to support visual impairments. Color should not be used as the only means to communicate information because some learners may be color blind. WAVE Browser Evaluation and the Siteimprove Accessibility Checker provide web content evaluation directly within Chrome. These tools allow the content creator to check color contrast for learners that may experience light sensitivity.

Use linking text for websites instead of listing the URL. A screen reader will spell a URL instead of reading it, which can be annoying and distracting for learners. When creating lists, use the built-in function of the computer management system. These functions provide the template to properly place and support labeling of content, thus avoiding errors in the accessibility checker.

School librarians will want to collaborate with the leadership team to determine if a free accessibility checker option is appropriate, or a commercial resource would best suit their school needs.

**Other Assistive Resources**

Can learners access a screen reader on the devices used in the school library? Screen reader software allows text to be transmitted audibly. Any earphones compatible with your computers should support learners using these devices. Learners with cognitive impairments can be supported with e-readers and digital books.

In Microsoft, learners can use the "Dictate" function to capture information in a document. Microsoft offers many features to support learners with vision, hearing, and physical impairments. These features can be found by clicking "Start," then "Settings," then "Ease of Access."
Some of the features you can turn on include:

- The magnifier functionality, which supports learners with vision impairments
- Color filters, which support learners with vision impairments
- The narrator functionality, which supports learners with vision and/or physical impairments
- Closed captions, which support learners with hearing impairments
- Keyboard shortcuts, which support learners with physical impairments.

**Conclusion**

Successful school libraries strive to provide accessible resources for learners with visual, hearing, physical, and cognitive impairments to fit their learning needs. Successful school libraries strive to provide resources to manage accessibility and assistive technology to support the needs of learners.

Equal access + equal opportunity = Success for all learners.

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**Schenell Agee** has worked in the field of librarianship for more than sixteen years. She currently serves as the supervisor of library media programs and research with Prince William County Public Schools in Virginia. Schenell earned a Master’s of Library of Information Science degree from the University of Southern Mississippi and a Master’s of Education in Education Leadership from George Mason University. She is a member of AASL and currently serves as the author co-chair for the AASL National Conference Committee.

**Works Cited:**


**Recommended Resources:**


FEATURE

DIGITAL

COMMUNICATION

for CURATION WITH
YOUR COLLECTION

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Introduction

A common responsibility for school librarians is to locate, evaluate, and organize library materials (Woolls and Coatney 2018). Collection management is a continuous charge for librarians in any setting. For those in school libraries the emphasis on student representation and community is crucial. Students must see themselves in their school library collection.

The AASL Standards Integrated Framework (2018) consists of six Shared Foundations and four Domains. Among those six Shared Foundations is Curate, which notes that a school librarian has a responsibility to “serve as a resource for others in the school community” (AASL 2018, 97). Collection development management falls directly into the area of curation for the school librarian in the AASL Standards.

When selecting and curating the school library collection, whether books, technology, or digital resources, the school librarian should gather feedback and ideas from their learning community. Gathering information and feedback ensures that the school library and its collection reflects the learning community. It also ensures that the library collection and school librarian instruction align with peer educator subject areas. Due to the wealth of digital resources and communication tools now available, gathering input on a collection from students, parents, peer educators, and administrators can be easy.

Digital Communication

When looking at digital communication it is important to think about how information is transferred and delivered. Research on information dissemination theory—specifically information dispersal—dates back to the 1920s. When looking at the delivery of information four major components should be considered:

- the audience or user,
- the delivery source,
- the information content, and
- the media type being used to circulate the information (Garner et al. 2006).

When using an online tool to gather or deliver information remember to think about your audience (students, faculty, parents), where the information is coming from (typically you, the school librarian), what you are telling your audience, and what kind of technology, app, or tool you might be using to deliver the information.

Remember to think about how your community can access your delivered information; in other words, not everyone might have the same app, device, tool, or connectivity as you. Think also about your message; one delivered solely to students should read differently than a message directed specifically to parents or peer educators. Gathering and delivering information takes a bit of thought before you can begin communicating with your community using some of the following useful tools.

Useful Digital Tools

Google Forms <https://www.google.com/forms/about/>: Google Forms offers a free, simple platform to create easy-to-use surveys. It enables users to get answers fast, whether you’re determining how to spend a grant or monies from your administrator, are trying to decide where to focus your budget for the year, or are trying to choose where to pursue funding for your annual collection budget. Once you create an account, you simply sign into Google Forms, decide what question format you wish to ask (open-ended, multiple choice, etc.), and enter your questions. Once your survey/questionnaire is complete, you can send the link to faculty, administrators, parents, and/or students. All responses are recorded on a spreadsheet for your own information purposes. Google Forms is a great tool for curating ideas, wish lists, book ideas, curricula, and lesson plans for the year.

Yo Teach <https://yoteachapp.com/>: For all those who remember or miss Today’s Meet, now you have a new, cost-free option in Yo Teach. This is a back channel, like Twitter, without the sign-up or account. Simply create a room, share the code, and users can log into Yo Teach, enter the code, and offer feedback. Yo Teach is an excellent tool for instant feedback, conversation, ideas, and information. Having a workshop or professional development day? Keep the conversation going with this communication tool. For collection management this platform could be a great tool to use to gather titles, genres, authors, and wish lists from students and faculty. Users can see the conversation thread, which can further feed ideas. Yo Teach is a quick and easy tool to use for instant feedback.

Flipgrid <https://flipgrid.com/>: If you’re looking for a useful way to gather information quickly Flipgrid is a wonderful, free digital tool and app. Winner of both the AASL Best Website and Best App recognitions, Flipgrid can help you gather feedback, information, and ideas via video. It is not the only video response tool out there, but it is by far the most intuitive. As the manager, you can create a poll or ask a question, then send out the link/Flip Code and users can respond to your query. Looking for feedback on the latest Manga series in the library? Wondering if a makerspace might be a good idea for your community?
Interested in Zines and not sure if they are right for your students? Flipgrid is a great place to float an idea or question to gather reaction.

**Canva** <https://www.canva.com/>: Communication involves receiving and sending information. With AASL Best Website winner Canva, users can create flyers, infographics, brochures, invitations, and so much more. It is a free publishing tool with amazing possibilities. Canva is easy to use, and the final products are gorgeous. Tell your students about the new nonfiction sports series with a flyer. Share the top check-outs and circulation statistics with your faculty, administrators, and parents through a monthly digital newsletter. With Canva, you can print items or send them electronically and know they are going to look good. (Disclaimer: While Canva is free, you can pay for Canva stock photos if you choose.)

**Piktochart** <https://piktochart.com/>: There is a wide range of free online and app-based infographic tools to choose from. Piktochart is one among many, but it is a personal favorite. It’s a simple tool that allows a user to tell stories with their data and information. An online tool to create great infographics, flyers, and charts, Piktochart offers a platform to share information with your learning community. Tell your faculty and administrators how library budgets are being spent with a monthly or quarterly report. Piktochart makes creating an infographic user-friendly and easy to read. Share library statistics, great reads, and new books with students and parents with a monthly write-up. Piktochart is a strong communication tool that will help any librarian share the message from their library while putting the spotlight on the needs of the learners.

**Edublogs** <https://edublogs.org/>: Have you ever thought about creating a blog? Blogging is not new, but it is a great writing exercise to keep school librarians accountable, as well as advocate for the library by communicating activities, reports, and collections in the library. It’s easy to embed a blog into the school library’s webpage, and your learning community can follow what is happening in your learning space. The one downside to blogs is feedback. There are typically comment sections at the end of a blog post, but if you are looking for a feedback or a polling tool, blogging is not the best vehicle. Comments and feedback typically arrive at the end of a blog post, and conversations are rarely in real time. Blogging is good for information delivery.

**Final Thoughts**

The collection in a school library should reflect the community it serves. When curating information and ideas for new books and materials in the school library, the school librarian should communicate with students, faculty, parents, and administration through a variety of digital tools and resources. Input from your school community is crucial when seeking representation in book collections, digital resources, and so much more in the school library. If you haven’t already, try out a site/app or two from this article. See how they change your communication and curration.

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**Works Cited:**


AASL offers ALL your professional learning needs

ALL | AASL Learning Library is the newly reformatted and branded eCOLLAB. Users will find more comprehensive tagging for better searchability and featured collections organized by topic. Purchase webinars individually or in packages, or join AASL to get your ALL-access pass to the largest library of AASL Standards-based online learning.

Concurrent sessions captured at the AASL National Conference in Louisville will be archived in the AASL Learning Library following the event.

SHARE THE WEALTH and encourage your colleagues to join AASL for a chance to win a trip to Salt Lake City for the 2021 AASL National Conference. Visit www.ala.org/aasl/STW.

To get your ALL-access pass to the AASL Learning Library, visit ALL.AASL.ORG
MARYLAND’S JOURNEY WITH OER

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Openly licensed educational resources (OER) are, in many cases, an untapped opportunity for free, quality resources to expand a school library collection. As with any library asset, they must be evaluated to ensure that they are in fact free and openly licensed. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) has created an OER repository and has learned lessons throughout the journey. The following article details the insights gained during this process.

In the Beginning

In the fall of 2015, leaders from the MSDE attended a kick-off meeting for the U.S. Department of Education’s #GoOpen initiative. This national initiative supports a collaborative effort to curate, create, and share openly licensed teaching and learning resources.

In conversations within the MSDE following that meeting, the advantages of implementing a repository of OER materials for Maryland educators and learners quickly emerged. Providing access to lessons, lesson seeds, interactives, and other resources vetted by educators nationwide, through a searchable location, would support personalized instruction. Additionally, educators spend hours creating instructional resources similar to those developed by other educators within their school, school system, state, and/or nation. By building a repository for digital resources that meets learner needs, the MSDE would reduce or eliminate educators’ redundant efforts when creating lessons.

In February 2016, Maryland became a #GoOpen state by agreeing to:

- Adopt/Implement a state-wide technology strategy that includes the use of openly licensed resources;
- Develop and maintain a state-wide OER repository;
- Publish OERs to the Learning Registry, a nationwide database of OER resources designed for developer (not educator) use;
- Participate in a national community of practice called the Professional Learning and Metatagging Communities of Practice; and
- Create a webpage to share Maryland’s commitment to and progress with the #GoOpen initiative.

Outreach

During the 2016 legislative session, a bill (“Maryland Open Source Textbook”) was passed requiring Maryland universities to begin converting textbooks to an OER online delivery format. Since the MSDE had already started an OER program, the bill provided an opportunity to develop an innovative collaboration between the MSDE and higher education leaders. Both groups realized that with a common repository, faculty at the college level could easily access K–12 instructional resources that may provide remediation for students in introductory courses and, at the same time, provide K–12 educators access to college-level resources that may support instruction for more advanced K–12 learners. As a result of this collaboration, each group opted to develop resources within the same repository.

Local School System Involvement

Currently, two of Maryland’s Local School Systems (LSSs) have committed to become #GoOpen districts. Both school systems are creating and curating resources to replace at least one of their locally approved textbooks. It is anticipated, based on interest from other Maryland LSSs, that several more will soon join the #GoOpen movement in Maryland.

With the assistance of a work group of twelve LSS leaders, strategies related to moving the project forward were identified and implemented. These strategies included:

- Identifying marketing avenues for the initiative;
- Researching existing OER resources and programs;
- Identifying the components needed for a resource to be considered an OER;
- Identifying evaluation rubrics that address OERs; and
- Determining how personalized professional learning should be delivered across the state.
The decision was made to develop a Professional Learning cohort of educators in each LSS to receive in-depth training. All twenty-four Maryland Local School Systems and the Maryland School for the Deaf participated. This training provided more than sixty educators with the knowledge and tools needed to replicate the professional learning they received with educators in their systems. Grant funding was provided to the twenty-five cohorts to support their LSS professional learning efforts.

The Maryland Repository

Maryland, along with other states, was interested in an education-focused repository that was easily navigable, searchable, and encouraged collaboration among states. The Learning Registry was not designed to meet these needs so interest in the registry dwindled. As a result, Maryland and other states shared information as they independently searched for a viable solution.

The intent of this solution was to provide access to relevant, current, interactive resources from across the nation that would support Universal Design for Learning principles and would be available anytime and anywhere. The decision was made that, once the repository was identified, the MSDE would review resources for content, copyright, and accessibility prior to endorsing and uploading them to the repository.

After researching different platforms, the MSDE selected the OER Commons website (<oercommons.org>) as the platform for its repository. The platform provided an openly available, searchable database of resources, and supported the creation of content and the curation of content into collections. Additionally, collaborative content development work areas, crowd sourcing, and evaluation tools were available to organizations.

One of the most attractive features of the OER Commons platform is that it enables organizations to create customized landing pages, groups, and content collections within a personalized hub. These hubs, or defined web spaces created by an organization but open for public access, allow organizations to:

- Create and manage “Content Collections” (resources grouped by content);
- Host “Groups” (interactive workspaces); and
- Share news and events related to a specific content area or project.

Currently, Maryland is one of fourteen states with shareable resources in the OER Commons repository. Materials in the Maryland Hub are publicly searchable by state and national content standards, subject area, educational level, material type, language, and content provider.

Inspired Designers

During the spring of 2018, Maryland’s assistant superintendents identified educators in each of their respective systems who were tasked with creating resources to populate Maryland’s OER repository. More than one hundred educators who were strong in content, instruction, and technology became the first set of “Inspired Designers.” Specialists in English language learning, instructional technology, special education, and school librarians were included in each Inspired Designer set in order to ensure resources were appropriate across content areas and ability levels.

The MSDE Instructional Technology staff and LSS cohort members planned and conducted professional learning workshops for the Inspired Designers. These workshops were based on Maryland’s OER considerations for copyright, accessibility, privacy, and evaluation to ensure that all resources met the minimum legal and technical standards for digital content as discussed below. During these workshops, several Inspired Designers were overheard saying, “Every educator needs to know this information!”

The last two days with the Inspired Designers were spent with the MSDE’s content specialists who provided guidance to the educators as they curated and created resources. Within OER repository Group areas, educators used content creation tools to generate resources. These resources were uploaded to the Maryland Hub, titled “Maryland’s OER Project: PreK–12,” that contains content libraries for thirteen subject areas including school library media, gifted and talented, and English language learning, as well as core content areas. As of June 2019, the MSDE has added 353 resources, 33 Content Collections, and 20 Groups to the hub.

Copyright Considerations

The nature of OER embraces modification and distribution, so copyrighted materials cannot be included in their creation. The three most common copyright concerns found when the MSDE reviewed the resources created by the Inspired Designers were the use of protected images, text, and the omission of readable hyperlinks.

When considering images for use in an OER repository, a distinction needs to be made between free and openly licensed. Most images that are labeled as free are in fact free for personal use and often one-time personal use. However, openly licensed resources are intended...
for reuse, modification, and even commercial use, often with no need for attribution.

Text is very easy to overlook when considering copyright. Most historic documents are no longer under copyright protection. Documents created by the U.S. federal government are in the public domain, so copying blocks of text from those original documents is allowed; however, text from a webpage that analyzes or comments on those documents is protected. The best practice for using text from a webpage is to look for the terms of use or copyright information and read the usage rights. The same is true when using any website that requires an account to access full-text content. The terms of use indicate that most subscription websites allow only free personal use.

Hyperlinks should be readable text and not a URL address. A concern that arose from the MSDE reviewing process of the Maryland OER was the use of links to videos. Though linking to videos is most often permissible, if the link is broken, the user has no way to find the video. This is where attribution comes in. If the text reads “use the (title) video from (source)” with the link to it, the learner still has the information needed to access the video.

Generally, the best advice for copyright compliance on OER is to remember that free is not necessarily openly licensed, and if in doubt, link to the source rather than inserting it.

Accessibility: It’s the Law

The accessibility training provided to the Professional Learning cohorts and the Inspired Designers included federal, state, and OER Commons standards for accessible design. This training also afforded the Inspired Designers the opportunity to later create resources that were more accessible and eliminated the need to spend time remediating errors.

The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) are international standards that ensure accessibility of digital resources for all learners, regardless of ability. All resources developed for the Maryland repository underwent a thorough accessibility review using the WCAG 2.0 standards to identify and correct any accessibility errors. There are five common aspects of formatting that affect accessibility and are found in various contents and types of resources: alternative text, hyperlinks, color/contrast, document structure, and descriptive text for audio and video files.

Alternative text, or alt text, is critically important for non-text content including pictures and charts. Accessibility requires that the alt text is meaningful and provides enough description to create an equitable user experience.

When adding a hyperlink to a resource, each link should be descriptive in nature, rather than just listing the web address. This descriptive text allows the learner to determine the purpose and destination of the link from the text alone.

The third, and most easily recognizable, concern is with color contrast. Color contrast is paramount for learners with low vision or color blindness. The standards ensure that the minimum contrast ratio is maintained throughout the content and that color alone is not the sole means of conveying content.

Document structure refers to headings, lists, and tables. Keep in mind learners with low vision may need to use a screen reader. Proper document structure guarantees that the text read by the screen reader will flow and be understandable to the learner.

When using video or audio files in a resource, accessibility standards require closed captioning and/or a descriptive transcript. When developing presentation slides, all slides should have appropriate, unique titles and the reading order should be accurate to create a logical flow of information.

The workshop participants agreed that the opportunity to meet with an accessibility specialist and work through the review process of their resources was invaluable and deepened their understanding of the standards and their application to their daily practices.

Privacy Is Everyone’s Responsibility

Another concept the MSDE team realized needed to be addressed when building a digital repository was privacy. The importance and urgency regarding privacy and the effect on learners, educators, and school systems is a high priority in Maryland. Student privacy can be a concern with OERs, especially when the resource includes a third-party application. Maryland’s LEAs are addressing privacy by creating local policies that adhere to federal laws and protect learners’ personally identifiable information. As a result, the MSDE team focused its privacy presentation on the federal laws and general knowledge that would be useful for all.

The workshop began with a hands-on experience analyzing the accuracy of personal information currently accessible through a simple web search. This was followed by a review of the privacy laws that are essential for educators when selecting OERs and other digital resources. The Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA), Children’s Internet Protection Act (CIPA), and Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) were explored through
interactive activities to ensure educators grasped the nuances of each and their application in the school setting.

Another important consideration was the privacy policies of some common digital resources and OER sites. The policies from these sites were analyzed using real-world scenarios, which led to deep discussions regarding what personally identifiable information is and how much information should be released.

There were three primary privacy outcomes for educators following this workshop:

• Knowing how information can be used and shared is vital to protecting educators and learners.
• Privacy is everyone’s responsibility, and educators should be guiding their learners to make well-informed decisions when they select resources.
• Educators should have an understanding of the privacy policies of individual local school systems before integrating any resources into teaching and learning.

Evaluation

The final component addressed in the workshops was the evaluation of resources for quality. The training focused on the use of a recommended evaluation rubric and norms that should be established when evaluating resources. The MSDE used Achieve’s OER rubric when vetting resources. This is also the rubric recommended by OER Commons.

As the educators worked together to apply the rubric to a resource, teams agreed that the final score was not as important as the discussion that occurred throughout the evaluation process. The educators also realized that the critical first step in the evaluation process was identifying the non-negotiable factors, such as copyright, alignment to standards, or inappropriate materials, that must be met before a formal evaluation begins. Educators found the rubric to be helpful in reinforcing their evaluation of resources. Participants anticipated using it regularly when evaluating resources to augment their lessons.

Participants detailed additional evaluation recommendations, including:

• Understanding the evaluation process already established in their school;
• Sharing professional learning on the Achieve rubric and the evaluation process prior to a school system review of submitted OERs;
• Reviewing multiple resources simultaneously so that comparisons can be made; and
• Identifying a purpose for each resource being reviewed.

Moving Forward

The establishment of Maryland’s OER project was an opportunity to bring highly effective educators together to identify best practices when creating OERs. These professional learning workshops provided valuable insights to apply to daily practices. All educators need to be aware of the new accessibility standards that expand compliance including mobile technology, low vision, and cognitive disabilities. The MSDE also plans to host future workshops with new sets of Inspired Designers and specialists to expand Maryland’s OER repository.

The presentations used for the workshops are publicly available in the Maryland Hub on OER Commons under the “Professional Learning” collection (<bit.ly/OER-ProfLearning>). This collection contains many links to valuable resources that will expand professional learning on these topics. Overall, the most important outcome from the workshops was the importance of ensuring OERs are copyright free and accessible and ensure learner and educator privacy protection.

Learn More about OER with the "AASL OER Toolkit"

For more guidance on the school librarian’s role in curating and creating OER, check out the "AASL OER Toolkit." The toolkit is organized using the Domains and Shared Foundations of AASL’s National School Library Standards so users can clearly identify potential roles, responsibilities, and opportunities. Visit <www.ala.org/aasl/advocacy/tools> to explore the toolkit.

The Office of Instructional Technology and School Library Media at the Maryland State Department of Education supports state and national efforts that transform teaching and learning in a digital world. They provide leadership, coordination, and support services for the implementation of the Maryland School Library Media Standards and the Maryland Digital Learning Standards for Students and Educators.
FEATURE

Kate Lewallen
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42 Knowledge Quest | Curating a Digital Collection
In the AASL Standards Framework for Learners, one of the six Common Beliefs central to the school library profession is: “Learners should be prepared for college, career, and life” (2018, 12). A large part of that Common Belief is that student success depends on so much more than traditional academic merits. Soft skills, like the Inquire and Collaborate Shared Foundations in the AASL Standards Framework for Learners, are not always easy things to teach in a traditional classroom setting, but new tools and innovations have made it easier—and more fun—to combine these skills with existing curriculum. Breakout boxes are one of these exciting innovations.

What Are Breakout Boxes?

Breakout boxes are similar to the escape rooms that have popped up all over the country in the past few years. In an escape room, you and your friends are locked in a room and given a scenario and a time limit. You must work together to solve a number of puzzles to get out of the room before time runs out. Breakout boxes center around boxes, each locked with one or more different locks. Boxes can be used to play an infinite number of games; each game includes a scenario and a time limit. Learners must work together to solve the puzzles and unlock the boxes before time runs out.

Breakout boxes can help students engage with classroom content by gamifying it. By incorporating a high-stakes scenario and time limit, breakout boxes mimic the scenarios students find in video games and escape rooms. Educators can add in a competitive aspect when using breakout boxes by splitting classes into smaller teams. Breakout boxes can also incorporate physical games to bring movement into instruction. Students may be required to explore a room and discuss problems with their peers, making breakout boxes a student-centered learning experience.

When leading a breakout box game, the school librarian serves as a guide on the side, giving hints as needed but otherwise staying out of the game play. Students are completely in control of how the game plays out, and this control makes them more invested in the outcome. The focus on student control combined with the emphasis on physical movement and gamification makes for more engaged students.

Why the School Library?

Why should the school library invest in breakout boxes as part of its collection development? Breakout boxes fit the school library’s mission to curate “resources and technology to foster inquiry and scaffold mastery of skills necessary for learning to progress” (AASL 2018, 62). Breakout boxes can teach and reinforce collaboration and inquiry, two Shared Foundations in the AASL Standards Framework for Learners; the boxes can also foster other important soft skills like resilience and perseverance. Students work in teams to complete the mission, meaning they must learn to “work effectively with others to broaden perspectives and work toward common goals” (AASL 2018, 85). As different clues are found, team members learn to communicate what they have and how it fits into the game. They also learn to recognize their peers’ diverse talents when solving the puzzles. Breakout boxes also enable students to “build new knowledge by inquiring, thinking critically, identifying problems, and developing strategies for solving problems” (AASL 2018, 36).

The games used with breakout boxes are built based on students’ existing knowledge; the games place that existing knowledge in a new context. Students must think critically in order to apply their existing knowledge to the new context presented by the breakout box and solve each puzzle, meeting AASL learner standard I.A.2. By using the reflection questions that are often included with the game set-up instructions, students can reflect on their own experience and the feedback of their peers to improve for future games, meeting AASL learner standards I.C.3 and I.D.4. In addition, students develop resilience and perseverance as they work under pressure and sometimes fail to solve a puzzle or even the entire game.

Curating breakout boxes into the school library’s collection also fits perfectly with the school librarian’s role as teacher leader and collaborator. Breakout boxes are adaptable to any age and subject area, making the school library the perfect place...
Games can be created for specific content areas and used to reinforce skills and concepts being taught in everyday classroom instruction.

Breakouts in My Library

At my school, we use breakout boxes in three ways: in the classroom, in the school library, and in our school’s summer day camp.

I have a total of four breakout box kits that I can lend to teachers for use in the classroom. While teachers were slow to use the kits at first, they are starting to pick them up more and more each year. If I see a game that matches what teachers are working on in class, I’ll approach them and offer to help them make it happen. During school professional development days, I also facilitate sample breakout games for teachers so they can play a game to see how it works and how they might work it into their classroom. While I have not had the chance yet, I would love to do a team-building game in a faculty meeting to further advertise the benefits of breakout games to our teachers and administrators.

In the school library, I have used breakout games for library orientation with sixth and ninth graders. It is fun and interactive and gets students moving around the school library to explore right away. I also hold programs after school or during lunch a few times a year for students to play breakout games with their friends. Some school librarians have created breakout clubs where students play breakout games and create their own games.

Over the last few summers, I have run a weeklong breakout camp as part of the school’s summer day camp. Throughout the week, students complete several breakout games, and they work together to create their own games. At the end of the week, teams get a chance to lead their game with the other campers.

Next Steps

If you’re ready to jump into the world of breakout games, here are a few things I recommend for your next steps:

- Create a free account at BreakoutEDU.com. As I mentioned above BreakoutEDU has tons of pre-created games, and you do not even need a kit to start working with digital games. Accounts on the site are free to create, and while some games require a paid subscription, all user-generated games are free. You can search the database by subject area, grade level, and type of game. Through the portal, you can access tons of library-based games focusing on all aspects of information literacy, from general library skills to games that help teach intellectual freedom, copyright, digital citizenship, and more. You can also find free tools to help you and your students create your own games.

In addition to the physical games, breakout boxes can be created and played for free digitally. BreakoutEDU provides access to ready-made, digital-only games through its database and has a screencast tutorial to help create your own digital game with Google Sites: <https://sites.google.com/site/digitalbreakoutjb/how-to>.
• **Join the breakout community on Facebook** where facilitators from all backgrounds and levels share advice and resources: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/breakout-edu>. The group provides tips on how to run games and how best to store locks and boxes, and it offers help if you get stuck in a game. There are groups for specific subject areas and even one specifically for librarians, but the general group is the most active.

• **Get a kit.** Anyone can purchase a pre-assembled kit from BreakoutEDU or create their own. Basic kits need a large box, a small box, a hasp, a three-digit lock, a four-digit lock, a word lock, a direction lock, a key lock, a UV flashlight, and an invisible ink pen. Just make sure that all the locks are reprogrammable.

• **Pick a game.** Start with an easy game to help you and your students get used to the process. For many students, especially those who are older, it might be a totally new way of thinking. Remember that you can find ready-made games on BreakoutEDU, Teachers Pay Teachers, and Pinterest.

• **Just play!** The best thing educators can do to help students be successful with breakout games is to just let them play. The games are, after all, student-centered, so students need the chance to take the lead.

Breakout games are a valuable tool to help us teach important inquiry and collaboration skills. Their adaptability makes them useful for absolutely everyone in school, even administrators, and the accessibility of free games, digital-only games, and a vast network of professional peers makes them work for every library, regardless of budget. With breakout games, school librarians can provide a resource that helps their school community create more engaged learners as well as build students who are well-prepared for their next steps in life.

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**Kate Lewallen** is currently the head librarian at the Webb School of Knoxville. She previously published a chapter in The Small or Rural Academic Library: Leveraging Resources, Overcoming Limitations and served as a blogger for ALA’s Programming Librarian. She received her MLIS from the University of Alabama. She is a member of AASL and the Association for Independent School Librarians, and she serves on the conference planning committee of the Tennessee Association of School Librarians.

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**Work Cited:**

AASL HONORS 2019 AWARD AND GRANT RECIPIENTS

The following AASL award and grant recipients were honored during the AASL’s Awards Reception at the 2019 ALA Annual Conference in Washington, D.C., on Saturday, June 22.
National School Library of the Year Award
Sponsored by Follett

HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT 214
Arlington Heights, Illinois

Front row: Kathryn Roots Lewis, AASL President 2018–19; Dave Schroeter from Follett; representatives from High School District 214; and Susan Yutzey, awards committee chair. Back row: Rob Hilliker, award committee chair.

High School District 214 is a large, diverse district located in suburban Chicago. The district’s six teacher-librarians—Katie Alexander, Dawn Ferencz, Barry Hanrahan, Mike Kic, Kim Miklusak, and Christie Sylvester—work collaboratively with faculty and staff, sender schools, public libraries, and community organizations to guide students as they perform independent research and inquiry that prepares them to be college and career ready. Additionally, they support and encourage reading and literacy instruction across curricula.

Distinguished Service Award
Sponsored by Joyce Valenza

JOYCE VALENZA
Award recipient Joyce Valenza. Also at the ceremony was award committee chair Liz Deskins and Miriam Gilbert from Rosen Publishing.

“In a forty-three year career I’ve seen over and over again how librarians can transform cultures of learning and literacy when they hit the start button to make magic happen. To accomplish an explicitly transformational mission, librarians must reinterpret and lead as information and communication landscapes emerge and evolve. They must see their programs as growing organisms. It’s our job to play with the future—to continually translate practice. I have been fortunate to be at the right place at the right time with my eyes and my mind wide open to new ideas and connections. What fun it has been to explore together with you new ways to lead and share and build our community of practice! I am deeply honored by this award and that you have found value in my work. Thank you all. And thank you, dear friends at Rosen for being our partners in our journey every step of the way.”

Distinguished School Administrator Award
Sponsored by ProQuest

SHIRLEY SIMMONS
Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services
Norman (Oklahoma) Public Schools

Kathryn Roots Lewis, AASL President 2018–19; Susan Heis, award committee chair; award recipient Dr. Shirley Simmon; Christie Freyre from ProQuest; and Susan Yutzey, awards committee chair.

“School librarians prepare and nurture learners for an ever-changing world by fostering a culture of discovery, inquiry, creativity, and innovation in school libraries. Through immersion and exploration, making content relevant, learners experience deep learning. School libraries that focus on providing learners with opportunities to explore and identify their own questions empower and develop them into lifelong learners who are not only curious but have the skills to critically analyze information and create new meaning.”

Innovative Reading Grant
Sponsored by Capstone

SUSAN GAUTHIER
East Baton Rouge Parish (La.) Schools

Kathryn Roots Lewis, AASL President 2018–19; Cathy Evans, award committee chair; award recipient Susan Gauthier; Beth Brezenoff from Capstone; and Susan Yutzey, awards committee chair.

“We are excited to be awarded the American Association of School Librarians Innovative Reading Grant to collaborate on a project with the Baton Rouge Zoo. This grant will support Belfair Montessori Magnet students in examining biographies and researching animals. It will provide the opportunity for students to bring awareness to the community about the importance of the zoo through the animals’ eyes. We are looking forward to meeting the animals and sharing their stories with everyone.”
Award and Grant Recipients

**Collaborative School Library Award**
Sponsored by Demco

CAROLYN FOOTE, SCHOOL LIBRARIAN, AND MELINDA DARROW, TEACHER
Westlake High School
Austin, Texas

Kathryn Roots Lewis, AASL President 2018–19; award recipients Carolyn Foote and Melinda Darrow; Susan Ballard, award committee chair; and Susan Yutzey, awards committee chair.

“It is so gratifying to be honored for a project that has impacted our students so powerfully. Hearing students tell us how the project changed their view of research or changed their career paths is so powerful. As a teacher-librarian, knowing you can work alongside teachers to help students learn in new ways is everything. It’s also been personally inspiring to collaborate with our teacher, Melinda Darrow, to create this opportunity. Collaborating with teachers to impact students is truly at the core of our work as librarians.”

**AASL Past-Presidents’ Planning Grant for National School Library Standards**
Sponsored by Roger and Susan D. Ballard

IN HONOR OF E. BLANCHE WOOLLS
PENNSYLVANIA SCHOOL LIBRARIANS ASSOCIATION

Kathryn Roots Lewis, AASL President 2018–19; award recipient Joquetta Johnson; award committee member Lisa Koch; and Susan Yutzey, awards committee chair.

“The AASL Past-Presidents’ Planning Grant for National School Library Standards will provide the Pennsylvania School Librarians Association (PSLA) with the funding necessary to develop, market, and carry out professional learning initiatives that support school librarians as they implement best practices that impact academic achievement for learners. PSLA is dedicated to transforming teaching and learning not only through quality school library programs but also by leveraging the AASL National School Library Standards for local advocacy efforts.”

Sponsored by Roger and Susan D. Ballard

IN HONOR OF DAVID LOERTSCHER
VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL LIBRARIANS

Susan Yutzey, awards committee chair; Jeffrey DiScala and Judy Deichman representing the Virginia Association of School Librarians; Susan Ballard, award sponsor; and Kathryn Roots Lewis, AASL President 2018–19.

Sponsored by Cassandra Barnett

IN HONOR OF HELEN ADAMS
NEW JERSEY ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL LIBRARIANS

Gabrielle Casieri is the school library media specialist at Lawrence Intermediate School. She teaches 4th-, 5th-, and 6th-grade students. Gabrielle is an active member of the New Jersey Association of School Librarians (NJASL) and is the chair of the NJASL Standards Subcommittee. Gabrielle and her committee are passionate about school librarianship and sharing the new AASL Standards with all NJ public education stakeholders.
Frances Henne Award
Sponsored by HOLLY SCHWARZMANN
Largo Middle School
Largo, Florida

Kathryn Roots Lewis, AASL President 2018–19; David Paige from ABC-CLIO; award recipient Holly Schwarzmann; Klaudia Janek, award committee chair; and Susan Yutzey, awards committee chair.

“I am absolutely thrilled to be the 2019 recipient of the Frances Henne Award. After all the hard work I’ve put into revamping our library over the past year, it feels wonderful to be recognized for all my hard work. I hope this award will bring more attention to the important work school librarians do in their communities and shine a spotlight on all the wonderful changes that are happening at my school.”

Ruth Toor Grant for Strong Public Schools
Sponsored by JENNIFER STURGE
Calvert County Public Schools
Prince Frederick, Maryland

Kathryn Roots Lewis, AASL President 2018–19; grant recipient Jennifer Sturge; Hilda Weisburg, grant committee chair; and Susan Yutzey, awards committee chair.

“Relationships are a key component to a successful school library program. I am honored to work to forge positive relationships between students, educators, and the school librarians. When transitioning from the elementary library model to the middle school model in our district, creating lasting relationships with stakeholders can sometimes prove difficult. Thanks to this grant, our team can provide outreach opportunities and create the lasting relationships encouraging students and staff to utilize the school library.”

Inspire Collection Development Grant
Sponsored by Marina “Marney” Welmers

Grant sponsor Marney Welmers; grant recipients Ness Shortley, Melissa Iamonico, Mae-Lynn Smith, Lauren Mabry, and Holly Schwarzmann; grant committee member Nicole Mazzola. Also receiving a grant, but not pictured Sean Casey.

SEAN CASEY
Northeast Middle School
Minneapolis, Minnesota

“Northeast Middle School is honored to be a recipient of the Inspire Collection Development Grant. The purchasing of new fiction and nonfiction materials made possible as a result of this grant will allow us to address our library media collection’s gaps in the areas of diversity, experiences, and representation, and enable us to ensure that it reflects the range of people, ideas, and issues in our society as well as the needs, interests, and abilities of our students.”

MELISSA IAMONICO
Sprain Brook Academy
Valhalla, New York

“I am extremely pleased to be awarded one of the Inspire Collection Development Grants. This grant will be used to develop a library for students at Sprain Brook Academy, which is housed in a correctional facility. The Inspire Collection Development Grant will allow the school library system to reach students who have not been served by a school library in the past, and we look forward to providing these students with exciting and relevant titles.”

LAUREN MABRY
Andrew Lewis Middle School
Salem, Virginia

“Following student-requested genre-fication of our fiction collection, the Inspire Collection Development Grant provides essential funding for developing and sustaining avid, intrinsically motivated readers. This grant will fund new materials in our most popular genres with an emphasis on diverse, more advanced titles to attract and retain readers throughout their time in middle school, as well as reading materials to support our increasing population of students who are learning English and/or literate in additional languages.”
HOLLY SCHWARMANN  
Largo Middle School  
Largo, Florida  

“I am so excited to receive an AASL Inspire Collection Development Grant. After weeding thousands of very outdated materials from our collection, the $5,000 grant will go a long way in helping me purchase updated and diverse books for our library. My goal is to provide our students with high-interest and narrative nonfiction titles that reflect the diversity of our school community and titles that support our goals of becoming a fully certified International Baccalaureate school.”

NESS SHORTLEY  
Horton Middle School  
Pittsboro, North Carolina  

“I believe school librarians and libraries need to be the heart of the school in more ways than one. We get to see every student and can have a huge impact on them by creating loving and brave spaces for them with our collections, our libraries, and ourselves. We can also lead with a focus on equity and collecting and sharing anti-racist, anti-ableist, anti-queerphobic, and other diverse and inclusive resources with our students and colleagues.”

MAE-LYNN SMITH  
Great Oaks Charter School Wilmington  
Wilmington, Delaware  

Mae-Lynn Smith has spent her career developing libraries and teaching technology to students and staff. After graduating with a Bachelor of Art degree from Vassar College in 1995, Ms. Smith began her teaching career at the primary level. A decade later, she earned a Master of Information and Library Science degree from Drexel University, and began building secondary library programs in suburban Philadelphia. In 2014, she moved to the charter school community in Wilmington, DE.

Inspire Disaster Recovery Grant  
Sponsored by Marina “Marney” Welmers  

JONES COUNTY SCHOOL  
Beverly Hines, School Librarian  

“Jones County suffered massive damage from wind and flooding during Hurricane Florence. In the aftermath, the concern was high on how we could replace some of the resources that were lost. We are a rural county located in eastern North Carolina with limited resources. I immediately thought to reach out to my professional organization for help. I am proud to be a member of AASL and ALA. When I was in college at ECU, my professor stressed the importance of joining and being active in professional organizations. I love being involved within the community of peers and recognize the good works that is being done on our behalf. Nine months after Florence and our entire county is still in a state of recovery. Being awarded this grant will help our media center to move forward and help our students to have the resources they so desperately need. We thank you so much for this honor and privilege of being the recipient of this grant.”
Inspire Special Event Grant
Sponsored by Marina “Marney” Welmers
Grant recipient Amanda Jones; grant sponsor Marney Welmers; grant recipient Anne Reis. Also receiving grants, but not pictured Wendy Carrington, Melissa Cortese, and Lori Quintana.

WENDY CARRINGTON
Northeast Bradford Jr./Sr. High School
Rome, Pennsylvania
“Thank you for the opportunity to provide more reading materials to the students of Northeast Bradford School District. Our lack of a public library in the district and limited resources have limited summer reading opportunities. Your grant will provide our students with the needed materials to maintain their enthusiasm for reading that they developed during the school year.”

MELISSA CORTESE
Buffalo Academy of Science Charter School
Buffalo, New York
“My name is Melissa Cortese and I am the library media specialist from the Buffalo Academy of Science Charter School. I am honored to accept the AASL Inspire Special Event Grant for my middle school library. This is my first year teaching as a library media specialist, and I am very excited to use this grant as a way to engage my students with reading especially with STEM subjects.”

AMANDA JONES
Live Oaks Middle School
Watson, Louisiana
“I am so delighted to receive this grant from AASL to not only help continue our school-wide Battle of the Books program, but allow us to host a regional Battle of the Books competition with the other eight middle schools in our district. This program will not only provide a quality program at each school’s level, but bring a sense of togetherness to our middle schools and community.”

LORI QUINTANA
Griffin Middle School
Smyrna, Georgia
Lori Quintana is a library media specialist at Griffin Middle School in Smyrna, Georgia, for the Cobb County School District. She has a Master’s in Education in School Library Media and is completing her Education Specialist Degree at the University of West Georgia. Lori is an advocate for student voice and reading literacy. She is the recipient of the Smyrna Mayor’s Educator Award and a recent graduate of the Cobb County Teacher Leader Academy.

ANNE REIS
Homewood Center
Ellicott City, Maryland
“I am Anne Reis, media specialist at Howard County Maryland’s alternative school. In his novel, Ghost, Jason Reynolds states, ‘You can’t run away from who you are, but what you can do is run toward who you want to be.’ I am grateful for this Inspire Grant, which will allow me to facilitate a literary series on the theme ‘Show Me a Hero’ and help my students ‘run toward who they want to be.’”

ABC-CLIO Leadership Grant
Sponsored by ABC-CLIO
Kathryn Roots Lewis, AASL President 2018–19; David Paige from ABC-CLIO; award recipient Heather Thore; grant committee member Calypso Gilstrap; and Susan Yutzey, awards committee chair.

“Thank you so much to the AASL and ABC-CLIO Leadership Grant Subcommittee for making this opportunity possible. SCASL is using this grant to kick-off an Emerging Leaders program to help develop new leader librarians. Ten (new to the position) school librarians were selected in the inaugural group and will meet seven times throughout the year to cultivate leadership skills to accomplish their goals. This grant allowed us to start off with a bang and will allow SCASL to offer more support to these budding leaders.”

AASL Affiliate of the Year Award
Sponsored by AASL
Susan Yutzey, awards committee chair; Mary Jo Richmond, award committee chair, Allison Mackley representing the Pennsylvania School Librarians Association, the award recipient; and Kathryn Roots Lewis, AASL President 2018–19.

Pennsylvania School Librarians Association
“Thank you for the opportunity to provide more reading materials to the students of Northeast Bradford School District. Our lack of a public library in the district and limited resources have limited summer reading opportunities. Your grant will provide our students with the needed materials to maintain their enthusiasm for reading that they developed during the school year.”
Every year, AASL recognizes excellence in school librarianship with more than $80,000 in awards and grants. Apply to be among the class of leaders recognized by AASL.

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STEAM + RESEARCH = STREAM CENTERS

Integrating Makerspace Resources and Philosophy into School Library Instruction
Laureen Andria  
landria@gmail.com

The Why

Simon Sinek’s Golden Circle theory tells us to begin with the “why” because it is our purpose, cause, or belief that guides and inspires us to action (2011).

Inspired by the forward-thinking school librarians around me (Hwang Lynch 2015), I carved out a corner of our school library to create a makerspace several years ago. The research and my experiences led me to believe in the maker movement’s constructivist inquiry model. Students and I loved exploring in our new makerspace, but the school’s existing curriculum kept the makerspace in a corner, relegated to a free-time activity during open library browsing periods.

Searching for a way to rethink our school library to reflect the needs of our learners and the AASL and state standards, our curriculum team (including myself, teachers, and administrators) applied a STREAM+ model to our school library and school’s curriculum. You’re likely thinking, do we really need one more STEM-based acronym? As far as our students are concerned, yes! Integrating these diverse ideas into our school and school library’s inquiry model ignites student learning and promotes equity in accessing the curriculum through differentiated, motivating, and multimodal learning opportunities.

The school library then combined the STREAM+ model with a centers model where students engage in a topic independently or with a team in a dedicated space containing relevant materials, activities, and instructional tools. The centers model was originally presented at an ESBOCES School Library System liaison meeting (Andria 2018); the centers model then was revised through professional conversations and review of the AASL Standards (2018).

This article details the school library’s efforts to adopt STREAM+ centers in the makerspace.

The How

We began the process of leveraging our existing makerspace by meeting with other stakeholders and asking “why.” We collaborated with other school librarians, teachers, and administrators to develop a vision for the makerspace. The vision we developed for our makerspace was to engage and challenge learners on their educational pathway to ensure they achieve their personal best.

In developing the instructional units for the centers, our school librarians and teachers needed to address library standards and new state standards in science and social studies; the units also needed to have the flexibility to be adapted when new standards were released. Our school team (librarian, teachers, and administrators) envisioned a physical and pedagogical STREAM lab and successfully applied for bullet aid to make it a reality.

The STREAM+ centers we created in the school library use the Understanding by Design principles. In this backwards design model, the first step is to begin with the end, which means starting with the desired outcomes and learning goals. Next, you select the evidence of learning to be collected and used to inform instruction, including assessments and performance tasks. The third stage is to design instruction and learning activities for students to actively construct meaning and for teachers to take on the role of facilitator and coach (McTighe and Wiggins 2005).

To create the curriculum for these centers, our school librarians and teachers met in grade-level “STREAM dream teams” to plan instruction based on collaborative conversation and action research.
The STREAM dream team meetings were vital to ensure that the library experience coordinated with the curriculum. As the school librarian I took on the role of educational leader, coordinating and chairing scheduled meetings every other month with the classroom, special education, and support teachers. To be respectful of the team’s time and to keep goals in the forefront, the agenda was sent ahead of time. The agenda was developed based on district priorities, patterns across our K–6 classes that emerged since the last meeting, the scope and sequence of our STREAM centers, and upcoming school events. The agenda always allotted time for an open forum for other questions or concerns about the STREAM centers and their instruction. The meetings were a time of collaborative work in a continuous improvement cycle. We planned, implemented, assessed, and reflected to integrate classroom content and library inquiry to ensure we were maximizing our students’ success.

Program assessment was based on qualitative interview data during end-of-year meetings with students, which showed a significant improvement in student motivation and engagement. With the introduction of AASL’s Standards Integrated Framework (2018), we already had the network to ensure the centers would be updated to our newest professional learning standards and will continue to adapt as standards are updated in the future.

The What

By front-loading the planning and preparation with the STREAM dream teams, I became the conductor of an inquiry symphony, allowing students to actively engage in the multiple modalities of learning experiences at each center. Depending on the desired unit outcomes, students could choose which centers to visit or the teacher could develop a rotation schedule for students to visit the centers.

Our elementary school library is a mix of fixed and flexible scheduling. We planned several centers-based units per year as part of the overall scope and sequence of the STREAM centers (see table 1). Expectations for the centers, such as social–emotional benchmark goals of positive team behaviors, the rotation schedule, and general use and safety with materials, were pre-taught when we first embarked on this type of learning; instruction on the expectations for centers involved an additional half to one class period. However, once the expectations were set, students knew the routine and classroom management took care of itself because students were so engaged with learning in the centers.

When students visited the centers in the unassigned, exploratory model, they were provided a “learning passport” (see figure 1). Students used the learning passport to engage in a center’s activities to learn about the “big idea”; that is the core concepts embedded in the learning standards and the goals of the instructional unit (McTighe and Wiggins 2005). After the students recorded their learning in their learning passport and briefly discussed the evidence of their learning toward the big idea with the teacher, students earned a stamp for their passport from that center. Just like real-world travelers, students were free to collect many stamps or focus on a favorite station. This type of self-paced, exploratory learning lends itself to the introduction of a topic over a relatively brief period of one to three lessons.

For units where the goal was greater depth of understanding, students were provided with a “STREAM Centers Guidebook” (see figure 2).
The guidebooks provided students with a research question, directions, and a supply list needed to engage with a center. To stretch students to engage in all the different learning modalities, teachers assigned a rotation schedule for students to use the centers and posted the student rotation schedule to a board. In this assigned model for the centers, each unit comprised of four class periods of forty minutes each. The students spent the entire forty-minute period at one center, except when it was their turn to browse the library stacks for self-select books. The students assigned to the centers were always the first group of students to check out books because their self-select choices become part of their research as they read to find information about their center’s research question. Then students at the other centers rotated, browsing in

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Table 1. STREAM+ Centers’ scope and sequence.
THE CENTERS GUIDEBOOK TEMPLATE

Branding: Be proud of your school library! When students, families, and teachers see your logo, they know what to expect and get excited.

Big Ideas: Write the relevant AASL and state standards because these are the learning goals for students. Each standard area is an opportunity to collaborate with colleagues and your community.

The Centers: Each center begins with a question anchored to the big idea and how to utilize the center resources toward answering that question. For early finishers, there are two extension activity options at each center to continue the learning. The template always includes the following four school library STREAM (science, technology, research, engineering, arts, math) areas:

Library: Students choose their self-select library books first. For the rest of class, they read their personal choices independently or with a friend, looking for answers to the research question. Because these are self-select books, oftentimes they do not find a complete answer to the daily question, but that is to be expected and students will simply respond with what they did or did not find.

Research: Students investigate a research question using pre-selected print and digital library resources.

STEM: Students apply the engineering design cycle to solve a problem. The materials at this center come from the school library makerspace. In order for this activity to align with science and math learning standards, careful consideration of materials and constraints is important. This is an opportunity to collaborate with your school’s STEM department.

Arts: Students demonstrate understanding of key thematic vocabulary with visual and/or performance art materials from the school library makerspace. This is an opportunity to collaborate with your school’s fine arts department.

Reflection: Wrap it up on the last day with a brief reflection and student self-assessment. If possible use the language from your school-wide character program that students already know.
A CENTERS GUIDEBOOK EXAMPLE:

UNIT 3.1 GEOGRAPHY AND ECOSYSTEMS

Branding: Our school seal graces the cover of each unit. If, like our library, you do not have a marketing budget, there are plenty of free logo makers and clip art available online to create your image. We chose owls in a tree to represent wisdom and growth.

Purpose: Each unit is an integration of the AASL Standards and New York state standards. Most of our centers are thematically anchored in the social studies standards, which were chosen in collaboration with the classroom teachers.

The Centers

Library: Students at this center enjoy reading on comfy beanbags and with puppets or other props.

Research: Students at this center research using our virtual reference collection at one of seven computers with headphones and/or with the print materials on display.

STEM: Resources for this center come from our makerspace and change with the needs of each unit. They can be as simple as recyclables or found materials from our schoolyard with some masking tape. LEGO sets are a perennial student favorite prototyping material. Art can be integrated into the STEM center by printing out blank browsers or smartphone screens and asking students to storyboard a website or app.

Arts: Like the STEM center, resources for this center come from our makerspace and change with the needs of each unit. They can be traditional classroom materials such as crayons and markers or fine art supplies such as paint or clay. The vocabulary definitions can also be expressed through performance arts and integrate STEM materials, such as building a set and acting out the definitions with LEGO minifigures.

Reflection: Our school utilizes Coach Wooden's Pyramid of Success from Inch and Miles: Journey to Success (2003); therefore our reflection rubric is grounded with key building blocks, including hard work, enthusiasm, action, team spirit, skill, and personal best.
The Cuss are truly a Family. But are my Family and my Family truly the same?
ten-minute increments throughout the period. At the end of each day, assessment was based on evidence of learning recorded in the students’ STREAM Centers Guidebooks and observations of social and emotional learning standards that promote personal and team learning.

We established a “guidebook” template to guide students through each center, which is described on the previous pages. This template is easily customizable to each unit’s theme or overall learning goal.

**Outcomes of STREAM Centers**

Student motivation and engagement were immediately evident. As I circulated around the room to ask Bloom’s taxonomy-inspired questions and provide support, I saw students quietly engaged in deep research and reading for both enjoyment and purpose. I heard excited voices collaborating on problem-solving STEM designs and content-inspired artwork. STREAM centers make inquiry learning fun.

Specific academic outcomes will depend on the goals and design of each unit and their intended grade-level learners. For instance, a first-grade family diversity research center demonstrates how students’ first forays into research focused on the importance of putting research into one’s own words, and a second-grade STEM center guidebook example displays the design plan for creative and unusual uses of makerspace materials. Based on his or her design plan, the student then builds and tests a prototype of the school supply barrier to keep the groundhogs away from our strawberries, troubleshooting when it does not work and striving toward improvement when it does work using the engineering design cycle. Another example is a third-grade example of word work in the art center, which demonstrates understanding of key concepts and vocabulary in the geography and ecosystem unit. A second-grade example from the urban, suburban, rural library center shows how an entering English language learner engaged with text alongside a friend and then illustrated understanding of a rural farm community. Centers provide learners with equitable access to differentiated learning experiences that enable them to demonstrate and grow their understanding.

While the aforementioned examples have been anchored in social studies, our school has had great success with other themes, including science and school-wide events such as the National Association for Music Education’s Music in Our Schools Month, which is a month-long school-wide celebration of the intersections of literacy and music anchored by the association’s national theme.

**Conclusion**

Through the collaborative creation of the STREAM centers, guidebooks, and learning passports, students explore integrated curricula through multiple modalities in their inquiry teams. The partnership between school librarians and teachers ensures content areas are infused with inquiry and making to spark the joy of learning in students. As expressed in the new AASL Standards’ Domains and Competencies, students will indeed Think, Create, Share, and Grow.

**Laureen Andria** is the library media specialist, gifted education teacher, and MST coordinator at Remsenburg–Speonk Union Free School District in Remsenburg, New York.

**Works Cited:**

The background of the author matters. Even when portrayals of diverse characters by majority group authors are respectful and accurate, there’s an extra degree of nuance and authority that comes with writing from lived experience.

According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), one-third of Latinx students perform below grade level (Bandeira de Mello et al. 2019). Multiple reasons for the gap have been cited, including social, economic, and systemic factors. Yet again and again, progressive scholars return to one of the single biggest barriers: whether a student’s culture is reflected and centered in the curriculum. How, then, do we ensure children see themselves as academic learners and as readers and writers?

Rudine Sims Bishop established a useful conceptual framework: books can be windows into other lives, sliding glass doors through which readers can pass into new worlds, or mirrors in which they can see themselves reflected. “Reading, then,” she declares, “becomes a means of self-affirmation” (Bishop 1990).

So what happens to kids without a literary reflection? You should note that 50 percent of U.S. school-age children are “people of color” or POC (Latinos, African Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans, Pasifika) (Bandeira de Mello et al. 2019). These kids need to see their lives, their families, their communities, and their culture as worthy of academic study, valuable and integral parts of not just school life, but schoolwork.

The problem is that just 23 percent of books published last year featured POC protagonists. While that’s an improvement over the annual 10 percent between 1994 and 2013, it still falls short of reflecting reality (Reardon and Portilla 2016). Also, many of those “diverse” books aren’t being used in classrooms: teachers often stick to canon, tradition, personal taste.

If POC students are only exposed to a sort of generic, homogenous White American worldview and history, they begin to internalize a view of themselves as unworthy, lesser, marginalized. This subtractive literary practice erases them, makes them less likely to achieve their dreams.

I grew up in deep south Texas, in the Rio Grande Valley, attending elementary and junior high in the town of McAllen. Though most of my peers and I were Mexican American, the only book I read in the 70s and early 80s with any speck of Latinx representation was Ferdinand the Bull, because it took place in Spain and had some Spanish names (although, oddly, not the main character, who should’ve been named Fernando like my little brother). By the time I was ready for college, I had come to believe that to be successful, I had to turn my back on my heritage.

Yet it isn’t enough to add mirrors to students’ academic careers. Students need access to mirrors made by people like them. How can Latinx kids see themselves as readers and

Making Mirrors

David Bowles
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writers if we don’t expose them to Latinx writers?

This phenomenon is known as #OwnVoices, a Twitter hashtag created by Corinne Duyvis.

Some may be skeptical. Isn’t diversity enough? No. There’s a long history of majority group authors (white, abled, straight, male, etc.) writing outside their experience to tell diverse stories. Sometimes the books they create are wonderful! But many times, they’re rife with stereotypes, tropes, and harmful portrayals. Marginalized people’s stories are taken from them, misused, and published as authentic, while marginalized authors have to jump hurdle after hurdle to be published, fighting to receive even a fraction of the pay, promotion, and praise that white authors receive for writing diverse characters’ stories … if they’re allowed through the door at all.

In 2017, when the percentage of POC protagonists in kid lit hit an all-time high—25 percent—there was a catch. The publishing industry had prioritized White authors rather than #OwnVoices authors. As a result, only 29 percent of books with Black protagonists were written by Black authors; 34 percent of books with Latinx protagonists were by Latinx authors; 39 percent of books with Asian and Pasifika protagonists by Asian and Pasifika authors; and 53 percent of books with Native protagonists by Native authors (Horning et al. 2019). The problem has become clear: some writers see diversity as a popular trend, so they jump on the bandwagon, taking up space that writers of color should occupy.

The background of the author matters. Even when portrayals of diverse characters by majority group authors are respectful and accurate, there’s an extra degree of nuance and authority that comes with writing from lived experience. #OwnVoices books have an added richness because the author shares an identity with the character, with the deepest understanding of the intricacies, the joys, the difficulties, the pride, the frustration, and every other possible facet of that particular life—because the author has actually lived it. Furthermore, research shows that both children of color and white children benefit from greater exposure to inclusive literature, especially #OwnVoices books that accurately reflect our diverse society. We have to move past local policies and procedures that focus on a numbers game or only on literature that has been approved by the principal gatekeepers. Given how diverse school-age children are, we must have collections and curricula that center historically marginalized voices.

As a university English professor, I advocate for the inclusion of diverse, kid-centric texts in the classroom. As a writer, I produce award-winning #OwnVoices work that centers the lives and culture of Mexican American communities, especially along the border, as well as their roots in Mexico and that country’s roots in pre-Colombian Mesoamerica.

My Pura Belpré Honor-winning middle-grade series Garza Twins (which starts with 2015’s The Smoking
Mexican American author David Bowles has written fourteen books, including the Pura Belpre Honor Book The Smoking Mirror and Feathered Serpent, Dark Heart of Sky: Myths of Mexico (one of Kirkus Reviews’ Best YA Books of 2018). His most recent publication, They Call Me Güero: A Border Kid’s Poems, has received multiple accolades such as the Tomás Rivera Mexican American Children’s Book Award, the Claudia Lewis Award for Excellence in Poetry, the Pura Belpre Author Honor, and the Walter Dean Myers Honor Award for Outstanding Children’s Literature. His work has also appeared in a wide range of venues, among them Journal of Children’s Literature, Translation Review, Rattle, and Huizache. In 2017, David was inducted into the Texas Institute of Letters in recognition of his literary accomplishments.

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Border issues and Latinx kids are also front and center in The Unicorn Rescue Society #4: The Chupacabras of the Rio Grande, which I co-authored with Adam Gidwitz. And I’ve got more exciting projects coming soon! The middle-grade graphic novel Rise of the Halfling King drops in spring 2020. HarperCollins is publishing my chapter book series 13th Street (a sort of Stranger Things for kids ages 5–9); the first two books release summer 2020. In the fall of 2020, my YA graphic novel Clockwork Curandera arrives, illustrated by Raul the Third.

It seems like a lot (and there’s more in the works), but representation still has a long way to go. There are so many gaps in our stacks.

Together, however, we can keep filling them with mirrors.

Works Cited:
# SHARE THE WEALTH

**Recruit and win!**

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A School Library Diversity Model and Assessment Guide

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In the fall of 2017, I was afforded the opportunity to participate in a university-sponsored diversity fellowship. As part of the fellowship, I elected to produce a diversity-themed website toolkit (http://wp.towson.edu/librarymediadiversity) for the Towson University School Library Media Program. In seeking a theoretical foundation for the toolkit, Universal Design for Learning (UDL) emerged.

UDL is a framework to improve and optimize teaching and learning for all people based on scientific insights into how humans learn (CAST 2019). In organizing and assimilating research for the development of the toolkit, a model was developed to reflect various diversity components in school libraries. The model, titled “The School Library Diversity Model (SLDM),” represents an application of UDL to organizational, curricular, and instructional practices common in school libraries. The model promotes diverse, culturally competent, organized, and accessible school libraries.

The following article presents the core components of the SLDM, with the UDL framework serving as the mechanism for facilitating a diverse school library learning environment that is supportive of all learners. An evaluation instrument is included to assess a school library based on the SLDM and supportive literature.

Overview of Literature

Cultural Competencies

The ALA Library Bill of Rights serves as a guiding document for the rights of all library users regardless of “origin, age, background or views” (2006). The Library Bill of Rights’ foundational tenants supported the development of the SLDM, in conjunction with utilizing key terminology/definitions for diversity and cultural competencies recognized in the library field.

The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) defines diversity as “the state or fact of being diverse; different characteristics and experiences that define individuals” (2012). For the purposes of this article, cultural diversity refers to “the participation of individuals in organizations, regardless of the race, ethnicity, or gender. It also includes persons who are physically challenged as well as those who are concerned about sexual orientation” (Josey and Abdullahi 2002, 11). Cultural competence is defined as “a congruent set of behaviors, attitudes, and policies that enable a person or group to work effectively in cross-cultural situations” (National Association of Social Workers 2015, 13).

Universal Design for Learning

UDL is a scientifically valid framework for guiding educational practice. It:

- Provides flexibility in the ways and means in which information is presented.
- Provides flexibility in the ways learners respond or demonstrate knowledge and skills.
- Provides flexibility in the ways learners are engaged.
- Reduces barriers in teaching and learning.
- Provides appropriate accommodations, supports, and challenges.
- Maintains high achievement expectations for all learners, including learners with disabilities and those learners who have limited English proficiency (The Higher Education Opportunity Act 2008).

The UDL framework enhances inclusive school library experiences for diverse learners and fosters independence for learners with disabilities (Blue and Pace 2011). It also provides proactive valuation of diversity (Zhong 2012). UDL’s guiding principles revolve around three primary brain networks: the Recognition Networks (the “what” of learning), the Strategic Networks (the “how” of learning), and the Affective Networks (the “why” of learning) (Meyer, Rose, and Gordon 2014).

The Recognition Networks are best supported in learning environments that facilitate multiple means of representation of concepts and provide flexibility in modality, explanations, and examples. The Strategic Networks are supported in environments that facilitate multiple means of action and expression for learners to present and express materials, and to demonstrate knowledge and understanding. The Affective Networks are facilitated in environments that foster multiple means of engagement by providing multiple means of engagement and interactions (CAST 2019). The application of UDL promotes equitable learning for diverse learners. UDL is evident in the implementation of highly effective teaching practices.

Highly Effective Practices

In the roles of teacher and instructional partner, the school librarian can optimize learning via the UDL framework and by utilizing the practices outlined in Linda Darling-Hammond’s and John Bransford’s Common Practices of Highly Effective Teachers (2005). These practices include:
• Assuring instructional expectations for the learners are clearly stated and exemplars of previous administrations of assignments are shown to learners as models of what to produce.

• Organizing the library instructional areas and lessons so that the organizational scheme is evident to all learners.

• Making materials easily accessible when needed, so no instructional time is wasted from lack of preparation.

• Providing learners with formative guidance and assessment during instruction by covering every part of the instructional area (i.e., not lecturing and standing still) and monitoring every activity that takes place.

• Providing multiple small-group activities in various groupings.

• Encouraging high levels of instructional discourse. Learners are encouraged to ask questions, discuss ideas, and comment on statements made by educators and other learners (Darling-Hammond and Bransford 2005).

Curriculum and Instruction

In order to support diverse learners, instructional methods should be varied to meet the needs of auditory, visual, and kinesthetic learners (CAST 2019; Meyer, Rose, and Gordon 2014). These varied methods are facilitated in an environment where:

• Learners are actively engaged in a wide variety of activities (e.g., research, media production, educational gaming).

• Learner grouping varies among activities.

• The school librarian actively covers all instructional areas of the library.

• High levels of discourse are encouraged and assignment expectations are clearly outlined.

• Assistive technologies are available and utilized for learners with learning disabilities. (CAST 2019; Darling-Hammond and Bransford 2005; Meyer, Rose, and Gordon 2014).

The research on UDL, effective teaching practices, curriculum and instruction, and cultural competencies form the framework of the School Library Diversity Model (see figure 1). In graphically representing these practices in the model, organizational diversity, and curricular programs serve as foundational pillars. UDL and cultural competencies serve as cohesive agents.

Figure 1. The School Library Diversity Model.
Organizational Diversity: Layout, Design, and Usage

Consistent with Linda Darling-Hammond’s and John Hammond’s Common Practices of Highly Effective Teachers, organization themes represented in the model include:

- Promoting representation of diverse cultures through items on display, promotional materials for the library, and posting learners’ work throughout the library.
- Creating an atmosphere where all learners feel representation in the school library.
- Making diversity in school libraries easily identifiable in a review of the collection.
- Assuring the school library has an accessible layout and design.
- Checking for ongoing usage of the school library by all learners through representation in the collection of data.

Diversity through Curriculum and Instruction

As represented in the SLDM, UDL provides a flexible learning environment in which multiple means of expression, representation, and engagement are used to address the needs of auditory, visual, and kinesthetic learners (CAST 2019; Meyer, Rose, and Gordon 2014). When appropriate, learners should be given choice in action and expression to best meet their learning strengths (e.g., students conduct research and are given the option to produce a paper or a slide presentation) (CAST 2019; Meyer, Rose, and Gordon 2014). School library staff should be flexible in meeting the instructional and cultural needs of all learners.

School Library Cultural Competency

Cultural competency serves as a foundational feature in the SLDM spanning the organizational structure. As illustrated in figure 1, culturally competent school library staff serve to support the diverse organizational components of the school library and the curricular/instructional needs of learners. Extending the UDL framework can reduce barriers for culturally diverse learners and increase the learning opportunities for all learners (Chita-Tegmark et al. 2012; Parker 2007; Meyer, Rose, and Gordon 2014). Culturally competent school librarians provide English language learners, gifted learners, and learning disabled learners with needed equitable access to school library staff and resources (Wideman and Odrowski 2012).

School Library Program Diversity Assessment Guide

A final step in the quest of defining and evaluating school library diversity was the creation of an analysis tool, the School Library Program Diversity Assessment Guide (SLPDAG), to compliment the SLDM. The SLPDAG includes the following areas/criteria to be used by school librarians in the diversity assessment of school library programs:

Collection Development. The assessment guide is aligned with the principles in the Library Bill of Rights that guide the development of a diverse print and non-print school library collection. Key collection development principles in the assessment include assuring all viewpoints on issues are represented in the collection and that learners see themselves represented in the collection. The collection should "represent the diversity of people and ideas in our society” (ALA 2006). Recommended formative practices for applying and assessing the guide’s collection development criteria include adherence to formal collection development policies, and the distribution of collection development surveys to constituents.

Advocacy. Visual representation of diversity in the school library can be supported via displays, posters, and visual media. The basis for visual advocacy relies on the principle that media "should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation” (ALA 2006). Learner work samples from school library-related instruction and other instructional areas of the school can be displayed in the library (Darling-Hammond and Bransford 2005).

Advocacy assessment is an ongoing effort that can include the school librarian keeping a journal or calendar of displays and other visual media to assure diverse representation. Encouraging learners to create displays representing aspects of diverse cultures assures inclusive representation of multiple viewpoints and perspectives in the school library.
Organization, Compliance, and Accessibility. The organization of the library and lessons should be evident to learners (Darling-Hammond and Bransford 2005). This can be assessed via a formal survey of learners and by formatively noting the ease or difficulty in which learners access the collection and instructional materials. In the varied school librarian roles defined by AASL (2010) (i.e., leader, instructional partner, information specialist, teacher, and program administrator), it is incumbent upon the school librarian to assure the diverse needs of learners are addressed. Reviewing learner individualized education plans (IEPs) and 504 accommodations promotes formative assessment of learner needs, while providing data to acquire appropriate school library resources to meet diverse learner needs in instructional and non-instructional activities (Every Student Succeeds Act 2015). Intermittent review of ALA/ADA guidelines (ALA 2019) for libraries can assure the school library is compliant and accessible.

Usage. Various data can be collected to examine trends in learner usage. Maintaining a sign-in log where learners note their purpose (e.g., reading, quiet study, research, media production, etc.) for using the school library in non-instructional situations will present data to assess the types of activities learners are engaging in during their free time. The school librarian can maintain a schedule of formal class instruction and non-instructional activities. These data can serve to denote if the activities are inclusive of all learners.

Instruction. UDL principles can help assess the school library instructional program’s capacity to meet the needs of all learners. In planning collaborative instruction, the school librarian can encourage classroom teachers to utilize UDL in presenting varied instructional methods to meet the needs of diverse learners. UDL criteria can function to assess the flexibility of the school library instructional environment. These criteria include:

- Using varied instructional methods and modes (audio, video, and text) to address auditory, visual, and kinesthetic learners.
- Providing assistive technologies for learners with learning disabilities.
- Providing learners with choice in expressing knowledge in select assignments.
- Having clearly stated assignment expectations.
- Sharing exemplars of the previous year’s assignments as models of what to produce.
- Having clearly organized lessons.
- Providing accessible instructional materials.
- Ongoing monitoring of all instructional area(s) and activities.
- Planning and implementing multiple small-group activities in instructional situations.
- Encouraging learners to ask questions and discuss ideas. (CAST 2019; Darling-Hammond and Bransford 2005; Meyer, Rose, and Gordon 2014).

Formative and reflective analysis of instruction can be utilized to assess the effectiveness of these instructional practices in meeting learner needs.

Dispositions. A school library staff that has a positive temperament and nature can help promote active participation of learners and faculty in the school library “regardless of race, physical challenges, gender, sexual orientation, or ethnicity” (Josey and Abdullahi 2002, 11). The staff’s ability to display the dispositions needed to work effectively in cross-cultural situations can be self-assessed using the ACRL Standards (2012); these dispositions may be more effectively assessed via a confidential survey distributed to learners and faculty.

Using the Assessment Guide in Professional Practice

School librarians can utilize the SLPDAG to enhance their professional growth, compliment formal program and professional evaluation, and as a collaborative tool in the following areas:

- Self-Assessment: The guide can be used as a self-assessment tool for collecting data in the improvement of diverse practices in teaching and administering the school library.
- Professional Evaluation: As a data collection tool, the guide can be added to a professional evaluation portfolio presented to principals, supervisors, and

A school library staff that has a positive temperament and nature can help promote active participation of learners and faculty in the school library “regardless of race, physical challenges, gender, sexual orientation, or ethnicity.”
• **Program Evaluation:** The assessment guide can be used to set short- and long-term goals for program improvement in diversity initiatives by capturing all-inclusive data about the school library. The guide can provide data on patron patterns of using school resources, and provide prompts for the administration of surveys, conversations, and other modes to assess diversity needs and promote advocacy.

• **Peer Evaluation:** Sharing the data collected with peers can provide opportunities to brainstorm and share ideas on diverse practices.

• **Collaboration:** School librarians can partner with other educators to use data collected via the guide to brainstorm and share ideas of diverse practices within the school and school library.

**Conclusion**

UDL provides a logical framework for school libraries to meet the diverse needs of all learners. The SLPDAG reflects the principles presented in the SLDM and is correlated with the UDL primary brain networks. Multiple means of engagement, representation, and action and expression are aligned with each criterion to illustrate potential means for addressing the respective criteria. While evolving and not all-inclusive, the SLPDAG is intended for school librarians to self-access diversity components within their school libraries.

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**Works Cited:**


### COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UDL Primary Brain Network(s)</th>
<th>Provides for Multiple Means of:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The print collection reflects diversity (all viewpoints represented; learners see themselves represented in the collection).</td>
<td>Affective Recognition Engagement Representation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The non-print collection (including subscription databases) reflects diversity.</td>
<td>Affective Recognition Engagement Representation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### ADVOCACY

| Displays, posters, and visual media are reflective of diversity. | Affective Recognition Engagement Representation |
| Learner work samples are displayed in the library. | Strategic Action and Expression |

### ORGANIZATION, COMPLIANCE, AND ACCESSIBILITY

| The organization of the library and lessons is clearly evident. | Affective Recognition Engagement Representation |
| The facility is ADA compliant and accessible. | Affective Engagement |
| The curriculum is accessible by all learners. | Affective Recognition Engagement Representation |
| Assistive technologies are available and utilized for learners with learning disabilities in non-instructional activities. | Affective Recognition Strategic Engagement Representation Action and Expression |

### USAGE

| Statistics denote usage representative of the entire school population. | Affective Engagement |
| Statistics reflect utilization by diverse learners (range of learning abilities). | Affective Engagement |
| Learners use the library in non-instructional situations at varied times. | Affective Engagement |
| Learners are actively engaged in non-instructional situations. | Affective Engagement |
| Multiple small-group activities are evident in non-instructional settings. | Affective Recognition Strategic Engagement Representation Action and Expression |

### INSTRUCTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UDL Primary Brain Network(s)</th>
<th>Provides for Multiple Means of:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Varied instructional methods are utilized to address auditory, visual, and kinesthetic learners.</td>
<td>Recognition Representation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Varied instructional modes (audio, video, and text) are utilized to address all learners.</td>
<td>Affective Recognition Strategic Engagement Representation Action and Expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistive technologies are available and utilized for learners with learning disabilities in planned instructional settings.</td>
<td>Affective Recognition Strategic Engagement Representation Action and Expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learners are provided with choice in expressing knowledge in select assignments.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment expectations for the learners are clearly stated.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exemplars of previous year’s assignments are shown to learners as models of what to produce.</td>
<td>Affective Recognition Strategic Engagement Representation Action and Expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organization of the library and lessons is clearly evident.</td>
<td>Affective Recognition Engagement Representation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional materials are easily accessible when needed; preparation is evident.</td>
<td>Affective Recognition Engagement Representation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school librarian monitors all instructional area(s) and activities (Darling-Hammond and Bransford 2005).</td>
<td>Affective Engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple small group activities are evident in instructional (Darling-Hammond and Bransford 2005).</td>
<td>Affective Recognition Strategic Engagement Representation Action and Expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learners are encouraged to ask questions, discuss ideas, and comment on statements made by the school librarian and other learners (Darling-Hammond and Bransford 2005).</td>
<td>Strategic Action and Expression</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### DISPOSITIONS

| Learners and faculty actively participate in the school library regardless of race, physical challenges, gender, sexual orientation, or ethnicity (Josey and Abdullahi 2002, 11). | Affective Recognition Strategic Engagement Representation Action and Expression |
| School library staff display the dispositions to work effectively in cross-cultural situations (National Association of Social Workers 2001 as cited in ACRL 2012). | Affective Recognition Strategic Engagement Representation Action and Expression |
From Me to We: Seeing Is Believing

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A Chance to Write the Ending to Your Own Story

“And they lived happily ever after…” This is the fairy tale ending we all hope for in our professional working worlds. In the real world, however, one of the hardest parts about accomplishing the fairy tale ending or realizing our ideal goals is defining what those goals are with as much detail as possible. Sometimes referred to as backwards design, the foundation of strategic thinking is to identify the end first (the goals) and then work backwards from there (the strategy you employ to get there).

Strategic planning represents a formal process for doing just this: clearly defining, in as much detail as possible, what that happy ending should look like. We can be the authors of our own story, written by us but informed and articulated through the words and dreams of those that we serve. If you had a chance to write the end, middle, and beginning of your future story, would you do it?

Relationships and a Shared Vision of a Fairy Tale Ending

A common and consistent theme heard from librarians, students, and alumni is how poorly understood school libraries often are by administrators, other educators, and stakeholders in general. When you talk to a stakeholder not familiar with the role of your school library, ask them two simple questions:

• What are your highest priority goals over the next three to five years (their version of the fairy tale ending)?
• In what ways do you feel the school library can help support you in accomplishing your goals?

When prompted to answer these two questions, your stakeholders must think about what they want to accomplish (define in their own minds what that perfect ending looks like with as much detail as possible) and how the school library can help that stakeholder accomplish their goals. What does the stakeholder need, and how can the school librarian help you?

Strategic Planning Key to Effective School Libraries

Developing a strategic plan for a school library is a lot of work. However, the time and energy it takes to develop a strategic plan can pay dividends many times over. Developing a strategic plan starts with beginning a dialogue with school library stakeholders about what’s important to them and identifying their highest priority needs. Creating this dialogue builds relationships; more importantly these conversations go both ways, and the very act of thinking about what an ideal school library might look like helps establish a clearer picture of what the school library should be in every stakeholder’s mind. The stakeholders see the school library as part of the school community, and these conversations serve as part education and part advocacy for the role of the school library.

Having a clear plan and pathway to achieve a strategic vision unites different stakeholders that often have disparate goals. The plan helps everyone understand what is most important for the entire school and clearly delineates how the school library supports them in accomplishing their high-priority goals. This helps change the discussion and focus away from what the school librarian wants to accomplish on her/his own to a collaborative vision crafted by the entire school community, moving the vision of the future from “me to we.”

Historically AASL has recommended strategic planning, evaluation, and assessment in school libraries. In the 2009 standards and guidelines, strategic planning played a prominent role: “The school library program is built on a long-term strategic plan that reflects the mission, goals, and objectives of the school” (AASL 2009). In the 2010 ALA/AASL Standards for Initial Preparation of School Librarians, the collaborative process of assessment and planning were emphasized: “Candidates communicate and collaborate with students, teachers, administrators, and community members to develop a library program that aligns resources, services, and standards with the school’s mission. Candidates make effective use of data and information to assess how the library program addresses the needs of their diverse communities” (AASL 2010, 17). The most recent
AASL Standards highlight the role a strategic plan plays in an effective school library: “An effective school library is fully integrated into the curriculum through ongoing, sustained efforts and a strategic plan that serves the school’s mission, educational goals and objectives, and school community stakeholders” (2018, 170). In addition, Cynthia Keller notes the dynamic interplay between evaluation, planning, and built-in school stakeholder advocacy: “Analysis of data collected for school improvement plans and/or long-range strategic planning results in the development of an action plan for improvement of the school library. The evaluation process then becomes an excellent tool for engaging others in advocating for the school library program” (2018, 17).

Strategic planning can be formally defined as the “systematic process by which a company, organization, or institution (or one of its units) formulates achievable policy objectives for future growth and development over a period of years, based on its mission and goals and on a realistic assessment of the resources, human and material, available to implement the plan” (Reitz 2004, 687). Such a process typically involves three discrete phases: needs assessment, strategic planning, and evaluation and refinement (Chow and Bucknall 2011).

The Steps for Strategic Planning

Step 1. Ask your stakeholders two questions (What should be?):

• What are your highest priorities for the next three to five years?

• In what ways can your school library help you with your priorities?

By asking school administration and representatives from stakeholder groups to answer these two questions, you can establish a list of high priorities that can serve as their ideal vision of the future. During these discussions you also have the opportunity to clarify your role and educate them on what you and your school library currently do and, most importantly, what you could potentially do for them in the future given appropriate time, resources, and support. This is an essential step toward building a stronger relationship with your stakeholders and allows you to establish a collaborative vision with each stakeholder group you serve.

As the school library expert, you now need to collect data and determine to what extent you are currently meeting your stakeholders’ needs. You can do this by collecting data through interviews, focus groups, and surveys. Visit <www.nclibraryadvocacy.org> for a full list of instruments that can be used in your strategic planning process.

Step 2. Identify the current state of your library and to what extent you are meeting the identified high priorities for your stakeholders (What is?).

Needs assessment is also called gap analysis. The gap is the difference between what is and what should be. A lot of this analysis can be done through your own expert opinion. Ask yourself whether the services and resources needed by your stakeholders are already being provided. If so, what statistics do you have to show how much they are being used. If the services and resources are not provided, add them to the list of potential What should be’s to be included in your future plan.

It is essential to recognize your own professional expertise and perspective when reviewing this information; it is unwise to rely completely on what stakeholders tell you they need and want since the majority of staff may not be familiar with the full potential of what school libraries can do for them.

Step 3. Collect as much data as you can to help define the What is for your school library.

Decision makers generally want to see three things:

• Data to support your position

• Stories of impact demonstrating your value to your users

• How what you are doing is helping them meet their bottom line

The goal here is to establish, in no uncertain terms, the current state of your school library, including resources, scheduling, time allocation, and overall performance statistics. Remember documenting the What is helps establish a starting point and most likely a sizeable gap between where you are and where you should be, especially in terms of helping decision makers.

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accomplish their goals. The other important aspect of collecting data is that doing so demonstrates that you have put the time and effort into documenting your current situation, which lends credibility to your story and any requests you may make for your school library.

**Step 4: Conduct a SWOT analysis.**

A large part of the *What is* and *What should be* has to come from you and your professional opinion and perspective. As the author of your own story, you need to take a step back and be extremely candid with yourself. Doing a SWOT analysis is a standard first step that most organizations undergo at some point. Stepping back and reflecting on strengths and weaknesses is always a good place to start to put into concrete words what you are already good at and where there are some sizeable gaps. Opportunities represent potential goals that you may want to strive for, and threats are reminders to you and others what could happen if they are not addressed appropriately in your strategic plan.

**Step 5: Seek and identify common ground.**

Once you have spoken to and collected data from your stakeholders it is time to identify the top needs and priorities from each group, including your own. Using the data gathered from multiple sources, including your stakeholder interviews, focus groups, surveys, SWOT analysis, and performance data, identify common ground for your school library’s priorities. This adds validity and reliability to your findings.

**Step 6: Create the strategic plan.**

Once you’ve gathered all the data, you should work with your stakeholders to outline and describe in detail the fairy tale ending. A strategic plan can be developed by the school’s steering committee, comprised of school administration, teachers, staff, and parents during a half-day meeting. Committee members can be broken into small groups and asked to craft the primary elements of a strategic plan for the school: vision, mission, core values, core competencies, short- and long-term goals, objectives, and tactics. The vision statement,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Needs Assessment Priorities</th>
<th>Strategic Goal Addressing Need in Priority Order</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Create a library website that supports student learning through providing resources for teachers, students, and information for parents on how to access library services.</td>
<td>Goal 3: Effective, award-winning digital resources and current, relevant technology for advancing the learning goals of 21st-century learners; Goal 5. Timely connection with XX Library community using a variety of communication tools by December 2016.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Engage parents as potential library advocates and funding sources (PTA) through communicating services (esp. Big Universe) and providing opportunities to visit the library.</td>
<td>Goal 2: Inspirational literary experiences throughout the year to foster the ongoing development of a reading culture at XX Elementary by June 2019; Goal 5: Timely connection with XX Library community using a variety of communication tools by December 2016.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Update technology in the library.</td>
<td>Goal 3: Effective, award-winning digital resources and current, relevant technology for advancing the learning goals of 21st-century learners.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1. School needs assessment priorities addressed by strategic plan.*
an aspirational statement of the ideal future, should be crafted by the steering committee; the statement should represent the ideal future that the school strives to achieve every day. It must be short and is often used as a tagline; the mission statement represents the daily activity that will ultimately lead to achieving the vision.

Core values reflect the fundamental tenets that serve as the foundation of the organization’s culture and work environment. Core competencies represent the organization’s primary services and resources; while libraries must serve everyone, it is essential that the library identifies what it wants to specialize in and be known for so that resources can be prioritized in these areas. The goals reflect the three to five highest priority goals to be achieved over the next three to five years. The objectives reflect the steps needed to accomplish each goal and detail the activities or tactics the school will do to achieve the goals. Dates and specific measurable inputs, outputs, and outcomes are also important.

Step 7: Detail your strategic plan timeline and evaluation rubric.

This set of goals, objectives, tactics, and general timeline will serve as a map to where you want to go and by when. You will want to keep the deadlines associated with the plan in a spreadsheet, which can be used as a real-time formative assessment to determine at anytime where you are, where you want to go, and what you have taken care of already. This map or spreadsheet is an excellent tool for asking for the resources you need to get to where you want to go.

Results of Two Case Studies

To study the impact of strategic planning in school libraries, our research team followed two school librarians over an 18-month period from summer 2016 to spring 2018. Two elementary school libraries located in the southeastern United States participated in the study, and at each school the research team used a case study method that involved interviews, focus groups, and online surveys.

The two elementary school librarians live in two vastly different worlds. While both are in Title I schools (40 percent or more students are below poverty), one is nestled in a small, rural, and homogeneous population (predominantly white student population), while the second is in a larger urban setting with a 65 percent Spanish-speaking student population. The school librarians began the strategic planning process unsure of the vision of their new leadership for their school libraries; they viewed the strategic planning process as a way to “get on the same page” with their school administration and library stakeholders and establish a common vision based on the priorities of their stakeholders. Tables 1 and 2 show how each school librarian’s strategic plan aligned directly with the priorities identified in their schools’ respective needs assessments.

After both projects were completed, we asked both librarians their thoughts on the process. The first benefit was establishing a clearer focus on what the school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Needs Assessment Priorities</th>
<th>Strategic Goal Addressing Need in Priority Order</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Grow students’ love of reading</td>
<td>Goal 1: High-quality collection that empowers students and teachers by spring 2020.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Create a welcoming environment that grows a love of reading and learning.</td>
<td>Goal 3 is library as place (welcoming environment) by fall 2017.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Increase collaboration with teachers</td>
<td>Goal 3 is library as place (for collaboration) by fall 2017.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Update technology in the library.</td>
<td>Goal 2 is to integrate state-of-the-art and relevant technology resources by spring 2018.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Create a center of learning for the school, a hub of activity, creativity, and learning</td>
<td>Goal 4 is library as a place of learning by fall 2017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. School 2 needs assessment priorities addressed by strategic plan.
we. I have multiple people from students to parents to staff to local members of the community who now consider themselves advocates for the library. They talk to people in the community about the library in their families, churches, and businesses. They have a story to market” (School Librarian 1, April 2018).

Strategic planning helped “get everyone on the same page,” as school 1 librarian noted:

The strategic plan gave our community a renewed focus. Over the course of the last few years, the library has been a driving force for school-wide programs and slowly, the culture of the school is changing to a more literary focus (i.e., students are reading more, author visits, etc.). The school’s community (students, staff, parents, administrators) is making the shift, and the strategic plan has been the fuel to keep the change moving forward. (School Librarian 1, April 2018)

It also helped with fundraising as the library now has a crystal-clear picture and “story to market.” School librarian 2 agreed and reflected:

Answering questions helped the staff better understand what could and should happen in the library. This was a bit of a subversive training for them. I didn’t have to sound preachy, but the more thoughtful participants were able to make connections. (School Librarian 2 Interview, April 2018)

The second benefit was building community around how the school library could help everyone in the school. One librarian called it “built-in advocacy.” The planning process caused everyone to think about and discuss the library.

One school librarian observed:

Sometimes, being the only person who does a job in a school can feel isolating. The strategic planning process was a community event. It helped to find out what was going well and what still needed to be addressed in the eyes of most of the people in the school. The plan took the guesswork out of how to meet the needs of stakeholders. The objective process was really helpful and remains the driving force of the work done in the library. (School Librarian 1 Interview, April 2018)

Several parents participating on school 1’s steering committee did not know that their school library did not have a dedicated annual budget. They held a separate meeting with the principal about their concerns. The school library was subsequently given a dedicated book budget. As the librarian at school 1 noted, “... the plan has moved the library from me to stakeholders better understand its purpose and potential by working as an advocacy tool in addition to its other purposes (School Librarian 2, April 2018).

Because of our strategic planning project, school librarian 2 was given a full-time library assistant by her principal. She found it to be so transformative, we are working together to find a way to create a toolkit to support other school libraries. This is also our primary hope with this article; that it can serve as a roadmap for creating your own strategic plan.

Conclusion

The combination of conducting a school-wide needs assessment, identifying high-priority goals for stakeholders, and then collaboratively developing a plan for how the library can help stakeholders achieve
their goals represents a clear form of built-in advocacy. It prompts school librarians to have conversations with their stakeholders, which builds both relationships and adds true validity to their understanding of what they want and need. In addition, these conversations also help develop a better understanding of what a school librarian does and can do for stakeholders in the future. The school-wide plan that is created serves as a collective vision for the future that places the school library and librarian at the core, right where they should be. Considering how rapidly the school library field is moving, it is recommended this process be repeated every three to five years.

Strategic planning helps articulate a school librarian’s priorities through the words and aspirations of those they wish to serve, helping redefine a school library and all that it means to the future well-being of your school. Make your own luck by writing your very own fairy tale ending.

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**Works Cited:**

**Appendices**
Access the following appendices from this study online at <www.nclibraryadvocacy.org>:
Appendix A: General Interview Questions
Appendix B: Teacher Interview Questions
Appendix C: Librarian Interview Questions
Appendix D: Parent Focus Group Questions
Appendix E: Elementary School Student Focus Group Protocol and Questions
Appendix F: Project Phases and Timeline
Appendix G: School 1 Strategic Plan
Appendix H: School 2 Strategic Plan
Appendix I: School Librarian 1 Reflections
Appendix J: School Librarian 2 Reflections
Appendix K: School Library Strategic Planning Process
Appendix L: Strategic Planning Worksheets