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## What We're Taking Away from Virtual and Hybrid Learning

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By the time this issue reaches you, two full years will have passed since we started to hear about a novel coronavirus and collectively wondered what—if any—impact it would have on our lives and libraries. Most of us probably did not imagine we were about to embark on such a strange and stressful journey or how our experiences would converge and diverge depending on our location and level.

While there hasn't been a single school library experience or a simple, well-defined list of lessons learned, I hope we can all take a moment to reflect on how our individual experiences, considered collectively, illustrate the depth and breadth of our collective learning. As another new year begins, we can look at what came before, what is happening now, and what we'd like to carry forward into the future.

We can also look at what we would *not* like to carry forward. Not every lesson learned throughout the course of the pandemic has been one we would choose to repeat. We all made discoveries that helped propel us forward, and we all tried things that, upon reflection, propelled us in no particularly helpful direction whatsoever, even if they did take sixteen hours to plan.

When we had to invent new methods and strategies, we had to think about what we were doing and why. We had to go back to the drawing board (which was now virtual, and to which we possibly could not remember the

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log-in) and ask ourselves fundamental questions. What role do school libraries play in the lives of students? How can we support all students? How can we keep students reading and learning and provide equitable library services, no matter what is happening in the world around us? How do we support each other and ourselves so we can continue to do the good work we want to do?

Of course, as we evolve and grow, we also need to rest and reflect. As we add new strategies and approaches, sometimes we need to move past previous methods. We can't only add; we have to be willing to subtract, as well. When we find new ways, we may need to replace the old ways and not try to do all of them at once. When we consider our work deeply, we may realize we can let some things go, because what we were doing no longer serves our truest purposes. (And also, regardless of how deeply weird time has gotten over the past two years, there are still only so many hours in the day, and we need to remember that we need quite a few of those hours to sleep, breathe, and take care of ourselves!)

The authors in this issue—who wrote these articles at the beginning of the 2021–2022 school year, which was definitely not a calm and relaxing time during which to breezily add an additional professional responsibility—generously share how they grew, struggled, and plan to move forward. Their hopes and dreams for their students and their focus on ensuring that reading, learning, and growing can continue, no matter what, shine through.

Cathi Fuhrman, one of our content experts, gives us a framework to think about the benefits and drawbacks of virtual professional development in “The Power and Pitfalls of Virtual Professional Development.” She reminds us to seek balance, to focus on what we hope to learn and accomplish, and to be thoughtful and purposeful as we nurture our professional lives and growth.

Her fellow content expert, Courtney Lewis, shares how she is looking to move beyond the in-the-moment research instruction that is so often the norm in “Envisioning Effective Digital Instruction.” While the pandemic may have been the specific inspiration for this work, the lesson is universal—we can use data and our own experiences to evaluate the underlying goals of our instruction and, if need be, take new approaches to achieve those goals.

Throughout the past two years, the need for continued and continual advocacy for school librarian jobs has continued, as Courtney Pentland details in “The Advocacy Efforts for School Librarian Staffing during the Pandemic.” She shares the stories and lessons learned of school librarians across the country, including Judi Moreillon, Laura Ward, Kathy Lester, and Tricina Strong-Beebe.

Lindsey Kimery shares how she found new ways to encourage reading during the pandemic in “Re-Inventing Reading in a Pandemic.” To keep students

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engaged and reading, Lindsey put everything on the table, harnessed the power of collaboration, and focused on goals instead of rules.

Finally, three elementary school librarians, Kris Fedeli, Margaret Kennelly, and Allison Dunn, share their unique stories of beginning their school library careers during the pandemic in “Diving into School Librarianship during the Pandemic.” They tell us what they learned from their incredibly unique perspectives on pandemic librarianship. They saw school librarianship through a different lens, but those lenses still led them to focus on the fundamentals of learning, making safe spaces and responding to the needs of their school communities.

While we don’t know what 2022 has in store for us, we do know that school librarian creativity is unmatched and unbounded. We know that ways can be found, methods invented, and strategies adapted. The future is unknown, but the lessons we have learned since 2020 can help us find a way forward, no matter what comes next.

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