



**American Association of School Librarians**  
a division of the American Library Association

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**Division Report to Council**  
**Gail K. Dickinson, AASL President**  
**2013-2014 Report to Council**

My presidential theme for the 2013-2014 year was “*It’s not about libraries; it’s about learning.*” The focus was on transition and change, building the next generation of school librarians. It was an exciting year, filled with opportunities for growth and change in the AASL organization. The year began with a new executive director, and it ended with an IMLS-funded research summit. This speaks to the new direction for a new AASL. Much of the focus during 2013-2014 was on developing the new strategic plan. The previous strategic plan covered the years 2008-2013, with the plan last updated in 2010. The new strategic plan covers the years 2014-2017. The year-long development process will come to fruition when the AASL Board approves the new plan during the June 2014 AASL Board meeting during the ALA Annual Conference.

**Strategic Planning**

The strategic planning process revealed three critical issues: association relevance, membership development, and association governance and leadership. Under each of these critical issues, several goals were identified, focusing on responding to the new and changing needs of AASL members, strengthening relationships with AASL communities, and creating a school library professional community, within and without AASL, to empower leaders to transform learning through school libraries.

The process will not terminate with the approval of the strategic plan, but will continue as AASL works to align resources and member time and energy to implement the plan.

**Critical Issues**

The economic issues facing schools and states continue to be of prime concern for school libraries. Philadelphia remains a key concern, with only a handful of school librarians remaining in what was once a historically strong library-focused city. AASL, in conjunction with the ALA Office of Public Information, Office of Library Advocacy, and ALA leadership, wrote letters of support for school libraries across the country, and a number of successes were reported. Two encouraging news items were reported from

Vermont and Iowa, where hard work from school librarians saw success in creating stronger support for school library programs.

### **Sylvia Knight Norton, New AASL Executive Director**

Julie Walker, long-time executive director of AASL, resigned at the end of July. After an extensive national search, Sylvia Knight Norton was hired to fill the position. Sylvia came to AASL from Florida State University, where she was the school library media internship coordinator and instructor. Previously, she was the school library, technology planning, and E-rate coordinator for Maine. Sylvia has extensive leadership experience with ALA and has served on the AASL Board of Directors, ALA Council, and ALA Executive Board. Sylvia will have her first year anniversary with AASL in October. Commendations to the AASL staff for a smooth transition between executive directors and providing the background for Sylvia's success.

### **AASL's 16th National Conference and Exhibition**

Hartford, Connecticut, was the venue for AASL's 16th National Conference and Exhibition. Conference attendance surpassed expectations with a total attendance of more than 3,000 school librarians, exhibitors, guests, and other educators. The conference, with the theme "*Rising to the Challenge*," began with a series of preconference workshops and continued with tours, keynote speakers Tony Wagner and Peter Bregman, and a host of concurrent sessions. It was a lively and invigorating time to celebrate school libraries as we rise to the challenge of providing learning experiences for students. In line with the presidential theme of "*It's not about libraries; it's about learning*," the other presidential initiative focusing on students kicked off with a networking reception for students and their mentors during the conference. AASL's 17th National Conference and Exhibition will be held in Columbus, Ohio, in 2015.

### **AASL CLASS Summit**

AASL was thrilled to learn that it was the recipient of a forum-planning grant funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). The grant enabled AASL to host a research summit focused on setting an ambitious research agenda on connecting school library programs to student achievement. Causality: School Libraries and Student Success (CLASS) took place April 11-12, 2014, in Rosemont, Illinois. Nearly fifty invited scholars in the school library and related fields met to prepare a white paper to be released at the ALA Annual Conference in Las Vegas. The forum was led by keynote speaker and noted researcher Thomas Cook (Northwestern University) and an expert panel of Joseph Maxwell (George Mason University), John Brock (New York State Education Department), Shana Pribesh (Old Dominion University), Marcia Mardis (Florida State University), and Paul Lanata (Jefferson County (KY) Public Schools). The stated goal of CLASS is to create a national focus and agenda on causal research to provide empirical evidence that school libraries make positive contributions to student achievement. The white paper is expected to be the basis of an application for funding to implement a major causal research study. AASL is grateful to IMLS for this opportunity. It was the first time that school library scholars had spent time together focusing on school library research. A new AASL task force is being created to develop a structure to maintain the community of scholars.

### **Introducing the Roald Dahl Miss Honey Social Justice Award**

Concern for equity and access has always been part of the most basic beliefs of school librarians. The belief that all children can learn, that all children have access to resources in all formats, and that the library is one of the best places for children to learn about the world around them is key to developing strong school library programs. To that end, AASL, in conjunction with Penguin Random House, has developed the Roald Dahl's Miss Honey Social Justice Award to recognize the collaboration between school librarians and teachers in the instruction of social justice using school library resources. The award is named for the beloved teacher, Miss Honey, in Roald Dahl's book *Matilda*. The first presentation of the award at the 2014 ALA Annual Conference coincides with the 50th anniversary of the publication of Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. Winners of this prestigious new award will receive \$2,000, a \$5,000 book donation from Penguin Random House, and up to \$1,000 in reimbursement toward travel and housing to attend the AASL Awards Presentation at the ALA Annual Conference.

### **Looking Ahead to the AASL Fall Forum**

AASL's 2014 Fall Forum will be based in St. Louis on October 17-18, 2014, with the theme of "School Librarians in the Anywhere Anytime Learning Landscape." Along with the main location of St. Louis, satellite sites will also be convened in Montgomery, Alabama; Atlanta, Georgia; Johnston, Iowa; Greensboro, North Carolina; Houston, Mercedes, and Richardson, Texas; Norfolk, Virginia; and Vancouver, Washington. Keynote speaker David Warlick will lead participants through two exciting days defining the learning landscapes of mobile learning and identifying the learning experiences to help school librarians celebrate their place in it.



Gail K. Dickinson  
AASL President  
2013-2014

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The mission of the American Association of School Librarians is to advocate excellence, Facilitate change, and develop leaders in the school library field.