

American Association of School Librarians

a division of the American Library Association



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**Annual Report to the AASL Membership and ALA Council
Cassandra Barnett, AASL President, 2009-2010**

The past year has been an eventful one for the American Association of School Librarians. At the ALA Annual Conference 2009, The AASL Board embarked on a new Strategic Plan. The many activities fall under the four goals which are designed to move us toward our vision of universal recognition as indispensable educational leaders.

1. The education community will have a shared vision that AASL's standards and guidelines are a model of excellence for student learning.
 - Our standards continue to gain recognition as school librarians collaborate with classroom teachers to integrate them into instruction.
 - Our close connection with the Partnership for 21st Century Skills has provided us a number of opportunities to increase the visibility of our standards and our organization. For instance, the release of the *Mile Guide*, an assessment tool for measuring the progress toward 21st century skills, at our National Conference highlighted our relationship and increased our visibility as a partner. Our own Executive Director, Julie Walker, will, in the fall, assume the role of Chair for the Partnership for 21st Century Skills linking us even closer to this highly regarded organization.
 - The release of *Empowering Learners: Guidelines for School Library Media Programs* complements our standards by guiding school librarians as they focus on moving to a flexible learning environment that supports instruction in multiple literacies and advocates reading for a lifetime. A task force has been working on the *Planning Guide with School Library Program Rubric* which will aid school librarians in assessing their school library programs. Look for it in the early fall.
 - Our Learning4Life (L4L) initiative is continuing to support states, school districts and individuals as they implement the standards and guidelines. The Standards & Guidelines Implementation Task Force has worked hard to develop webinars and programming for the AASL National Conference. The Training Summit conducted at the ALA Annual Conference 2009 was very successful in providing the State Coordinators strategies for working with school librarians as they implement the standards and guidelines. Be on the lookout for an implementation toolkit for building level school librarians.

2. AASL's professional development opportunities are essential, valuable, and available to school librarians.
 - AASL's 14th National Conference in Charlotte was a great success. Considering the economy has caused many districts across the country to tighten their budgets, we had a record-breaking 3950 school librarians, educators, exhibitors and guests. The conference committee organized top quality programming. New to this conference was the parallel virtual one, *b there*, designed to allow those not in attendance to participate online. The blogs, podcasts, author and speaker interviews, webinars, the ELMSS Research Symposium, session materials and other professional development activities are all still available. The plan is to again provide an online presence at the 2011 15th National Conference in Minneapolis.
 - L4L Webinar Series offered four webinars during School Library Month focusing on the four chapters of *Empowering Learners: Guidelines for School Library Media Programs*. These will be archived and available for future use.
 - AASL e-Academy continues to offer quality online courses.
 - Fall Forum 2010 will be held in Portland, Oregon November 5-6. Paige Johnson from the Partnership for 21st Century Skills will be the keynote speaker. Gail Dickinson, Leslie Maniotes and Ross Todd will also be featured.

3. All stakeholders understand and recognize that the school librarian and school library programs are essential to teaching and learning.
 - The mega-issue discussion for the Board's Midwinter Meeting was "What name should we use to help us achieve universal recognition and be considered indispensable?" The board looked at data from a membership survey which highlighted the inconsistencies about job titles in our profession. Based on this data and other research provided, we identified the advantages and disadvantages of various titles and AASL's capacity to make a name change. The board voted to re-affirm the title of school librarian. This decision gives us the opportunity to clearly define who we are and what we do all our constituencies.
 - AASL has had two opportunities to comment on two important national initiatives. The first is the Common Core Standards Initiative which has released a common core of state standards for English-language arts and mathematics. AASL issued comments on the draft highlighting where the school librarian is positioned to help with the implementation of these core standards. Currently, a crosswalk document comparing the *Standards for the 21st Century Learner* with the common Core Standards is being developed. In addition, AASL has also provided comments on the National Education Technology Plan which again highlights where the school librarian is uniquely positioned to implement the plan as well as urging US Department of Education Secretary Arne Duncan to insert language in the plan specifically related to school libraries and school librarians.
 - The data from the 2010 School Libraries Count! survey is being compiled. This data continues to provide valuable information about the state of our nation's school libraries. We are excited to offer to the 2009 and 2010 participants customized reports that compare their programs with like programs.

- April is School Library Month and this year Spokesperson Laurie Halse Andersen was a powerful voice for the importance of the role of school libraries and librarians. Her school visit was broadcasted on the webpage for all to enjoy. Her ongoing support and passion for libraries will continue to have an impact with all her audiences.
- The reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) will be addressed by Congress in the near future. President Obama's budget proposal has removed the Improving Literacy Through School Libraries grant program which places school libraries in competition with all other literacy programs. AASL is working closely with the ALA Washington Office to urge the inclusion of language that:
 1. Establishes a state goal of having a state-licensed school librarian in each public school
 2. Directs school districts to ensure that each school in the district is served by a state-licensed school librarian
 3. Allows state and local teacher professional development funds to be used to assist in recruiting and training school librarians.

However, it is our members who will have the greatest affect in accomplishing this. Please contact your representatives and urge them to support this change in the language of ESEA.

- Over the past year I have visited a number of states and corresponded with members all across the country. I have met wonderful school librarians and seen excellent school library programs. Unfortunately, excellent libraries and librarians aren't immune when school districts are faced with financial difficulties and forced to cut programs and school librarian positions. I have written numerous letters on behalf of these school librarians and their programs urging their superintendents and school board members to consider the effects of these cuts on their students. Sometimes the efforts of the local supporters of school libraries are successful; sometimes they are not. There have been some bright spots. In a school district in Indiana facing program cuts, elementary students wrote and performed a play "The Case of the Missing Librarian". They kept their librarian. Shonda Brisco created a Google map that marks places where the decision has been made to eliminate or reduce certified school librarian positions. I urge our members to contribute to this map which is posted on the Advocacy page of the AASL website if your community has made such a decision. It makes for a powerful image.

4. AASL fosters vibrant, inclusive, accessible, and supportive communities for school librarians.

- AASL has continued to increase its presence in ALA by recommending its members to ALA committees and task forces. However, it is absolutely necessary for our members to volunteer for these positions. Completing the volunteer form on the ALA website is the only way we have of knowing who is interested and qualified for these positions. The ALA Committee Volunteer database will open August 2 and close December 3, 2010. This is your window of opportunity to represent AASL in the larger organization and collaborate with members of the other divisions.

- In 2008, the AASL Board approved a set of recommendations that came out of a communications audit some of which focused on our serial periodicals (*Knowledge Quest*, *School Library Media Research* and *Hotlinks*) Based on those recommendations, we will be making some changes in these publications. Look for these changes as we work to build a robust, interactive digital presence and integrate the print and digital elements for *Knowledge Quest* and *SLMR*, and maximize the linkages among the content of our publications.

On a personal note, it has been my pleasure and my privilege to serve as the President of the American Association of School Librarians during the last year. I have met and worked with many talented people who are passionate about school libraries and their impact on students.

Sincerely,



Cassandra Barnett
AASL President 2009-2010