

NATIONAL SCHOOL LIBRARY
Standards
*FOR LEARNERS,
SCHOOL LIBRARIANS,
AND SCHOOL
LIBRARIES*

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A REVIEW
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I come to this review with six decades of experience in the profession and a reputation as a futurist with disruptive ideas, but with the same inevitable look across education and at major trends in teaching and learning that will be ignored only at great peril.

Since 2008, when the U.S. economy tanked, the loss of jobs in our profession has been staggering. Recently, there has been a bit of a revival as the economy has improved, but a number of pressures in education as a whole has relegated many library positions to paraprofessional staff with some oversight from a professional at the district level, if fortunate. At the same time, it has been alarming to watch the types of exhibitors at state and national conventions grow smaller and smaller, while exhibit halls at International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) and ASCD have exploded. That is a major clue about where the money is now compared to where it used to be.



It is said that a profession cannot reinvent itself because of the drag of tradition. Every profession has been struggling to adjust to the fast pace of technological change, from medicine to engineering, from the National Education Association in education to organizations such as the International Reading Association (now the International Literacy Association). Even within the library field, we are struggling to embrace the current information and technology explosion as we fight the huge stereotype that libraries are no longer relevant, that Siri—in the palm of our hand—is the ultimate in reference librarianship, and a new generation of learners is addicted to the Google search engine. That reality gives one hope that new standards will be a flagship that may recognize the present but propel us into the future. With that background, I set my task at examining the new document in depth with hope and a bit of trepidation.

After hours and hours of examination, a number of major concerns became apparent. In order to avoid total negativity, I decided that for every critique I had I would offer a positive recommendation to librarians who are trying to use the document in their practice.

THE BEST OF THE STANDARDS

Bravo 1: Inquiry in More Depth

Without doubt, these standards treat the topic of inquiry in more depth than any other standards to date. Through a picture model and also in framework statements, the idea of inquiry and how it contributes to investigations of what is known about a selected topic are extensive. The frameworks and rubrics at the end of the volume

help librarians not only understand the concept of inquiry as never before, but also help them make judgments about whether learners are mastering the various steps of inquiry. If, for example, other programs of the library beyond just inquiry projects were to be eliminated, the inquiry model and rubrics—along with excellent examples from a variety of grade levels—would be a good stand-alone volume. Such a volume might amplify the guided inquiry material published by Leslie Maniotes, but also work alongside the forthcoming book about inquiry by Barbara Stripling.

Bravo 2: Happily, this edition includes regular comments about the role of the district and state in the program of the school library.

Bravo 3: The thread “GROW” is perhaps the best part of the standards because it hints a number of times how we can stimulate creativity and invention in the school library.

THE MAJOR CHALLENGES OF THE NEW STANDARDS

CONCERN 1: THE LOOK BACKWARD, NOT FORWARD

While much of the material in the standards has come from the previous edition and the various statements issued by AASL over the past decade, the concentration is a look backward, rather than a total rethinking of the professions in an environment of explosive change in information, technology, and learners, and the need to prepare these learners for very different careers. Like Frances Henne, who wrote the 1960 standards and realized the major

change in audiovisual media, both the profession and individual practitioners have to start from scratch, be disruptive, and reconsider everything we know about the idea of the library if we are to move forward, or we will suffer the same fate as Kodak. There are many futurist voices out there—both in our field and in education generally—who talk, write, and explore the exciting possibilities rather than just try to sort through the past to preserve the best of the best we have been practicing for decades.

On a personal note (and, yes, I realize I don't have a very good sample), I have 28 grandchildren who go to various schools across the nation. I wish that just one of them would speak in glowing terms about their school library. Some can tell me about how they enjoy their public library but not a peep about the school library, librarian, or library clerk. A year or so ago, my daughter took me to a world-class elementary school learning commons a couple of hours from her home. She came away so excited yet so disheartened with what her own children have in their schools. Reinventing what we think, act, and proclaim needs to be commonplace in order to stay relevant. For every practitioner I recommend finding a world-class example and then spending a few days interacting there. It would be better than the most expensive gift you have ever received. They are out there. Every district supervisor should have an example of excellence in the district to showcase, and we need examples in every one of the large city districts that have been meeting together now for a few years.

The Knapp School Library Project and Library Power conducted those demonstrations at critical times—we

need new ones desperately. Perhaps the Future Ready Librarians movement will help; Ruth Small's cadre of schools working with innovation might help; AASL could revise its Library Program of the Year award program; and we might rejoin P21 to get libraries back in their view. We need at least 20 innovative programs recognized each year, so there will be a network of excellence demonstrating what we are all about. No one else is going to toot our horn.

Thinking Ahead: Has anyone ever thought of convening a national think tank of librarians, tech folks, curriculum folks, administrators, architects, and creative thinkers like Daniel Pink and Sir Ken Robinson to design the most disruptive "library" imaginable? Who knows, we might end up with a library learning commons, design center, personalized learning center, community center, learning community, and workout center, all in one as a whole school with no individual classrooms. Imagine you were interviewing for a job at Designtech High School run by Oracle in California. What would have to happen to standards and library education to prepare "librarians" to work in this environment? (See a description at <http://www.designtechhighschool.org/>.)

CONCERN 2: A SINGULAR PROGRAM EMPHASIS

While inquiry as a programmatic function has been set out in great detail, one soon recognizes that it is the umbrella under which every other program element must fit. Thus, there is a singular function of the library program in the school. If asked by teachers, administrators, boards, and parents, the simple and simplistic elevator speech is: "My

role as a librarian is to teach inquiry (information literacy)." To librarians who want to have a grade-by-grade curriculum to teach, this idea is very comforting. If such a curriculum were deemed indispensable by the educational community at large, then why cut the number of professionals? Currently, we have no footing in the charter school movement that is popular with the U.S. president, if, for example, that movement continues to expand over the next eight years. Trying to propose a single additional curriculum to that group would be nigh to impossible. The language used in the standards indicates that a lock step curriculum is not necessarily an automatic interpretation of the framework (see p. 3), but it is a very tempting notion to a large segment of our colleagues.

In order to sell the new standards with their singular focus, I suggest that the elevator speech needs to be expanded to fit the focus of the school. For example, if STEM or STEAM is a focus, then the elevator speech needs to be expanded to declare a partnership of inquiry with science, technology, engineering, and math curriculums, thus boosting the impact of STEM on both the teaching and the learning. It will be your aim to demonstrate the impact in that important piece. The same case could be made for other emphases, such as personalized learning, problem-based learning, design thinking, or blended learning among other school initiatives. Yes, we read the statement on p. 85: the library resources, services, and standards should align with the school vision. Should the wording encompass stronger verbs, such as *helps accomplish*, *boosts*, or *directly connects*? Generally, the school vision statement is very broad. It is the

current initiatives that require our support.

Thinking Ahead: Do we change the sign on the door from "Library" to "Inquiry Center"? On second thought, that's a bad idea. If you don't like "Learning Commons," perhaps use "Library Design Lab," or better yet, have a contest every year to have the children redo the physical space and name it themselves. If they created it, would they use it? That's a novel thought. In fact, if children and teens were able to participate in standards design, do you think they would design a place with only one function?

CONCERN 3: LACK OF A CLEAR VISION OF THE EXCITING ROLE THE SCHOOL LIBRARY CAN HAVE ON THE ENTIRE SCHOOL'S EDUCATIONAL FOCUS

Consider this statement from the introduction to the 1975 standards:

The human worth that democratic societies seek to protect rests upon commitment to educational programs which meet the individual purposes and developmental needs of students and prepare them to resolve the problems that continually confront them. . . . Media programs which reflect applications of educational technology, communication theory, and library and information science contribute at every level, offering essential processes, functions, and resources to accomplish the purposes of the school. (p. 1)

No such vision introductory statement about the library being the heart of the school or the hub of the school exists in the standards' introduction. So

many principals used to cite the hub of the school phrase as a bragging point. Why not now? Are we *the* program element in the school that is the heart of the entire learning community? Are we an indispensable element of that community's success? Do we connect with every type of learner and every teacher to fulfill the vision of the school?

In order to get a sense of the vision in the standards, you need to go to the introduction to each of the three documents that constitute the total program of the library in Chapters 2–4. Consult the introduction to learners, librarians, and libraries. Here you will be able to piece together your own vision statement.

If you see yourself as the leader of that indispensable program element in the entire school, then you need to construct that vision in order to introduce the standards to any group of patrons, from students and teachers to administrators, boards, and parents. Put that vision on your website, on posters, and in presentations. Most of all be ready to present evidence you collect as fact, not fake news. It is the only way this profession will be able to survive. Actually, on the AASL website that accompanies the standards, there are “message boxes” that pull snippets of the standards into elevator speeches. These can be found at <http://standards.aasl.org/project/message-box/>. Too bad the clarity of some of these messages is not paramount in the standards document itself.

Thinking Ahead: For the best toots of the horn, employ a video trailer, news article, infographic, or elevator speech. Someone is likely to ask, “Where’s the beef?” And we could invite them to spend a day at our library to watch the whole thing work.

What if the next first lady or first gentleman took on the reinvention of the library / design lab for every school? Wow!

I would like to do 100 visits to various lunchrooms where the students talk in glowing terms about their library and librarian. Have you had someone you know sit down at lunchroom tables and ask children what they think about you and your space? Revealing. If we could find 100 places like this, think of this: What if the next first lady or first gentleman took on the reinvention of the library / design lab for every school? Wow!

CONCERN 4: THE STANDARDS DOCUMENT IS EXTREMELY COMPLEX

To get your head around the standards, you need to first understand that there are three main parts: learners, librarians, and libraries. In each, there are shared domains (named “Shared Domains” and “Key Commitments” on other pages), and underneath the foundations are “Domains” (referred in other places as “Domains and Competencies”). Then you can dive into the extensive tables for elaboration. I counted over 40 pages of tables, including pages that try to explain how to read the tables. Exhausting.

Be sure you understand the definition of each term used. For example, “Create” does not refer to the idea of creativity; it means construct or build. Creativity is a part of the term “Grow.” The standards are so laden with jargon that you will need to consult the glossary on p. 273 to read and reread the

definitions to learn the new language. For example:

Agency: When learning involves the activity and the initiative of the learner, more than the inputs that are transmitted to the learner from the educator, from the curriculum, and the resources, it is learners’ power to act. When learners move from being passive recipients to being much more active in the learning process, actively involved in the decisions about the learning, then they have greater agency. (CORE Education, 2014)

Does that mean allow students to be creative? But you can’t use that term because creativity in the standards is under the idea of “Grow.” There are over 60 terms defined in the glossary. Study this section carefully and at length to be able to interpret many of the statements in the various tables and commentary. It is overwhelming.

The best one can say about the index in regards to uncovering the main ideas is the word *pitiful*. Good luck. For example, “Common Beliefs” is an excellent phrase to find vision statements. The index provides only one entry for *technology*. Troubling. It is obvious that the indexer who was hired did not understand the document or the profession very well.

Thinking Ahead: Write a new edition of the standards that is understandable by parents, teachers, admin-

istrators, and librarians who have their own world of regulations and standards to deal with.

CONCERN 5: LACK OF A CENTRAL ROLE FOR TECHNOLOGY IS ALARMING

Don't bother to look up the word *technology* in the index. This is alarming and scary. Where technology is mentioned, we are introduced to the concept of "appropriate technology" (p. 171), whatever that means. In the checklist of evaluating the school library on p. 174, we are to work with teachers to integrate technology into the curriculum. Technology is mentioned several times as a responsibility of the district program, and on p. 176 we learn that the district supervisor is on the leadership team for technology and works with librarians and technology-integration personnel. That brings up the question whether librarians integrate technology into learning experiences or if that is a role for another professional.

On p. 178, we do get a sense that "the school librarian evaluates, promotes, and uses existing and emerging technologies to support teaching and learning," and that access should be 24/7. Finally, to find the central role, buried so deep and not indexed, one has to search and search. So then we turn to the assessment of the school librarian as a leader in technology. Beginning on p. 148, we get the sense that inquiry is the major role, and technology leadership is absent. A disaster. The library educators of AASL—not to mention the various committees that inform us about the best technologies—should be outraged. We get a clear sense that as a librarian, if you teach the searching of

databases, you need not concern yourself with any other techno prowess.

If inquiry is so important, then our role in technology is equally so. Does technology really make a difference in teaching and learning after spending billions and billions? We do have some wonderful librarians who know how to make technology *the* central focus of opportunity for children. Those innovators need to keep going, growing, sharing their expertise, and pretty much ignoring this set of standards. If you techno whiz librarians surround yourself with a cadre of students who will be tech leaders in the school, you will have discovered a strategy to make a difference in every classroom and with every learner in the school. I don't like to mention names here, but Sue Kowalski knows what I am talking about.

Finally, we all need to consider those great educational thinkers who really have solid ideas for now and the future. I am thinking of the Substitution, Augmentation, Modification and Redefinition (SAMR) model by Reuben Puentador and the most recent ideas of Sir Ken Robinson (see <https://tinyurl.com/y9tw6jil>).

Thinking Ahead: What if the library was the test bed for every new technology we could throw at students, with the challenge to invent ways that technology could be used to learn and invent better? Could we handle the crowds?

CONCERN 6: FREE VOLUNTARY READING IS MISSING

For those of you who line up at conventions to get signed copies of children's and teen fiction because you try to instill the love of reading, this standards document is not your friend. It is fascinating but disturbing to discover

that this century-old role for the school librarian is ignored. It is replaced by the motivation to read in support of inquiry. Thus, the reading of nonfiction, periodicals, blogs, and other information resources would be paramount. When Common Core emphasized the reading of informational texts rather than literary ones, our profession did respond, but when you look over the program of almost any state library convention, you will not find a plethora of informational text authors as visiting speakers. We should, of course, promote expository texts, but these standards ignore the work of Stephen Krashen, who is never cited for his research or promotion of school libraries in his book *The Power of Reading* and in his latest work in China. What is so ironic is that the issue of *Knowledge Quest* that was published right after the standards debut focused totally on reading for pleasure. Yes, I did find that pleasure reading is one of the bullets under "Commons Beliefs" in the standards, but it is not fleshed out at all in the main standards. For those interested in expository text skills, here is an example of an embedded reading skill into a coding class, although the co-teacher is a tech integration specialist: <https://tinyurl.com/y8vnpvxh>.

Thinking Ahead: What if every student had a budget/credit card to pull down any book they wanted from Amazon and then add that title to the collection of print or ebook titles? What if their folks or they could add to the amount on the credit card? Such an opportunity would, of course, open collection development to the community and patron-driven collection development, and perhaps even to collection mapping, where chunks of the collection that match major learning

experiences challenge everyone to help build great focused collections of not only what we own but also what we can connect to through open educational resources and consortia. Everyone can help curate the best, so that our collections are preferred over simply searching on Google.

CONCERN 7: THE TEMPTATION TO TEACH A COURSE IN INQUIRY

For those in the profession who would like to teach a course in inquiry, these standards are for you. You are teaching a skill like reading, where the emphasis is almost totally on the skill itself rather than the connected content. Here, we take on an outdated practice of academic librarians who teach a semester class in inquiry. The students can choose any topic they are interested in, but the focus is really on the process rather than the deep understanding of the topic. We hope that if every learner can find something to investigate that interests them, they will be motivated to build the skills we are trying to teach them. Our colleagues have rejected this practice, along with the one-shot library lesson, because there is little or no evidence that such a course makes any difference. Yet it is popular, because it can be done in isolation from the classroom and can be under our total control. A fair number of school librarians want to teach such a course but try to reach out to a teacher's curriculum and encourage the learners to choose topics that overlap what is being done down the hall. This is a step in the right direction, but just a small one.

The opposite approach, known as embedding inquiry skills, encourages librarians to have a large repertoire of skills at their disposal that can be inserted at

any given moment in a curricular topic to boost content knowledge. Thus, we have a quiver full of arrows that we choose in a collaborative learning experience to hit the target of the expected content knowledge. For example, do you teach vocabulary building by looking at adjectives, or do you teach vocabulary when the learners are reading science texts, social issues, or pieces of literature? Is one method superior to the other? I think the research is pretty clear on when the best time to teach a skill is, and it's not in an isolated setting.

The standards are silent on ways to embed inquiry skills into science, social studies, or other disciplines. So, while collaboration with teachers is encouraged, the message seems to be that the classroom teacher is in charge of content learning and the librarian is in charge of process learning. Big mistake. Don't tell the English teacher that she can't teach footnotes and bibliography, that you will do that and she should just read the papers for content, not quality of information or critical thinking, and so forth. A science teacher, on the other hand, might welcome the idea of just grading content knowledge and having you, the librarian, worry about the process skills. Another big mistake.

Some years ago, the idea that every teacher is a reading teacher became a popular notion. Then when we think about the Kahn Academy movement, we can see that bits of inquiry can be inserted at the point of need quite easily, so both the teacher and the librarian can concentrate on the progress of individual students. In fact, a series of such one-minute videos is coming out of the University of South Carolina on how to choose a topic, how to build a question, judging the quality of information, and doing deep searches on Google—these

could be done for almost any grade level, experience level, or in both English and Spanish. There's no hint of such approaches in this set of standards.

If you are really interested in personalized learning, then you'll get the best results if the classroom teacher and librarian concentrate on both content and process at the same time. The librarian can help a learner evaluate a cause of the American Revolution, and the teacher can help another student with a bibliography. It's okay to cross over. Do your own testing of this notion to compare the outcomes when crossover happens versus separate teaching. So many librarians complain about teachers who sit down and grade papers while they are teaching inquiry skills. The standards quote the old saying that two heads are better than one, but that's about the extent of that idea.

The introduction to the standards is very clear that these standards are for librarians by librarians. We are not concerned with what's going on in science or social studies, and so forth. We are constantly reminded that these are "your" standards and what "you asked for." Big mistake. Isolation has been a problem in this profession for decades, and this document heads us toward a train wreck.

My best advice to librarians is to make yourself indispensable to teachers of all disciplines. Embed the inquiry skills you know to boost the content knowledge teachers are striving for. And you are offering a second head, another body, another mentor to raise the number of children or teens who meet or exceed both adults' expectations. I know of no other way to become indispensable. It's nice to have icing on the cake, but when push comes to shove, the teachers can teach inquiry.

Perhaps the library learning community could have not only a makerspace, but also a liaison with all kinds of businesses, organizations, and local government where they are inventing, becoming entrepreneurs, and solving community problems.

If you don't believe me, visit any one of the schools in the High Tech High network. Visit the Science Leadership Academy in Philadelphia where inquiry is the heart of the school and there is no librarian. Check out so many "award-winning schools" named by P21 or any other professional group. How many of these schools have librarians?

Thinking Ahead: Not only should every learner build his or her own inquiry model and update it, but students could be responsible for the school's own YouTube channel where they could build their own Kahn Academy of helpful videos on inquiry and a host of other helpful topics.

CONCERN 8: A MISSING ELEMENT OF COLLABORATIVE INTELLIGENCE

There are a number of references in the standards to the idea that learners develop new knowledge. After repeatedly encountering this notion, the sense I get is that as learners pursue a topic and use inquiry skills to do so, they develop knowledge that is new to them. I don't get the sense that students are inventing or innovating something or adding to the known body of knowledge. There are numerous statements about collaborative groups working together, but collaborative intelligence is not a part of this idea. What is collabora-

tive intelligence? It is when minds with varying expertise get together to solve a problem or invent a new solution that is a product of group thinking, and so the invention is not a product of a single mind. The invention of the iPhone is an example. Steve Jobs assembled a team of experts with a vague notion of what might be invented, but what emerged was a product of group creativity. There are plenty of examples of collaborative intelligence out there with children and teens. Look up Mouse Squads for teams in the national spotlight. Much of this kind of work resides in the world of design thinking, which is a cousin to inquiry but is not really spotlighted in the standards. The challenge is to help children and teens realize that they can make a difference in the world. Design thinking is not in the index either, but it was a primary focus at the AASL "introduction to the standards" hall day preconference session, and because we had no access to standards prior, that part of the preconference seemed like a strange sidestep.

Thinking Ahead: Perhaps the library learning community could have not only a makerspace, but also a liaison with all kinds of businesses, organizations, and local government where they are inventing, becoming entrepreneurs, and solving community problems. It would become something like an internship center, open six days and

evenings of the week. And a virtual makerspace would never close. Check out <https://www.symbaloo.com/mix/virtualmakerspace> as one example.

CONCERN 9: A MISSING ELEMENT OF INQUIRY: METACOGNITION

So many inquiry projects end with the idea of sharing what we have learned with others. The oral report is still alive and well and is developed in the standards as a culminating experience. In the first information literacy model from the book *Brainstorms and Blueprints* (1988), Barbara Stripling and Judy Pitts taught us all that reflection should be a part of every step of the inquiry process. Much more recently, Carol Koechlin and I recommended a post-inquiry Big Think metacognitive exercise. Like every sports coach and the military know, a post-game or event must be reviewed by coaches and players/soldiers in order to assess what went right, what went wrong, and how to get better next time. The notion is that across grade levels, everyone must get more and more sophisticated in building content knowledge and inquiry skills if progress is to occur.

Thus, if Mrs. Smith's class had three inquiry projects over the school year, by doing a Big Think we might perform poorly on the first one, review what we did wrong before the second project, and by the third experience, we declare a winning season! Major progress in expertise is ready to exhibit next fall in Mr. Jones's inquiry projects. And on and on across the grade levels.

Such an event, call it the Big Think or anything else, is absent from the inquiry model in the standards. Major error. If we are going to coach children and teens through inquiry experiences,

we need to borrow the strategy used by every athletic coach and military leader who knows that metacognition is a major way to improve over time. The analysis of failure is essential, and mediocrity cannot be ignored. Again, an interview with a graduating senior grandson of mine revealed the following paraphrased idea: “The only time I ever saw the librarian in high school was her annual repetitive lesson on how to search the databases. Did she think we didn’t learn it the first time? We just gave up paying any attention because we already used the databases regularly.”

Our profession needs to do a Big Think about Big Thinks. Otherwise, our academic friends will keep telling us that we are sending inquiry illiterates to them.

One last consideration: Has anyone proposed that every learner create his or her own inquiry model as opposed to one that we impose on them? They might just build an early one in elementary grades and modify it as they become more and more sophisticated inquirers. A delicious challenge!

Thinking Ahead: Doing Big Thinks on a regular basis teaches children and teens how progress toward excellence is a critical element in building lifetime interests, employment, and entrepreneurship. It’s the key to continual improvement of me, my family, my group, and my community.

CONCERN 10: THE ONE-DIMENSIONAL ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT OF THE LIBRARY ON TEACHING AND LEARNING IS WORRISOME

The assessment of inquiry in the standards is based on a set of rubrics modeled after the work of Bob Marzano

and Charlotte Davidson. While rubrics are popular, they are only one way of measuring and are based mostly on judgment calls rather than any hard evidence. There is a set of “Evidence of Accomplishment” statements in Appendix H (p. 262) that gives ideas of what might be assessed but not how. This is very curious, since AASL has had extensive funding from the national government through its CLASS project that has been seeking gold-standard measures of school library impact for some years now. Disappointing. If you are really, really interested in assessing the library’s impact and are still reading this review, I will send out digital copies free to 50 requests, or you can purchase a copy at LMCsource.com. You can email your request for the book *We Boost Teaching and Learning* (2018) to me at reader.david@gmail.com

Thinking Ahead: When mentorship, facilities, technology, and expertise are recognized as first rate, all teachers would naturally pair themselves with the professional and technical staff of the library learning commons in order to provide the ultimate personalized learning. There might be a professional teacher librarian for every two faculty members. A wide variety of assessment measures would be available, but parents and each child would be at the center of such progress measurement.

CONCERN 11: LACK OF A DESCRIPTION OF A REVOLUTION IN THE PHYSICAL FACILITIES AND SPACES OF THE LIBRARY

There are only a few hints about physical spaces in the library. We see references to an environment created for inquiry and a flexible space with ad-

equated technology. We learn that resources are a central part of the space, as well as barrier-free spaces that provide for learning opportunities. In evaluating the physical space, a typical convoluted statement means almost nothing: “The school librarian creates an environment that is conducive to active and participatory learning, resource-based instructional practices, and collaboration teaching staff” (p. 178). If we were asked to supply ideas to administrators and architects in designing library spaces, statements like these in the standards would be useless. I am not certain how many library facilities the reader has visited, but my sense is that the typical outmoded facility could easily make the case that it passes muster with the new standards. We might see most of the floor space taken up with bookshelves, a teaching space with chairs arranged in traditional classroom style, a small area with a couch or two, perhaps a storytelling rug in an elementary facility, a large circulation desk, and a bank of older model computers.

For the past decade, librarians in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States have been transforming their physical spaces into learning commons. This entire effort is ignored in the standards. The first book about the learning commons, *The New Learning Commons: Where Learners Win!* was published in November 2008. Many, many articles have been published in *Teacher Librarian* describing these changes, beginning with the account of the first learning commons in Chelmsford, Massachusetts, dedicated in January 2009 and designed by Valerie Diggs. What is most impressive about this movement is the response of

children and teens to the new designs. Such places are busy, busy, busy from dawn to dark, with all kinds of exciting things happening. Patrons know when a space responds to their needs and interests, yet they are not mentioned in the standards as anyone to consult when designing the facility. The first book about makerspaces in the library was written by Leslie Preddy, a past president of AASL, yet such major and visionary statements about library facilities were considered a fad and unworthy of mention. Her book, *School Library Makerspaces, Grades 6–12*, was published in 2014 and is not noted in the standards bibliography.

Certainly, among the 1,300 plus individuals the standards proclaim had a voice in creating the standards spoke of their efforts to redesign the space in the library. Tradition won out. Again. One thing we have learned about the transformation of libraries over the past decade has been the excitement in the voices of administrators and architects. Architects love to design multipurpose and creative learning environments, and the administrators we have interviewed are so excited that the library is such a popular and busy place that is contributing to the learning community of the school. However, the stereotype of the library as a warehouse of books is sadly alive and well, and that idea, I believe, has caused many administrators to opt for a library clerk to handle the circulation. It's much cheaper, and if there is a district supervisor of libraries, they train the clerks and police the selection of resources. Charter schools just have volunteers handle the donated books in the closet, call it a library, and encourage the children to use the public library. That's all they really need now that the children

have access to Google, right?

Thinking Ahead: As a kid or teen, when I come to the door of the “library,” I enter the most exciting space in the school. I can:

- Read a book, or write a book
- Watch a video, or create a video
- Use a database, or create a database
- Use an invention, or create an invention
- Research what other people say about something, or create a revisionist view of the idea
- Use the space as it is, or create a new space to do what I and my group need to do
- Use the library website, or contribute to the library website
- Listen to a lesson about inquiry, or create tips for others on how to do inquiry, technology, or projects in the space
- Use the OPAC, or participate in crowdsourcing the OPAC that turns it into a conversation
- Come once a week for a library lesson, or come alone, with a small group, or my entire class almost any day and at any time
- Learn what my teachers expect me to learn while in the library, or work not only on their agenda but also on my own agenda
- Live by the rules, or help create the rules
- Use the technology they have, or suggest, test, accept, or reject new technologies
- Use the space as designed, or design my own space in which to study, work, create, share, and contribute to the whole
- Allow the librarian to “own” the space, or have an ownership stake in the space

Yes, there are risks to learners and everyone else, and we realize these when we read articles like “5 Risks Posed by the Increasing Misuse of Technology in Schools” at: <https://tinyurl.com/y9cayp3b>, but we also have fixes and better ideas of how to take advantage of the best tools while minimizing the risks. That is why everyone in the learning community works together to maximize the positive and protect one another along the way. Abandoning technology from the learning space is no solution. We do not retreat from automobiles in favor of horse and buggy transportation because of the risk factors.

CONCERN 12: THE IDEA OF COLLABORATION IS FUZZY AT BEST

The word *collaboration* is used many times in the standards document, but it usually refers to groups of students working together on an inquiry project. To librarians, collaboration with teachers can be just supplying materials upon request or finding out what is being taught in the classroom and doing something on the same topic in the library. A true collaborative partnership on a particular learning experience has been troubling and difficult to achieve in many schools despite the evidence that an equal partnership, or co-teaching, makes the most difference in both the deep understanding of topical content and also in the learning of the needed skills to acquire that understanding. Both the fear of being rejected by a teacher or actually being rejected causes many librarians to retreat into their libraries to do the best they can as an independent entity. Such isolation from the classroom further re-

inforces the notion that we don't actually make a difference in teaching and learning. This is too bad since AASL offered one of the best definitions of the evolution to collaboration in a 1996 brochure describing the difference between Communication, Cooperation, and Collaboration.

In a search of the teaching partnership between teacher and librarian in the standard, much is left out, couched in general terms, and easily misinterpreted. The statements I encountered were as follows:

- P. 14: The instructional role from the previous standards as a domain in the standards is described.
- P. 42: We learn that it is a good idea to collaborate with teachers and groups of students during inquiry.
- Pp. 42–47: We get the clear idea that the librarian has total responsibility for inquiry instruction. There is no mention of the teacher and the librarian to work through the process of inquiry.
- P. 54: We learn that the “library” (probably means “librarian”) is to collaborate with other educators in the process of inquiry, but no actual partnership is suggested.
- Pp. 84–85: We would expect that the description of collaboration would have a strong statement partnering with teachers, but it's not there.
- Pp. 148–149: A weak statement I could find that hints at actually partnering on a learning experience with a teacher reads:

Collaboration is integral to school librarian's work as educators. Being skilled in collaboration and practicing co-teaching positively affects learners' learning. The old adage that “two heads are better

than one” applies here. Having a wide repertoire of collaborative planning strategies helps foster this disposition throughout the school community. Seeking out other educators and discussing ideas and information serves as an example that elevates all members of the faculty.

- P. 174: Finally, here is the strongest statement on a true partnership of teacher and librarian in the design of a learning experience, although traditional inquiry is the focus rather than including the more creative design thinking model:

The school librarian collaborates with teachers to design and teach engaging inquiry-based learning experiences, as well as assessments that incorporate multiple literacies and critical thinking.

The school librarian uses systematic instructional development and information search processes in working with teachers to improve integration of technology into curriculum.

Thinking Ahead: The stereotype of the library as a warehouse of materials to be shared is alive and well. To replace that idea with the concept that librarians make a major difference in the quality of teaching and learning is harder to establish but essential if we are to become indispensable in every school. I dream of such a day. I dream of standards that promote partnership.

CONCERN 13: THE VIRTUAL LEARNING COMMUNITY

According to the standards, the types of resources the library should pro-

vide include those that involve intellectual freedom, cultural awareness, “vetted,” equity, and other traditional quality assurances. Thus, most library websites we have seen provide links to the OPAC, databases, and often a list of books compiled or approved by the librarian that students might like to read. Oh, and of course, library rules. Such a one-way street of information is assumed in the standards, with the librarian directly in charge and in control. When forced to do so, students and teachers access such information resources but generally ignore the site and trust whatever device is in their hand.

When Google first issued the Google Doc, it introduced the world to collaborative interaction and knowledge building. Now, with an entire suite of tools, the idea of building a participatory learning environment comes squarely into view. Yet, for the most part, the library community has ignored the possibilities, partly out of knowing how or why a collaborative learning community might work, but also the fear of letting go just enough to allow others to participate on “our” website. Fear is rampant that someone would post something offensive.

Building a two-way community in a virtual space has so much potential. In fact, if the librarian is actually committed to reaching out to every student and teacher, then the virtual world is the place to make that happen. It is difficult to believe that of 1,300 librarians who worked on the standards, none of them raised the issue.

Most schools now subscribe to some sort of content management system. Designers of every system we're aware of know very little about the idea of collaboration. Instead, they create a

In the past 50 years, the number-one complaint by librarians has been the number of teachers who resist collaborating with us. And, in the world of technology, teachers can and do remain as isolated as ever.

top-down and directive environment. What ends up happening is a website created by the teacher that is just a list of assignments, due dates, and grading. No wonder technology does not often make a difference when isolated teachers in isolated classrooms merely move over their 20-year-old lesson plans to the content management system! Suddenly, lessons and assignments are available 24/7, and the amount of paper used by children and teachers is reduced greatly if not all together. But that is about the extent of improvements.

In the past 50 years, the number-one complaint by librarians has been the number of teachers who resist collaborating with us. And, in the world of technology, teachers can and do remain as isolated as ever. And this set of standards has no solutions.

When Google Classroom was first introduced, only one person could “own” a class lesson plan. After a number of complaints, Google opened Classroom, so that two or more adults could jointly own a lesson site. Think of the possibilities: joint collaboration 24/7 from anywhere and most devices connected to a learning activity where the students and teacher are working. What a gift! Yet how many of the librarians around the country take advantage of this innovation? I suspect very, very few. We dig our own grave.

Thinking Ahead: I dream of a time when most librarians discover the value

and power of creating and administering, along with many other hands, a virtual learning community or virtual learning commons. Templates already exist:

- Elementary school: sites.google.com/site/templatevlcelementary
- Middle school: sites.google.com/site/templatevlcmiddle
- High school: sites.google.com/site/templatevlchigh

Such experimentation helps libraries and librarians compete directly with Google by using Google. Features to expect might include:

- A living school yearbook on the front page that draws users in every day
- A community of readers with multiple book clubs operating simultaneously
- A space where multiple groups are testing various technologies to provide others in the school with the best learning tools
- Collaborative and co-taught learning experiences known as knowledge building centers (Google that) where librarians and classroom teachers plan, teach, and assess the results together as a team—such experiences become the track record of the library’s impact on teaching and learning
- The opportunity for all students and teachers to contribute, maintain, police, and develop collaborative learning spaces together, such as virtual

makerspaces (see <https://www.symboloo.com/mix/virtualmakerspace>)

- A digital space where patrons have a sense of ownership

CONCERN 14: COST

According to the AASL website (as of January 5, 2018), only the previous standards are listed as AASL publications. When you click on the standards and are a member of ALA, you can order the standards for \$199, and that is the price listed on Amazon.com. Those who attended the national conference in Phoenix got a copy of the standards for \$99. Recently, there was an announcement for students in library education programs that combined AASL membership and a copy of the standards for \$100. Incredible! Who is going to pay that kind of money for national standards? Everyone I spoke to about the price blamed ALA Publishing. What is certain is that there will be a small rush in the beginning for the book, and then it will be dead. I certainly would not recommend telling any principal that you ordered a copy at that price to slip underneath his or her door. The only advice I can give is advice I got from members of the AASL presidency: just use all the free stuff on the website, and don’t you imagine district supervisors in the big cities school districts will pay \$200 per copy for every school in the district. And then there are so many school libraries whose only budget for materials comes from book fairs. Zero sales there. ALA has the first right of refusal on any division’s publications—they see the standards as a cash cow. I recommend that the AASL treasurer provide all of us a report on the costs of creating the standards, the agreement with ALA Publishing, and a con-

tinuing report on sales. And we need to know the budget for the implementation committee. How are those costs going to be recovered? Who will pay a workshop fee plus the cost of the publication? Good luck.

Here are how these standards compare with other professional organizations:

- *Leading Learning: Standards of Practice for School Library Learning Commons in Canada*, free at <http://llsop.canadianschoollibraries.ca/>
- *From School Libraries to Learning Commons* from British Columbia, free at <http://bctf.ca/bctla/pub/documents/2017/SL2LLC.pdf>
- *ISTE Standards for Students* (and for others), free at <http://www.iste.org/standards/for-students>
- *Next Generation Science Standards*, free at <https://www.nextgenscience.org/three-dimensions>

Such a comparison makes us ask questions such as:

- What is the role of a national professional organization?
- Why do educational professional organizations publish their standards for free?
- How do other standards appeal to an audience beyond just their own membership?
- How do other organizations fund the production of standards?
- How do other organizations bring other monies in when their standards documents are free?
- So what? Why should we care? What's next?

Thinking Ahead: There are enough friends out there who would fund a standards project, so that the product could be given away free without bur-

dening the organization. Recognition of such gifts does not mean there is a conflict of interest. Multiple gift givers are preferable to a single source.

CONCERN 15: QUIBBLES

Here are a few minor irritations that could have been solved had the document been circulated in draft for comment:

- The use of the word *library* as if it is a person. “The library *does* this or that.” Sorry, only people do the work in libraries.
- The almost 70 pages of appendixes could have been published online rather than bulking up the printed version.
- The obvious task of trying to fit the entire program of the library under the single topic of inquiry. Ideas, probably from the various seminars, were tucked in somewhere.
- The use of light orange type for headings that don't copy well or work for those with low vision.
- The constant need to flip back and forth through many sections to find a thread of an idea. It was obvious that the editor was unable to keep a thread going across chapters. A really good writer could have done this.
- A number of brilliant authors in our profession were missing in the various bibliographies. Examples include Stephen Krashen and Keith Curry Lance.
- Lack of major initiatives in education such as STEM or recognition of great standards in other fields that we could build on.
- The term “vetted resources.” Has anyone ever noticed how accurate the information is in their science collection of books?

- The impossible index.
- A searchable digital edition would help not just reviewers but everyone tracing a thread of ideas.
- Jargon, jargon, jargon.

RECOMMENDATION: WISH LIST

A national standards publication for any educational professional organization is a major event—a vision of excellence for the nation's children, teachers, administrators, and parents. I read in the introduction somewhere that the previous standards document seemed to be ignored by many in the profession. This edition will fare worse. That is painful for a past president of AASL to determine after an in-depth perusal of the document.

My recommendation? Start over. Use this edition, like the Association of College & Research Libraries did, to circulate in digital form to the entire profession for comment. And reach out to the entire educational community and our academic library colleagues in this effort. That way you will not have wasted the time and effort of so many who are now charged with the impossible task of broadcasting the document widely as a done deal.

Consider producing—like ISTE has done—a set of publications for various audiences, and make them easy to read and free. Then you can take what you have in this document and produce full-length books, workshop guides, seminars, and so on as fee-based resources. But you will have to negotiate with ALA Publishing to get this done. By the time you can get such a project under way, ALA Publishing will have figured out that they have extremely poor sales for this overpriced volume.

Considering that everyone's atten-

tion span has gone down, short, simple, readable, and visionary documents are required for a profession that is limping along right now. We need collaboration with many, many colleagues and organizations across education and beyond if we are to survive. Otherwise, Google wins, as it already has done in numerous schools and almost every charter school in the nation.

Standards in every field seem to involve adults imposing their will on the next generation. Suppose a new edition of these standards had a section from the point of the learner—three stories including elementary, middle, and high schoolers. Imagine if they helped write it and then were encouraged to create their own personal set of standards? Talk about personalized learning!

A new edition of the standards might be under constant revision that might have a number of sections that could be published as separate pamphlets, MOOCs, or websites, with five new ones being published or revised each year. Areas for possible publication include:

- Literacies and the library
- The world of information and the library
- Inquiry and the library
- Learning experiences and the library
- Technology and the library
- The “persona” dimension (an interesting but not very useful addition to the complexity of an already multi-dimensional document)
- The physical learning space in the new library
- Constant repetition of pat phrases that become meaningless and open to a wide variety of interpretations (*align with, scaffold learning, cultivate networks*, just to name a few)
- The virtual learning community and

the new library innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurship

- Boring oral reports, a passive learning activity
- A parent’s guide to the school library
- An administrator’s guide to the school library
- The school board’s guide to school libraries
- STEM and STEAM in the school library
- The school library as a disruptive, innovation space
- A guide to the research on school libraries
- Collaboration in the school library—what every teacher should know and be able to do
- What every architect should know in the design of the school library
- Design thinking and the school library
- A student’s bill of rights in the school library
- Artificial intelligence challenges in the school library
- The student cadre in the school library
- Making, inventing, and creating in the school library
- The school library as a reading community
- Becoming a writer in the school library
- Community projects in the school library and idea guide
- Virtual worlds and the school library

IN CONCLUSION

Every athletic coach out there faces the prospect of winning or losing during the season of games. The thought of losing a single game is not pleasant and certainly overwhelming if the losses continue. That is why so many coaches

conduct those after-game analyses. They ask tough questions of everyone involved to determine what’s next. Overall, to this reviewer, the prospect of wide adoption of this set of standards across our profession and across education in general is bleak. Sales of the document and notice taken by major journals outside librarianship will be key indicators of whether we have won or lost this round. Starting over after so much time and effort is not a pleasant task to consider, but there will be a new effort at revision. It just can’t come soon enough.

To every library professional out there, my advice is to keep innovating, connecting, and making a difference with every single child, teen, and adult you can. The documented difference you make in your school is the real news: indispensability. If these standards are of little value to you in your own school, district, or state, then create your own vision, but look forward, not backwards. Perhaps create or participate in a social network where change and documentation of impact is the principal topic of discussion, rather than the mundane of warehousing ideas.

To the profession as a whole, it is the image we have school by school by school that will determine our fate. Are you faced with a line of tacklers that weigh over 300 pounds each? Well, you are the quarterback. If you get sacked, get up, dust yourself off, and try something different. Just don’t give up. That’s my advice to school librarians, district leaders, state associations, and the AASL that I have been a participating member of for half a century.