FOCUS:
SCHOOL LIBRARIES AND EQUITY

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The CSLA Journal welcomes advertising of interest to school library personnel.
As president of CSLA, one of my goals is to continue to advocate at the state level for equity in school library programs and for strong library staffing at all levels of schools—elementary, middle and high school. The recent Los Angeles Unified School District strike resulted in additional Teacher Librarians for all secondary schools over the next two years. This action demonstrates the importance of equitable access for all students to strong school library programs. In my acceptance speech at our recent state conference, I spoke about my goals for 2019-2020 as president using the theme “Connect, Inspire, Grow, Repeat” to provide the schools our students deserve—and that includes a strong school library.

Keith Curry Lance and Debra E. Kachel, in Phi Delta Kappan, March 2018 “Why school librarians matter: What years of research tell us” stated, “We know the research consistently finds a positive relationship between full-time Teacher Librarians and scores on standards-based language arts, reading, and writing tests regardless of student demographics and school characteristics.” Your work creating a welcoming environment for your students reflects the strength, power, and beauty of sharing many stories in school libraries. Providing diversity of topics and compelling storylines brings us closer to a place of understanding, compassion, and empathy. The article further states that for students at-risk when it comes to reading, academic gains are even higher in reading for Black students (5.5%), Latino students (5.2%), and students with disabilities (4.6%). In light of these findings, school libraries are essential in providing rich diverse collections of print, digital, and instructional technologies promoting equity for the school community.

In my role as Coordinating Field Librarian for the Los Angeles Unified School District I review, evaluate, and select library books to develop the K-5 and secondary school collections. Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop’s metaphor “Mirrors, Windows, Sliding Glass Doors” inspires me to promote and share multicultural literature to champion equity throughout the entire school community.

“Empathy is about finding echoes of another person in yourself.” -Mohsin Hamid

Not only are books offering windows, mirrors but also sliding glass doors, to the world, where our students see not only themselves reflected, but also their lives a part of a larger human experience that is one of inclusion and self-affirmation. Being a good global citizen requires knowing about diverse characters, diverse authors and diverse populations, and reading more is one way students learn empathy. Students thinking more deeply as they read and reflecting about themselves as readers and as human beings, enables them to better listen to and understand others who share their world.

This issue of the Journal will inspire, inform, and enable you to serve your community as the equity hub on your campus. Each article will motivate your efforts to promote equitable opportunities for all students. Our school libraries are part of this work. We are preparing the future, so meeting the needs of our diverse community and range of learners is essential in helping them become thoughtful global citizens.
Each cycle of the Journal I meet with an advisory board to consider themes that are current and relevant to the profession. Over and over we encounter the same idea. School libraries are an equity issue, both in having well-resourced, well-staffed libraries, but also in the services and materials we provide. In this issue we examine the role of school libraries related to equity in education – from how we deal with the FAIR Act to how we advocate for our students to have teacher librarians.

In this issue you will find ideas about advocacy from John Hamrick in his personal narrative of the LAUSD strike and from Kay Hones in how she advocates in her school. Dr. Achterman provides a community college perspective on recent legislation related to intervention courses at that level, an important piece of information for all high school teacher librarians. Christopher Fluetsch and Jeromy Winter discuss providing materials for students related to equitable representation. And an invited contribution from Jessica Cantrell reminds us of libraries roles in combatting stereotypes, particularly related to Native peoples.

I hope you find something new, something compelling, and something worth thinking deeply about.

MARY ANN HARLAN
Dr. Mary Ann Harlan is the Program Coordinator of the Teacher Library program at the School of Information at San Jose State University. She is a long time CSLA member and has been Chair of the Governmental Relations committee and the Northern Section President.
Introduction

During my tenure as an elementary school teacher librarian, I have noticed library personnel are hesitant to provide students with age-appropriate lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning (LGBTQ) resources. I struggled with this because I know the importance of representing all of our students regardless of ethnicity, gender, religion, disability, nationality, or sexual orientation. I began wondering if the lack of LGBTQ titles was the same in other districts’ elementary school libraries. In my research, I found indeed this was the case. In this article, I will explore some of the reasons why librarians stray away from adding LGBTQ titles to their libraries, why it is important to have these titles as part of our collections, and some resources for LGBTQ title selections for elementary libraries.

What does ALA Say about LGBTQ Books in the Library?

“The American Library Association (ALA) stringently and unequivocally maintains that libraries and librarians have an obligation to resist efforts that systematically exclude materials dealing with any subject matter, including sex, gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation” (GLBTRT, Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Round Table, 2017).

Why Are LGBTQ Titles Underrepresented in Our Elementary School Libraries?

We know the ethnic makeup of our schools through surveys taken at the beginning of a child’s educational journey. These numbers are public knowledge and for funding purposes are presented publicly to stakeholders. At my school, I know the ethnic makeup of our student population is 96.4% Hispanic or Latino, 1.8% White, 1.0% Asian, and so on. Therefore, inclusive title selections are readily determined for cultural diversity based on the ethnic makeup of a school’s population. Cultural representation through texts is entirely acceptable, and we openly solicit new book titles based on cultural diversity from our students and teachers. Students request books that represent their ethnicity without reservation.

The same is not true for selecting books that represent our LGBTQ community. We do not always know who those students are, especially at the elementary grades. Unlike the ethnic composition of our school, I cannot tell you the percentage of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning students who attend. Unlike requests for titles about most topics, students who identify as LGBTQ are not always willing to request books on the subject. Still, in this day and age, we do not have students, parents, or family members who outwardly identify themselves as LGBTQ. Therefore, we must be proactive in stocking our libraries with books that represent these students.

Another issue preventing the strong presence of LGBTQ books in our elementary libraries is fear. Library staff remain afraid of creating controversy or having to deal with challenged books. School personnel fear how parents will react to having LGBTQ materials in the elementary school library. To help prevent this fear we must have firm policies and procedures in place on how to handle challenged books. We must not fear what parents or community members are going to say about the collection we provide to our students.

Self-censorship and our own biases also contribute to a lack of LGBTQ titles in our elementary libraries. I have experienced some of the library staff in my district remove books from book lists, not shelve books, or not order books based on their own biases. “Censorship of LGBTQ content in schools not only sends a discriminatory and stigmatizing message that LGBTQ content is inherently inappropriate, but deprives students of the right to access information that could be important to their development, health, and safety” (Greer, 2016). Librarians have to set aside their own biases to serve all of our students.

Who Are We Representing by Having LGBTQ Books in Our Elementary School Libraries?

In her article, “Intellectual Freedom for All: Developing LGBTQ Collections,” Elizabeth Gartley reminds us “Providing equitable access to information means our LGBTQ students should see themselves reflected in the library collection, and that all students who visit the library see an accurate representation of the diversity in the world” (Gartley, 2015). By having books with LGBTQ themes in our libraries, we are representing not only our students, but their immediate family members, their extended families, and their friends. Imagine going through school without connecting with a book that represents you or your family makeup. Fernando (pseudonym), a student at one of my schools, has two moms who are openly raising their son. It is important to have books which represent Fernando’s family and other families like his.
When given an environment that is supportive, caring, and accepting, LGBTQ students can thrive.

We are helping students understand themselves by having LGBTQ collections. LGBTQ students can find answers to help them understand their sexuality. For younger students, it might just be to realize they are not the only ones feeling a certain way or the only ones with families that look different than others. It provides opportunities for these students to see a reflection of themselves and know that it is normal. Additionally, it provides opportunities for all students to see various compositions of different family units. GLSEN (formerly Gay, Lesbian, & Straight Education Network) reports, “one-quarter of elementary school teachers (25%) say that they know a parent of a student at their school who is lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT)” (2012). Claudia Harrington provides a terrific series on a variety of family arrangements (I will introduce more about choosing LGBTQ books in a later section). Another reason to have a healthy LGBTQ library collection is to help family and friends of LGBTQ students understand them. As stated before, students can see a representation of the diversity in the world around them (Gartley, 2015).

**Why Do We Need LGBTQ Titles Represented in Our Elementary School Libraries?**

Through a press release, The Williams Institute: UCLA School of Law (2018), reported statistics about our LGBTQ youth. They state that 3.2 million youth ages 8-18 are LGBTQ (8%) or 1.6 million LGB in grades 9-12 and about 1% or 150,000 youth ages 13-17 identify as transgender. According to GLSEN (2015), “LGBTQ students who attend schools with anti-bullying or anti-discrimination policies that include sexual orientation and gender identity experience less anti-LGBTQ victimization than LGBTQ youth at schools without those protections” (The Williams Institute: UCLA School of Law, 2018).

The Trevor Project: Saving LGBTQ Lives, www.thetrevorproject.org, reports on some unsettling numbers among our LGBTQ youth. They report that LGBTQ youth are “almost five times as likely to have attempted suicide compared to heterosexual youth” and “LGBTQ youth who come from highly rejecting families are 8.4 times as likely to have attempted suicide as LGBTQ peers who reported no or low levels of family rejection” (2019).

Students who identify as or are assumed by others to be LGBTQ have a higher rate of being bullied than their peers. Many of these students endure homophobic teasing and slurs. Stopbullying.gov reports that in 2017 33% of LGBTQ students said they were verbally harassed on campuses and 27.1% were cyberbullied. Questioning students also endured bullying at higher rates (on school property 24.3% and cyberbullying 22%), than their heterosexual peers. Of those students, 18.8% reported being physically assaulted at school because of their sexual orientation (Rainbow Book List, 2019, March 11).

As you can imagine, students who experience this type of bullying, fear going to school. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention reports, LGBTQ students, compared with heterosexual students, were 140% more likely to miss school at least one day prior to the 2015 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018). Of course, this high absenteeism rate results in lower grade point averages (GPAs) of our LGBTQ youth. GLSEN (2014), states that “LGBTQ students who experienced higher levels of victimization based on their sexual orientation had lower grade point averages (GPAs) than students who were less often harassed (2.8 vs. 3.3).”

**How Do School Libraries and Teacher Librarians Help with the Issues LGBTQ Students Face?**

When given an environment that is supportive, caring, and accepting, LGBTQ students can thrive. The CDC states, “Positive environments can help all youth achieve good grades and maintain good mental and physical health. However, some LGBTQ youth are more likely than their heterosexual peers to experience negative health and life outcomes” (U.S. Department, 2017). In her article, “LGBTQ & You: How to Support Your Students,” Lauren Barack writes that “School librarians provide support through their very presence as well as through the services they can provide” (2014).

Many times the library provides a refuge for students who feel they do not fit into mainstream society. This refuge is important since LGBTQ students are more likely to be harassed and more likely to experience violence perpetuated against them. Teacher Librarians are those individuals who help students understand the world around them through text. We are the people who provide safety through knowledge and are free-speech supporters who ensure the rights of all to access materials. No matter who the students are, they know they can come to the library and feel part of a community.

As stated before, students and parents are not always willing to reveal their true identity openly. As Teacher Librarians, we need to proactively account for this and find ways for students to access materials without being fearful of exposing their identity. “Libraries that have LGBTIQ+ (1 stands for intersex) e-books, online subject guides, lists of recommended LGBTIQ+ books on the library website, or LGBTIQ+ books integrated in regular displays make it easier and safer for youth to locate those materials” (Wexelbaum 2019). As Teacher Librarians, we must provide opportunities for private checkout through e-books. Students can readily checkout e-books without having to walk up to a counter with fears of being outlets. Also, it is necessary to keep an updated list of LGBTQ books found in the library and on our library websites. This list will provide students with quick access to our LGBTQ books without having to search the online public access catalog [OPAC]. By providing students pertinent information through our...
Teacher Librarians need to advocate for LGBTQ specific staff training, focusing on creating a safe and supportive environment for all students. I believe Teacher Librarians can help to support all students, including our LGBTQ community, by stepping outside the four walls of the library. The CDC reports, “Schools can implement evidence-based policies, procedures, and activities designed to promote a healthy environment for all youth, including LGBTQ students” (U. S. Department, 2017). Teacher Librarians need to be advocates for LGBTQ students. We need to reach out to administration and become part of committees dedicated to policy writing. I am sure all schools have anti-discrimination policies, but do they specifically identify the LGBTQ community in those policies? Additionally, Teacher Librarians need to advocate for LGBTQ specific staff training, focusing on creating a safe and supportive environment for all students. Teacher Librarians should be the voice for not only our LGBTQ students, but for all students.

How Can You Select Quality LGBTQ Materials for Our Elementary School Libraries?

Book selection is one of the favorite parts of my job. Talking to teachers, students, and other library personnel about the needs of our school library is an exciting occurrence for me. Once I know the needs of the library based on others’ recommendations or based on need, I get to work. Remember, we need to be proactive in our addition of LGBTQ titles. I have my favorite go-to places to find diverse books. Here are my favorites for LGBTQ titles:

- **We Need Diverse Books** - [https://diversebooks.org/](https://diversebooks.org/) - This site is a terrific place to find information on diverse books. Under the “Resources” drop-down menu you will find an abundance of information (2019).

- **TeachingBooks.net** - [https://www.teachingbooks.net/](https://www.teachingbooks.net/) - I like to use their “Find Resources For” buttons to learn more about LGBTQ books. This site offers the ability to narrow your results based on grade level, curricular area, genre, cultural area, award-winning books, and more (2019).


- **GLBTRT** [Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Round Table] - [http://www.ala.org/rt/glbtrt/award/stonewall](http://www.ala.org/rt/glbtrt/award/stonewall) - Here you can find Stonewall book award winners as far back as 1971. You will have to search through to find elementary school specific titles (American Library Association, 2019).

- **GoodReads** - [https://www.goodreads.com/list/show/15355.LGBTQ_Children_s_Literature](https://www.goodreads.com/list/show/15355.LGBTQ_Children_s_Literature) - I like to search “Groups” in GoodReads to find children’s LGBTQ titles. GoodReads is an excellent way to find out how others rate books (2019).

References


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**JEROMY WINTER**

Jeromy Winter is a Teacher Librarian at two elementary schools in Selma Unified School District. Previously, he taught first grade for thirteen years. In addition to his primary education career, he is an online instructor at Fresno Pacific University Continuing Education. Jeromy values life long learning and has continued to educate himself by receiving his Master’s Degree in Reading and Language Arts and three teaching credentials. In his time away from work, he enjoys spending time with his wife and three children. He also likes watercolor painting and gardening. Of course, like every teacher, he enjoys vacationing at the beach during summer breaks.
In January 2012, the FAIR Act became California law. The Act requires schools to educate their students about a widely diverse range of people, including people of many different racial, ethnic, gender, and sexual orientation groups (Our Family Coalition, n.d.). The Act specifically calls out “…particular emphasis on portraying the role of these groups in contemporary society” (California Department of Education, 2018, p.1).

The FAIR Act provides both a challenge to and an opportunity for Teacher Librarians to do what they do best: provide their patrons with excellent information sources that reflect their information needs. The FAIR Act encourages TLs to develop their collections so as to offer their patrons materials covering a wide range of people and materials that hopefully reflect students’ reading desires, and own life experiences. TLs owe their students these sorts of diverse collections.

During the 2016-2017 school year, the Davis Joint Unified School District (DJUSD) made a concerted district-wide effort to improve school library collections to better meet the requirements of the FAIR Act. This process ended with improved collections and a more complete long-term collection development plan. Other educational communities may be able to learn from the DJUSD experience, and, building upon it, create stronger, more inclusive collections for their own schools.

Collection Analysis

The initial impetus for the FAIR Act’s specific collection development came from the district office. At the beginning of the school year, the director of curriculum instructed the teacher librarians to analyze their collections with an eye towards meeting the requirements of the FAIR Act. Each of the 13 school libraries was given approximately $400 for additional collection development. Although this may seem like a small amount of money, it represented the first time in at least a decade that the district made a direct contribution to collection development.

The most important question facing the TLs was how best to analyze the collections to create site-specific collection development plans. Each TL worked independently of the others, but the majority analyzed their site collection using the subject headings in the MARC [Machine Readable Cataloging] records. This had the advantage of being easy to collect using the circulation computer system, while providing sufficient detail for future planning.

As a downside, however, it took four to six hours at each library for all the subject headings to be compiled into a useful dataset. In many cases, the MARC records had not been standardized, and subject heading searches were fragmentary or duplicated. Sorting through the various subject searches took the majority of the work time.

Subject categories that included FAIR Act materials included ethnic-American groups, LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning) related subjects, various disabilities, and gender groups. They also included certain historical or social subject headings. For example, subject categories that related to African Americans included: African-American, Afro American, antislavery, Blacks, Freedmen, Freedom rides, Fugitive slaves, Music, African, School integration, Segregation, Slave (all variations).

The FAIR Act specifically deals with impacts to California or United States history or society. Subject categories that covered other countries and did not directly relate to ethnic groups within the United States were not considered as part of FAIR Act-driven collection analysis. For instance, Chinese-American was included, but Ancient China was not.

The materials identified in the subject searches were then split into fiction and non-fiction categories. Both categories are important for FAIR Act compliance, but they serve different functions within students’ learning patterns, so the TLs decided to differentiate within the collection analysis report.

The final collection analysis included not just information about the library collection, but also demographic analysis of the school community, comparing the materials available with the student population. This is a vital step. The whole purpose of the FAIR Act is to create learning environments that meet the diverse needs of school communities, and this cannot be done appropriately without looking at the diversity of such a community.
The Report and Purchasing

Each TL was responsible for creating the collection analysis for their site or sites. This process took about a month. The reports were submitted individually to district administration. Each site report was around ten pages long.

The reports included the collection analysis, the current plans for improving FAIR Act related sections of the collection at each site using the district allotted money, and future collection plans. The report appendix contained a detailed list of materials proposed for purchase, including title, price and FAIR Act category.

Because the various district library collections had grown over time to meet the needs of each site and the predilections of each TL, the needs varied wildly between the different sites. Purchasing took place at the site level, with each site ordering site appropriate materials and passing the bill on to the district office to pay. This was more efficient and site responsive than it would have been to do district level purchasing.

At Willett Elementary, for instance, the purchasing focused primarily on LGBTQ+ materials. In recent years, there has been quite a bit of high quality, middle grade literature published containing positive representation of LGBTQ+ characters. Other FAIR Act categories purchased at Willett included non-fiction books that dealt with underrepresented groups in American history. These books were immediately embraced by the fourth and fifth grade classroom teachers, who included them directly into the social studies curriculum.

Purchasing took place over the back half of the school year, with all sites completing their ordering by June 2017 and all materials being available for use by the start of the 2017-2018 school year. The initial district investment of $400 per site allowed an average of about 20 books per site to be purchased.

Ongoing Plans

Once the district made the initial commitment to FAIR Act-guided collection development, other funding sources became available in following years. Some sites provided money via PTA or School Site Council. TLs began to systematically include FAIR Act materials in their usual annual collection development. With so much wonderful middle grade and young adult fiction available, many of the TLs found that it was as much about identifying the FAIR Act relationship to books they were already planning to buy as it was buying specifically for the FAIR Act.

Awareness of the FAIR Act also led many sites to include FAIR Act subject categories in the MARC records for new purchases, as well as adding to the MARC on previously held materials, where appropriate. This made it easier for all patrons to find desired materials.

During the 2018-2019 school year, the district allocated FAIR Act-related money directly to the schools’ growing e-book collection. The district added a shared e-book collection during the 2016-2017 school year, and it has grown slowly, with individual schools buying for the district-wide collection out of school-specific funds. With the new district emphasis on FAIR Act materials, the shared e-books became an obvious place to invest.

Unfortunately, the e-book collection represents the only district-money devoted to FAIR Act collection development in the 2017-2018 or 2018-2019 school years. There are currently discussions aimed at including the school libraries in the Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) for the 2019-2020 school year. As with so many districts, DJUSD finds itself with less funding than it needs, so advocating for library funding is an ongoing process.

Conclusion

There are some important takeaways from the DJUSD experience.

First, the initial investment in time and energy needed to create FAIR Act based collection analysis at each site has more than paid for itself, but when planning this sort of collection analysis, do not underestimate the time it will take. At Willett Elementary, the 30,000-item collection took about 6 hours to properly analyze. Other schools in DJUSD reported longer times, TLs planning to undertake this project should consider approaching their district to request Variable Service Agreement hours to perform the analysis and write the report. The district may not provide the funding, but making the ask helps keep the needs of libraries in front of administration.

Second, look for funding for collection development in many different places. If local LCAP goals include improved school climate, building community or improving access to information, TLs should use these points to advocate for additional funding streams. The district curriculum director may be the appropriate place to initiate this conversation. Look at site-level funding streams as well, including parent groups and School Site Councils. It does not take a lot of money to start the process of improving FAIR Act compliance.
Third, publicize the final product. Do not be satisfied simply doing a collection analysis. Write a report. Make plans for the future. Talk to local community organizations, district administrators or the school board. Librarians ought to be proud of the work they do and the support they provide their patrons. Libraries matter, and communities sometimes need to be reminded of this fact.

Finally, always keep in mind that the main purpose of FAIR Act compliance is to better serve the school community. All students deserve a diverse collection with a wide variety of voices. Teachers need primary sources from many viewpoints. Libraries are uniquely placed to provide these things.

DJUSD’s libraries continue to work on creating strong collections that meet the needs of their diverse patrons. The FAIR Act is a useful tool towards this end. The district continues to use the original reports and analyses to advocate for funding and support. Their FAIR Act collection analysis project provides a useful example for other districts.

For more information about the Fair Act, including actual wording and ideas for lesson plans, see www.faireducationact.com.


References


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Combatting Stereotypes against Native Peoples in Public School Libraries

Jessica Cantrell

Libraries are a collection of knowledge to be utilized to educate and share information with those of all ages. School libraries, most importantly, provide support for the education and growth of all students who set foot in them. This is ground zero for combating misinformation and stereotypes. Combatting stereotypes is much more than weeding out harmful materials in a library. It is learning to recognize them in all forms, understanding how they affect peoples, confronting them, and revealing the real narrative behind them.

Native peoples of the United States have been stereotyped since first contact with European invaders. These stereotypes have led to the continual dehumanization of Native peoples. This structural block of colonization is a tool to separate Native peoples from the average citizens; to make them a “peoples of the past”, “extinct”, the “environmental Indian”, the “stoic Indian”, or the “drunken Indian”. These are all common stereotypes and no doubt that you have heard them before. You may have even assumed some of these to be true. The question we need to raise now is: how can we change this portrayal and fight back against the stereotypes that are ingrained into the very fabric of our nation’s narrative?

First, we must learn to recognize a stereotype when we see it. Thinking critically and asking the right questions will help you recognize stereotypes within literature and in everyday life. When it comes to literature, we should ask questions such as:

- Who is the author of the book?
- Are they Native?
- Are they from the tribe they are writing about?
- Did the tribe they are writing about endorse the book?
- What types of words are they using to describe Native peoples; is this bias?
- When was the book written?
- What tense do they use, past or present?
- Are they tribally specific?
- Are they grouping all Native peoples together?

These questions most times are not easy to answer and are certainly time consuming to find. But in order combat these prevalent stereotypes, we must put in the time and energy.

Seek out those who make it their work to change these stereotypes. Many Native peoples are and have been investing their time, energy, and resources into challenging stereotypes that have plagued their communities for generations. These individuals are resources to the education community; seek them out, ask them the awkward and uncomfortable questions that you cannot Google search answers to. When we create a dialog we help each other sift through the misinformation and stereotypes. We find the true narrative of our history and our present.

This creation of dialog allows us to confront our own misconceptions and stereotypes that we might have about another group. Creating this dialog with students is important not just to change the narrative but to honor them with the truth. When working with local school librarians the question comes up of how can we start the conversations if we are pulling all of the books with inappropriate content from the shelves? Another question is what if a book only has one negative stereotype in it? Do we pull it or leave it? These are legitimate questions and the answers are not always black and white. Yes, there are some books that stayed on the shelves so teachers could use them as conversation starters, while others were pulled for various reasons. When these conversations are started within classroom or library settings students learn that confronting stereotypes can be uncomfortable. But in the end, this open dialog allows them to have a better understanding of each other and their different cultures.

It is especially important to learn the true narrative of a people’s culture, history, and present. Most times Native peoples are trapped in the past. When the Choctaw author Tim Tingle visited Eureka, California schools in April of 2018 he did an exercise at Alice Birney Elementary. He asked all Native peoples in the assembly to stand; he then asked the assembly as a whole what Native peoples wore. All of the answers consisted of the usual buckskin, feathers, beads, headdresses, etc. Even with all of the Native peoples in the room standing, wearing jeans, T-shirts, skirts, etc., the stereotypes of what Native
people are supposed to look like were more prevalent than what they actually look like. A lot of times when Native culture or life is taught in schools, it is who they were at the time of contact. But Native peoples have not stopped progressing and advancing. We have always been a peoples of the time we live in. Just as others are. You would not assume that an English person still wears Victorian clothing because they are from England. Or that someone who lives in Massachusetts Bay still dresses as a Pilgrim. But these types of assumptions and stereotypes are personified onto Native peoples all of the time. That is why it is important to learn the real narrative and change the misconceptions.

Find your local tribes and contact them. See what resources they have that can help you teach their narrative honestly. Learn to read between the lines when you read about Native peoples. Reach out to local or national experts. Find Native authors and support them. Read their books, talk about their books, and if possible use their books when teaching.

The negative effect of the one-story narrative is real and affects how we see peoples and what we think of their culture on a daily basis. Native peoples suffer the worst of this because our stories have been hidden for so long. No one wants to confront the horrific past of boarding schools, massacres in the name of progress, indentured servitude (slavery), scalp bounties, etc., but that is exactly what needs to happen if we are to confront and change the stereotypes of Native peoples. It comes up a lot in conversations I have, on whether or not children should be learning about these topics. To me and many Natives, I would say the answer is yes. Our children learn these truths from the time they are little. It is not something to hide, it is something to recognize and try to heal from. Without discussions on these tough topics and confronting stereotypes how can we heal?

JESSICA RAE CANTRELL
Jessica Cantrell is a citizen of the Wiyot Tribe. She is the librarian for the Bear River Band Library in Loleta, California. She has partnered with local schools for the last two years to remove from and then replace stereotypical materials in their libraries. She is an advocate within the local community to bring awareness on the harmful effects of stereotypes/colonialization as well as promoting dialog to change the dominant narrative.

Letters About Literature in California

June 2019-
National winners announced

Spring 2019-
Winning letters published on the CSLA website

Read the 2019 winning letters:
csla.net/letters-about-literature

Sadly, the Library of Congress has decided that Letters About Literature will conclude with the 2018-2019 program.
A is for Advocacy

KE Hones


Each year I try to create an annual report that emphasizes the importance of school libraries with my site as an example. Why? Because so many California students do not have access a school library program!

A is for Advocacy can be a framework for school librarians to consider the local opportunities they have to influence educational policy and reform. Teacher Librarians can build on personal strengths, find opportunities at hand, and capitalize on connections.

Four main ideas are: (1) the message you want to spread; (2) the mode in which you want to work; (3) the means by which you can influence others; and (4) the advocacy forward to build momentum to carry through on the work.

**Message**

Build on personal strengths, find opportunities at hand, and capitalize on connections that you already have to develop your message. I love to write grants and have gotten many students involved in grant writing for several years. Students talk about what they want for their class, brainstorm ideas, help write the grant, and follow up with thank you letters. Administrators, teachers, staff, and visitors are amazed at the many ideas and projects students have created. Because we have a full time Teacher Librarian we can provide programs and assistance for student to write these grants. This is an example of building on personal strengths to develop a message about the school library within the community.

**Mode**

Define how to operate as an advocate for your message on an everyday basis. Establish a mode of frequent, simple, and clear communication with many different groups. Engage in reflective dialogue on current practice. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) certification has helped me focus on student learning and reflect on practice, always asking, “What is the next best step?” Now I am hoping to encourage experienced teachers to become Teacher Librarians by completing the NBPTS certification in library media (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2019).

**Means**

Develop a vision for action and the means to make pro-active decisions about how to move advocacy forward. How can I encourage teachers to become the Teacher Librarians our California students need? Now that classroom teachers can use the NBPTS certification instead of university course work, I will communicate with administrators, district and state education leaders that this is a clear path for experienced teachers. I will advocate for funding to help cover the cost of the NBPTS certification. Maybe this could be part of CSLA statewide agenda?

There are a variety of concrete ideas for how to influence others: Smile and talk about wonderful library programs. Always have an amusing, interesting, clever, or weird story about a student in the library! Whenever I am at an event in the district, someone always says, “Oh yes, you are the librarian!” Brainstorm with other school librarians and develop a Top Ten list of ideas! Here are some tips for advocacy and framing the message:

- What is the issue really about?
- Who is affected?
- Who are the players?
- What is the “hook”?
- What pictures or images communicate the message?
•AND … when we advocate for school libraries who should we talk to? Think about the education policy arena and the attention span of key players. For instance, consider that elected officials have 2-6 years in their office; parents are engaged in schools with one child for twelve years; teachers/administrators have a 20-40 year career.

The variety of avenues to influence educational policy and reform includes models of local site-based reform, teacher action research, networking, and publication.

Below is a sample template for a media message:

1. Problem (frame, controversy, broad impact). For example, equity in school library programs; 7187:1 ratio of students to teacher librarians in California; underperforming students; less access to literacy, information literacy, technology, college/career resources and programs.

2. Solution (values). For instance, local and state funding for credentialed Teacher Librarians at every school in California and funding for experienced teachers to attain the NBPTS library media certification.


Advocacy Forward

Finally, here is some easy advocacy. Your annual library report can be fun, interesting, and ready to distribute as an advocacy tool. A recent ALA Connect thread for members had samples of library annual reports. There are lots of great ideas including infographics. Some also include great photos of patrons and quotes that seems like a great idea for a school library annual report. I am going to share mine with teachers who might become school librarians!

“Each stage in the policy cycle offers opportunities for research to inform process. Understanding which stage your research can inform will help you determine your target audience. Understanding which stage you want to influence will help you design applicable research.” –Sheldon Gen (Gen, 2004).

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A Personal Advocacy Story: LAUSD Teacher Librarians

John Hamrick

On a drizzly day in March I am precinct walking in Echo Park for a special school board election. This funky historic LA neighborhood, with its painted lady Victorian houses and aging apartment blocks, is an old stomping ground of mine. It also happens to be part of a highly contested and oddly gerrymandered section of the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). A good turnout in this neighborhood could potentially swing the school board out from under the sway of big money interests. The board seat is vacant because the prior occupant was ousted due to charter school related campaign finance crimes. Megadonors have been trying to drink the public school milkshake for years in LA by packing the school board. Teachers cannot outspend the opposition, but hundreds of us are sloshing about the streets today to fend off the privatization interests that are poised to break up LAUSD like a … well, like a billionaire hedge fund manager, such as our district superintendent. If the school district is privatized, it would open the district up to a feeding frenzy of private interests. Given full control, I believe the privatizers would staff classrooms the way they staff Uber, and we would probably have to hire Temple Grandin, an expert on handling cattle behavior, to advise on how to herd the kids around from one stifling overcrowded room to the next. So in addition to my regular work week of running the library in a large urban public high school, I am spending a large chunk of my weekend knocking on doors.

During the 2019 LA Teachers Strike, a few weeks ago, I picketed and rallied for a week in the rain (Yes, it rained for a week in LA.) with a hopeful sign that read: “UTLA SUPPORTS SCHOOL LIBRARIES AND TEACHER LIBRARIANS!” The United Teachers of Los Angeles [UTLA], my union, had included Teacher Librarians on its list of demands. I was thankful to be part of the vision of “Community Based Schools,” and “Schools our Students Deserve”: such were our slogans. UTLA has been smart enough to link the interests of LA teachers with those of the broader community, making the case for investing in the overall efficacy and sustainability of our public schools. The UTLA agenda is more for our students and communities than it is for ourselves, or else we would have accepted the 6% pay raise up front and avoided any job action. The strike was about working conditions—for both teachers and students. Polls show that 80% of LA supported the strike. (Strong Majority, 2019).

On day four, outside my school, a group of mostly parents made a human chain at least a mile long between schools along Colfax Ave in the San Fernando Valley. You cannot buy that kind of support.

In counterpoint to the spare exclusivity of the charter model, which most often does not include a school library, UTLA imagines schools with nurturing wrap-around supports, schools that welcome and nurture all students, with reasonable and humane class sizes. This vision of community-based schools naturally includes a professionally staffed school library. So that is how it happened that our teachers’ union demanded restoration of secondary school Teacher Librarians, and stuck with that demand through some tense negotiations. Teacher Librarians and school libraries are an integral part of the vision. The new contract which ended the strike calls for a certificated Teacher Librarian in every secondary school. Plans are in place to hire eighty-two additional positions within two years. This is an unprecedented gain after years of school library cutbacks and closures.

We became part of the vision, I think, by maintaining a constant needling presence at union special committee meetings, for years. How many years? A hundred. No, kidding. The Library Professionals Committee (LPC) is a standing committee of UTLA that was started about 15 years ago by intrepid TLs to give us a seat at the UTLA table. These are the same folks that make up the Los Angeles School Library Association (LASLA), which pioneered school libraries in Los Angeles in 1915, and of which I am the current president. Meetings of the two, LPC and LASLA, are held jointly at UTLA headquarters. For several years, we have had UTLA officers in most of our meetings, discussing a range of issues: recency, supplanting, textbook duties, contract language, and reductions in force. It sounds like inside baseball, I know; but for us it is survival.

The worst and most recent threat to school libraries and teacher librarians has been “repurposing” or “fungibility,” whereby the site administration could redirect the funding centrally-allocated for a Teacher Librarian position to something else, like an additional administrator. This provided an incentive for administration at sites to kill the library programs. It was also a conflict of interest, since they could repurpose the funding to their own positions. “Repurposing” caused the recent spate of closures, mostly at the middle school level, and reversed the small gains achieved since the recession. Even surviving library programs were undermined by an aura of impermanence. By the time we went out on strike, Teacher Librarians were basically at-will employees. We were betting high stakes on UTLA standing firm.
Although our recent success has been through the union, our advocacy has often been focused directly at district management, with limited success. Here is one case. In 2012, the district re-opened the library at Markham Middle School in South Central Los Angeles to comply with an Office of Civil Rights (OCR) Agreement. The OCR Resolution Agreement of 2010 was seen at the time as a legally binding response to federal government oversight. It came out of a study that showed disparities of several kinds, including libraries, in predominantly African-American neighborhoods. A few years later, the district used “repurposing” to close Markham’s and other libraries, basically reinstating the disparities, closing libraries that they had just spent a fortune restoring. They broke the Agreement. I wrote and spoke to the board and to the superintendent’s office directly, and the school board decided to create another “task force” to study the situation. The school board has done the “task force” thing twice in recent years, and we have become wary of getting our hopes up. The prevailing question addressed by the last task force was: “How much will it cost to bring all of the school libraries up to California Model School Library Standards?” The focus was on counting books. Updating the book collections to these standards, a moot point without staffing, would cost tens of millions of dollars which they felt they could not afford. Therefore, our request to secure existing TL positions, and honor the OCR Agreement, was obliterated. The erosion of the school libraries would follow the usual predictable and regressive patterns. Parts of LA would become, once again, absolute literacy deserts.

Currently, in the Spring of 2019, it’s raining in the desert. We are in the refreshingly cool position of placing newly hired Teacher Librarians in some schools that have for years shut their libraries. Right now, localized advocacy within school sites and communities should be our primary focus. This is the kind of advocacy that is a natural and enjoyable part of the job of Teacher Librarian. My own experience in these neighborhoods makes me optimistic that such grand re-openings can be successful.

In 2000, my first job as a TL placed me in a middle school library in a low income neighborhood. It was a beautiful space, but it had been closed for two years, and neglected for much longer. The book collection was small and out of date. There were no computers, no automation, and the facility was run down with peeling paint and loose asbestos tiles. The school personnel had stopped referring to it as a library, and were calling it a “multi-purpose room.” Nevertheless, with me a nerdy cheerleader sasquatch at the helm, the school community exuberantly took back the space, and it was filled every day with children, teachers, and parents. Eventually, the books and computers came in, but the teaching and high levels of engagement were always there, growing from relationships within the community and its confluence of interests around literacy.

To be honest, starting as I was from scratch, operating without a template, it helped that I had little in place to start with. When building bond money was allocated to the site, the community asked for upgrades to the library. In a few years, it became one of the most well-resourced library facilities in the district. This can be done.

Optimism, after all, is what we are selling as advocates. We are always up against the cynical notion that such resources and experiences as we provide will be wasted on “those kids.” Everyone has had discouraging moments, but so many have let the cynicism creep into their core beliefs. Once as I was persuading an English teacher to bring her students to the library to get some books, etc., she balked, saying, “90% of these kids will never read a book.” Why are you even here, then? From a middle school administrator: “We had to repurpose the funding from the Teacher Librarian to hiring an additional assistant principal to help with discipline.” What happened to quality-first teaching? The time a parent at a school meeting told me that children’s books are not part of her “culture”: Illiteracy is not a cultural trait. And I work every day to uplift the self-image of children that do not think they are the “type” of kid who goes to the library: If you track kids persistently, they actually do start to profile themselves. Except in my library, which is full to the brim every day with “those kids.”

Still canvassing, I just had a long talk with a retired teamster and Vietnam veteran about his glory days driving trucks for Ralphs Supermarket. That job empowered him to buy his Echo Park bungalow where he raised four children, two of whom are now teachers. His daughters, the teachers, cannot afford in 2019 to buy a house in Echo Park. The United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW 770) union is not what it used to be, and a Ralphs employee these days starts at just above minimum wage and probably does not make a career there. The veteran and I have found common cause, and he tells me he will spread the word about my candidate for school board.

On this hilltop in Echo Park, the rains have freshened the LA air. The afternoon sun glimmers cleanly off of the downtown skyscrapers. I remember the glimmer and the smell from a drizzly day 28 years ago when I was a young teacher living here, pushing a baby carriage down this same street. My first year as an English teacher in East LA was a struggle, but I loved it, even as I grew into the job. In that year, my students and I read together the play, The Miracle Worker, from our textbook. In that play was an allusion to the story in Genesis of Jacob wrestling all night with an angel, getting his hip out of joint, and ultimately recognizing his assailant and asking for a blessing. I remember that the kids and I talked for a good while about Jacob and his angel. That is the battle I signed up for as a teacher, not to lobby, to bargain, to confront management, speak in public—or to the press, or trudge around knocking on doors. But these days teachers, and especially Teacher Librarians, have to be advocates. The stakes are much beyond our own.
Strong majority of Los Angeles County residents supports teachers’ strike, LMU survey finds. (2019, January 15).
LMU Newsroom.

JOHN HAMRICK
John Hamrick is currently the Teacher Librarian at North Hollywood High School in the Los Angeles Unified School District. He is also the president of the Los Angeles School Library Association, LASLA, an affiliation of teacher librarians involved in advocacy and mutual mentoring and support since 1915. John has been teaching in school libraries in Los Angeles since 2000, and from 1990 to 2000 taught high school English in East LA. Prior to 1990, John worked as a crisis and residential counselor to indigent drug addicts, runaway youth, and the chronically mentally ill. His educational background includes teaching credentials from the University of Arizona and California State Long Beach. John is very proud of his daughter, Lauren, who does Speech Therapy with preschool kids and his wife, Alicia, who is a Labor/Delivery Nurse.

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Optimism, after all, is what we are selling as advocates.
AB 705 Disrupts Community Colleges, Provides Opportunities For K-12 Information Literacy

Doug Achterman

A ssembly Bill 705, authored by Jacqui Irwin (2017), is creating transformational change in California’s community colleges, change that has important implications for high school library programs. The impetus for the bill, slated for full implantation in all California community colleges by fall of 2019, was research indicating that students who were placed in below-transfer level English and Math classes using common placement tests were far less likely to complete transfer-level courses in those subjects—both of which are required for degrees and transfers to universities.

According to a report from the Public Policy Institute of California, among the quarter million students who enroll in English and math courses in California’s community colleges, the “vast majority” had been placed in remedial, below-transfer level courses, and “most never complete a transfer-level course in English or math” (Rodriguez, Mejia & Johnson, 2018, p. 3). State data show that in 2016-2017, for example, among the nearly 261,000 students who enrolled in community college that year, just 8% completed both transfer level English and math in their first year (California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office, Student success, 2019). A study published by the RP Group and Educational Results Partnership in September indicated that students traditionally enrolled in pre-transfer level English classes were more than three times as likely to succeed in transfer level English if they skipped the remedial track and enrolled directly in transfer level English. Similar results were reported for students taking math courses (Research and Planning Group, 2018).

Even more, earlier research shows that students from underrepresented ethnic groups and low-income students have been disproportionately impacted by this practice, as they have been more likely to be enrolled in below-transfer level courses and to begin remedial course work at lower levels. This further decreases the likelihood of transfer-level success (Cuellar, Rodriguez, & Johnson, 2016).

Under AB 705, colleges are required to “maximize the probability that students will enter and complete transfer-level coursework in English, mathematics (or quantitative reasoning) within one year.” High school performance data—e.g., GPA and coursework—is to be the “primary means for placement” in English and math classes. Further, students are not to be placed in pre-transfer level classes unless they are “highly unlikely to succeed in the transfer-level course” and “enrollment in pre-transfer-level coursework will improve the…likelihood of completing transfer-level courses in one year.” (Assessment, 2019, § 55522).

Given a body of research that shows many students traditionally placed in remedial courses can and do succeed when moving directly to transfer level courses (see Scott-Clayton, 2012; Scott-Clayton, Crosta, and Belfield, 2014; Willett, 2013), these requirements for placing students in remediation now represent a high threshold. The bottom line is that for the first time in the coming year, the overwhelming majority of new students will enroll directly into transfer-level English and math courses.

If you are a certificated Teacher Librarian in a California public school, you already understand some of the additional context: the most recent data available on the California Department of Education website, from 2014-2015, indicates that the ratio of students per Teacher Librarian is 7,187:1 (California Department of Education, 2018). While recent data on the specific number of Teacher Librarians in California’s high schools is not readily available, my own research from 2008 showed that 44% of high schools had no certificated Teacher Librarians (Achterman, 2008). The recent success of Los Angeles Unified School District in its negotiations for more Teacher Librarians notwithstanding, it seems reasonable to assume this percentage has improved little, or may have even worsened, in the past 11 years.

Over the last several years, approximately 250,000 students enroll in California community colleges for the first time each fall, and 60% of those students are under the age of twenty (California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office, Enrollment, 2019). If you follow the math—250,000 students x 60% who are under 19 x 44% who were without a high school Teacher Librarian—you’ll see that, conservatively, 66,000 students a year will take a research-heavy college level English course having received no professional library support and little or no information literacy education in their pre-college coursework.

While English and math departments are scrambling to redesign curriculum and rethink delivery of academic supports (see Rutan, 2018), librarians are also working to provide a different level and kind of support for students in transfer-level classes. Prior to AB 705, most students would have had some experience going through a research process and using college level resources as part of research assignments in their pre-transfer level classes. Now, librarians are also working to provide a different
level and kind of support for students in transfer-level classes. Efforts include advocating for increased staffing, creating online information learning modules, and embedding librarians into courses so that they meet regularly with the same classes, rather than for a one-shot orientation at the beginning of a research project. Inherent in all these efforts is the intention to increase the number of contacts students have with librarians.

The positive disruptions related to pedagogy in the community colleges have led to rich conversations and rethinking about what amounted to a deficit model regarding incoming community college students (Harry, B., & Klingner, J., 2007). The placement assessments predominant in higher education only reinforced the notion that incoming students were not yet capable of succeeding at college-level work. New models based on universal design principles are exploring ways to support all students through challenging college-level courses.

What’s a Teacher Librarian to Do?

Professional Learning

Work with counselors, teachers, and with other Teacher Librarians at your school and in your district to learn what you can about AB 705. What are the implications for teachers who know the vast majority of students will enter directly into transfer-level English and math classes?

Collaboration

In your collaborations with content-area teachers, continue to encourage developing assignments that move students toward college-level work. One possible focus is building students’ capacity to develop their own authentic research questions. Is there time built into assignments for lots of background reading, thinking, and exploration of topics? Is there an expectation that students’ research questions can and probably will evolve as students learn more about their topics? Are there scaffolds and check-ins built into the assignment that prompt students to reevaluate their research questions based on new information? In my own experience working with first-year college students, the development of a research question as part of a structured, supported process has been a major focus of effort that has yielded positive results.

Articulation with Community College Librarians

I strongly encourage high school Teacher Librarians to connect with the instructional librarians at their local community colleges. Ask them about their areas of focus and the challenges they face in supporting students in transfer-level English courses. Ask them for copies of research assignments from transfer-level English classes and other non-remedial courses. Bring those assignments back to your school and share these with your content area teachers. Ask them to identify the skills required to complete these assignments and perhaps do some backward planning to the assignments most students at your school are completing. Are there gaps that need bridging? Are there ways current assignments can be tweaked to emphasize some skill areas more strongly?

Disruption and Opportunity

While AB 705 is creating disruption throughout the California Community College system, it is generating possibilities for new ways to address achievement gaps and provide greater equity in our students’ pathways to success. Such disruption is causing wholesale reflection about teaching and learning among community college faculty, including librarians. Thus, it’s a perfect time to connect with your educational partners in the community college system and explore ways to build on information literacy goals together.

References


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Doug Achterman is the Head Librarian at Gavilan College in Gilroy, California. He has been a librarian since 1998 and earned his Ph. D. in Library and Information Science from the University of North Texas in 2008; his dissertation documents the strong relationship between school libraries and student achievement in California's public schools. Dr. Achterman has worked full-time in California public education in various capacities since 1984. He can be contacted at dachterman@gavilan.edu.
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The California School Library Association is an organization of teacher librarians, classroom teachers, paraprofessionals, district and county coordinators of curriculum, media and technology, and others committed to enriching student learning by building a better future for school libraries.

The association encourages professional growth, provides avenues for sharing common concerns, represents the interests of school libraries to the Legislature and the California Department of Education, and enables members to serve the educational needs of the multiculturally diverse students of California.

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