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School Library Research: Guest Editors' Introduction

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This section of the *Peabody Journal of Education* is dedicated to the services and strategic leadership that today's school librarians provide to shape the future of education. School libraries and librarians occupy a unique position in K–12 education as both resource and agents for student success. As education has evolved, school libraries have transformed from quiet spaces lined with books into hubs of research, creation, and reading in all its many formats.

Libraries are a center of the school community, a place for students and staff to advance student achievement through critical inquiry, evaluating and using resources to construct new meaning. Libraries play a critical role in creating lifelong learners. School librarians are committed to providing equitable access for all students so they can pursue interests of academic and personal relevance. School libraries offer a wide array of up-to-date and diverse resources from which librarians provide expert instruction on information literacy and digital learning that prepare students for college, career, and life.

School leaders can empower their entire school community by leveraging the expertise of their school librarian and the school library's print and digital tools and technologies to ensure that students have a more equitable and successful educational experience. Viewed through a lens of economic efficiency, school libraries are a high-value investment in student success.

Shattering the shushing stereotype of the past, school librarians have transformed into leaders in literacy, digital citizenship, and information management and serve as partners in instructional technology. Effective school libraries are not possible without leadership that recognizes that qualified school librarians are instructional leaders and teachers who serve across all grade levels and content areas. Librarians collaborate with teachers, pivot to new methods of instruction, broaden opportunities for reading material that address students' social and emotional well-being, and leverage community partners to create dynamic learning experiences that support the ever-changing needs of students. A school librarian, serving as a teacher, leader, instructional partner, information specialist, and program administrator, has the ability to impact students throughout their years in school.

School libraries bridge the gap between access and opportunity, providing students a safe space to explore personal interests and issues. Yet the library world is not immune to the unique challenges faced by educational leaders and institutions across the nation today. These challenges present barriers to the very foundation of public education: equitable access and intellectual freedom.

The research presented here explores the DNA of effective school libraries and current threats that endanger their existence and impact the success of all learners. Our researchers examine barriers to access created by socioeconomic status, geographical opportunity, a racial reckoning, and a global pandemic. They evaluate the components of quality preservice library science programs and explore the role professional associations like the American Library Association and American Association School Librarians and state library chapters play in supporting educational leadership.

And, in a time of a nationwide literacy crisis, an epidemic of information illiteracy (i.e., "fake news"), and the demand for supporting students in hybrid and blended learning, why have we seen a 20 percent decline in the number of school librarian jobs over the past 10 years?

This issue presents a body of new research from some of the preeminent voices in the school library world that come together to support educational leaders in leveraging libraries' transformative role in an ever-changing educational landscape.

Finally, we wish to honor the lifetime contributions of Rutgers University's Dr. Ross Todd by dedicating these articles in his honor. His research and dedication to the field of school library research and preparation has had a profound impact on the next generation of school librarians through his deep commitment to information literacy and inquiry-based research.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Notes on contributors

Craig Seasholes (MA, Pacific Oaks College) has served as President of the Washington Library Association; on the AASL Board of Directors and the ALA Library Ecosystem Task Force; and as a member of the Future Ready Librarians Advisory Panel. He is an elementary Teacher-Librarian with over 30 years of educational service.

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Christie Kaaland (EdD, University of Washington) currently serves as Chair of Antioch University Seattle's School Library Media Endorsement Graduate Program. She is Associate Editor of *Teacher Librarian: The Journal for School Library Professional*; is a member of the Washington Library Association Advocacy Committee; and was Guest Editor of recent special school library advocacy issues of AASL's *Knowledge Quest*. She is the Author of *Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Recovery in the School Library: Creating a Safe Haven*.