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Definitely NOT Alone!

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Definitely NOT Alone!

Online Resources and Websites Help Keep School Librarians Connected
When I began my first library position in 1980 at a rural, primary school, I was truly a solo librarian. If I needed assistance, I could call (landline) or write (postal mail) to my library science professors, or I could call one of the other six librarians employed in the school district. To keep up-to-date professionally, I joined my state professional association and attended the conferences that they sponsored twice a year. I was, for the most part, isolated and on my own with limited access to other professionals and to professional information. Being a solo librarian today is certainly challenging; however, because of our technological interconnectedness, today’s solo librarian is definitely not alone.
Web Sites
The Web allows librarians instant and constant access to professional information. By visiting the Web site for the American Association of School Librarians <www.aasl.org>, we can learn about awards and grants, conferences and opportunities for continuing education, guidelines and standards, issues and advocacy. We can access online research publications <www.ala.org/aasl/slm>, position statements <www.ala.org/aasl/positionstatements>, and essential links <http://aasl.ala.org/essentiallinks>.

Web sites for state professional associations provide a wealth of information as well.

From the Alabama School Library Association, "dedicated to the improvement of instruction through the utilization of media and technology," to the Minnesota Educational Media Organization, "serving school media and information technology professionals in Minnesota," to the Wyoming Library Association Teacher Librarian Interest Group whose mission is "to network, encourage and disseminate information helpful to the school library media community in Wyoming," state professional association Web sites provide valuable information.

Email
Professional colleagues—in a school district, across the state, or across the country—are only an email away. Subscriptions to listservs provide an email connection to thousands of colleagues. As AASL members, librarians can subscribe to the AASLForum <www.ala.org/aasl/aaslforum>, LM_NET <http://lmnet.wordpress.com> "is the original discussion group open to school library media specialists worldwide, and to people involved with the school library media field. LM_NET provides an excellent way to network with other school library professionals, connect to new ideas in school library practice, seek advice, and ask library related questions." Post a query here, and you'll get immediate and plentiful responses from all over the world.

Additionally, state professional organizations offer listservs to facilitate communication within the state; for example, CALIBK-12 <www.calibk12.info> is the official discussion list for the California School Library Association; the Michigan Association for Media in Education offers MAMElist <www.mimame.org/membership.html>, "an active online community for sharing resources and information," and the Virginia Educational Media Association <www.vemaonline.org> "provides a forum for professional communication."

Web 2.0
Facebook offers additional opportunities for librarians to connect and communicate by joining groups. Stay up-to-date and informed about happenings in the field by joining AASL’s Facebook page <www.facebook.com/aasl/ala>. Frequent postings from The PALM Center: Partnerships Advancing Library Media at the Learning Systems Institute and Florida State University <www.facebook.com/PalmCenter> highlight key current issues. State level organizations offer Facebook connections as well: the California School Library Association <www.facebook.com/4CSLA>,

To view a list of state professional associations mentioned in this feature, visit www.ala.org/aasl/knowledgequest!


Or follow the great thinkers in the field on their blogs:

Diane Chen, library information specialist extraordinaire at a Tennessee elementary STEM magnet school <http://blog.schoollibraryjournal.com/practicallyparadise>

Kristin Fontichiaro, clinical assistant professor and coordinator of the school library media program at the University of Michigan School of Information <http://blog.schoollibrarymedia.com>

Carl Harvey, Indiana elementary school librarian and current AASL president <http://carlharvey.com/libraryties>

Doug Johnson, Director of Media and Technology for Mankato (MN) Public Schools <http://dougjohnson.squarespace.com>

Joyce Valenza, high school teacher–librarian, technology writer, and blogger, <http://blog.schoollibraryjournal.com/neverendingsearch>

Online Learning Communities? By All Means!

Join the Teacher-Librarian ning <http://teacherlibrarian.ning.com> "a community for teacher librarians and other educators...for those of us who connect, teach, share, and lead in new information landscapes." Take advantage of online professional learning communities to interact with colleagues, network, and discuss topics of interest.

Consider joining a professional network such as LinkedIn <www.linkedin.com> where you can connect, not only with old friends and colleagues but also with new professional colleagues to "access knowledge, insights and opportunities."

Other Sources of Helpful Information

Remember, too, that there is a plethora information and support available to you:

If you should have a challenge to material in your library, the ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom <www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/offices/oif> is only a click away. Their goal is to "is to educate librarians and the general public about the nature and importance of intellectual freedom in libraries." From providing resources about initiatives and projects such as Banned Books Week and Choose Privacy Week to providing information and documents about intellectual freedom issues, the ALA OIF assists.

If you are searching for educational literature, information about best practices, or the latest educational trend, remember ERIC, the Education Resources Information Center, <http://www.ed.eric.gov>. As "the world’s largest digital library of education literature," ERIC offers 1.4 million citations on educational literature and includes over 335,000 full text documents.

Looking for data about libraries? Take advantage of AASL’s national longitudinal survey, School Libraries Count! <www.ala.org/aasl/slc surveY>. Here you can find data from 2007 forward which will allow you to compare your library to others for staff activities, hours and staffing, collection size, technology, visits, and expenditures. Another excellent source of data for libraries is the National Center for Education Statistics <www.nces.ed.gov>. Numbers, facts, tables, and figures regarding school libraries abound.

The moral of the story is that, while you may be the only librarian in your building or your district, you are not a lone librarian. Technology allows you to immediately and constantly connect and interact with other school librarians. Making full use of these resources will allow you to remain connected.

Audrey Church
is an associate professor of school library media at Longwood University in Farmville, Virginia. She is the author of Leverage Your Library Program to Help Raise Test Scores (Linworth 2003), "The Instructional Role of Library Media Specialists as Perceived by Elementary School Principals" (SLMR 2008), and "Secondary School Principals' Perceptions of the School Librarian's Instructional Role" (SLMR 2010). She currently serves as the Educators of School Librarians Section representative to the AASL Board of Directors.

Audrey will present a Webinar for AASL members on the challenges facing solo librarians on December 13 at 7:00 PM CST!

Visit www.ala.org/aasl/knowledgequest to register.