

Celebrating the Past and Transforming the Future

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Sixty-five years—780 months, or over 23,720 days, or 569,400 hours. Wow! In 2016 we celebrate the sixty-fifth anniversary of the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) as a full-fledged division of ALA. Our organization is the only national professional organization whose sole focus is on school libraries. Since 1951 AASL has been the leader at working to support and guide the future of our profession. It's a huge task, and as an AASL member since 1999, I hope I played some small role in helping AASL successfully support school librarians and their students.

Celebrating the Past

We have much to celebrate in 2016. AASL is in the process of our next standards revision and update. We have advocated for students and school libraries and been rewarded by seeing major strides forward with the passage of ESSA, the federal Every Student Succeeds Act. School librarians are active and involved so that AASL can continue to provide valuable professional development opportunities (both virtually and face to face) for our members and colleagues. Our network of school librarians—from the dedicated board of directors to all the dedicated volunteers on our committees and task forces—works together to support the many facets of the organization.

Transforming the Future

Yes, we have many accomplishments to celebrate, but we know our organization must continue to grow and evolve. We also recognize that AASL must be receptive to building the next generation of school librarians. School librarians who are just beginning their careers will build on the work of the generations of school librarians before them. AASL wants to make sure that the resources and services we provide are effective and essential to building effective school library programs all across the country. All school librarians can improve the lives of every student in their schools, and AASL wants to be ready to support librarians' endeavors.

At the end of 2012 the Special Committee on the Financial Future of AASL was formed to look ahead. What kinds of things would our next generation of members need, and how could AASL be ready to help provide them? The work of that special committee inspired the 65th Celebration Task Force to look at ways AASL can celebrate our past and transform the future. We all know that the organization's resources are limited. With all that AASL already does, the budget is stretched to the maximum. Any new initiatives would require new funding streams.

Therefore, at the 2015 AASL National Conference the 65th Anniversary Giving Campaign was launched. The campaign that started at the 2015 conference will run through the 2017 AASL National Conference. During those two years, we will raise money as a way to celebrate our sixty-five-year history and use those funds to transform our future. The campaign will work with our affiliates, our members, and our leadership (both past and present) to raise financial support for two specific programs that we believe will help transform the future of our field and the association.

Student Bridge Scholarship

When school librarians first enter the field, AASL will cover the cost difference between student membership and regular membership for three consecutive years. Why? Currently, many student members of AASL do not go on to rejoin AASL at the standard rate. While certainly some AASL student members decide to go into another specialty, some new school librarians find the dues increase from student membership to regular membership to be a financial hardship. By offering this scholarship program, AASL and ALA will bridge this increase in rates, giving

student members the opportunity to establish themselves both in their careers and financially before they are expected to pay the standard rate for working professionals.

AASL Induction Program

The AASL Induction Program, scheduled to launch at the 2017 AASL National Conference, will offer a systematic structure to assist future school library leaders in recognizing and developing their leadership abilities. This comprehensive program will ensure that members are prepared to actively shape the future of the K–12 education landscape as leaders within their schools and the association.

Why Donate?

As our committee worked to plan the giving campaign and the focus of the funding, it became clear that, if we are going to celebrate our past and transform our future, we have to focus on the word *our*. The slogan “It’s in Our Hands” became so important because we must take ownership of the future and focus on how can we help support that future.

Some of our donors shared their reasons for contributing to the campaign:

“Giving a gift to AASL is a little self-serving because we, members, *are* AASL, but it is our 65th birthday, and AASL is deserving of the gift even if we are buying it for ourselves.”

—Blanche Woolls, AASL President 1993–1994, professor, California

“I think each generation is responsible for doing what they can to help the next generation. I appreciate what the founders of AASL did to start it. I’ve benefited from their work and vision, and it is my turn to do what I can for the next generation. The contribution is one concrete way to do that.”

—Marge Cox, school librarian, Veterans Memorial Elementary, Florida

“AASL and I have grown up together; we are practically the same age! I don’t think that I would have been as effective a leader in the schools and districts where I have been a school librarian without the support and training that I received from AASL. This campaign is an opportunity for me to give back a little bit.”

—Cassandra Barnett, AASL President 2009–2010, consultant for state department of education, Arkansas

“If I can make a monthly payment for unbundled entertainment services and my favorite news coverage, then I can CERTAINLY make one in support of the profession I love so dearly!”

—Carolyn Vibbert, school librarian, Sudley Elementary School, Virginia

“As a member of AASL I have been exposed to many different experiences, some through the organization itself and the great leadership we have had, and some through the incredible networking that occurs. The main reason I contributed to the 65th anniversary campaign is to help the organization continue to provide opportunities for this type of networking for school librarians who will join in the future. I have received incredible and rewarding gifts through my associations with my AASL colleagues.”

—Jody Howard, member of AASL Board of Directors, Colorado

“AASL has supported school librarians since 1951. It’s the same age as I am, and I’m feeling ready to take on issues and challenges in new ways. We are strong—ready to be stronger with an endowment to support our

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many great new projects while we continue to offer strong standards and guidelines, leadership with legislators and boards of education, and a phenomenal network of practitioners always ready to answer questions and share ideas. The wisdom of our collective experience is a strength that needs to be maintained for K–12 students of the future, all of whom deserve great campus librarians.”

—Dorcas Hand, retired school librarian, Texas

“When I was growing up, there was a sampler in our family’s kitchen that read ‘Home is where the heart is.’ AASL is my professional home. I am happy to do my part to keep the home fires burning bright in order to welcome a whole new generation of family as they cross the threshold and shape the future for our great association.”

—Susan Ballard, AASL President 2012–2013, program director, New Hampshire

“Early in my career I thought of AASL as someone else—the staff, the officers, some mystical group in

Chicago working and speaking for school librarians. I have realized now, though, that I am AASL and you are AASL. AASL is a strong and effective professional association because of what its members accomplish. The student bridge scholarships and induction program funded by the 65th anniversary campaign will help to keep both the association and the profession strong.”

—Audrey Church, AASL President 2016–2017, professor, Virginia

How Can You Help?

We all have different budgets and can afford to contribute different amounts. Those of us on the 65th Celebration Task Force know—and appreciate—that AASL members are already contributing to the association via their dues, and many members also contribute their time and talents on committees. So, it was important to set up the campaign so that no donation would be too small. Each little bit will help

us reach our goal to provide these transformational activities for the next generation of school librarians.



If you go to transform.aasl.org, you can find more information about the campaign, some of the history of

AASL, and a list of donors who have already joined the campaign. We’d like to add your name to the list. No amount is too small, but we wanted to offer a way to recognize those donors who donated \$65 dollars or more. Donors at the \$650 level and above will receive the 65th-anniversary lapel pin with a simulated diamond inset. Donors at the \$65 to \$649 level will receive the 65th-anniversary lapel pin with a simulated blue sapphire gemstone.

We appreciate all the work everyone does every day for the good of school libraries and students. In this year when we will celebrate the sixty-fifth anniversary of our professional organization, let’s remember that “It’s in Our Hands” as we celebrate our past and transform our future!



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