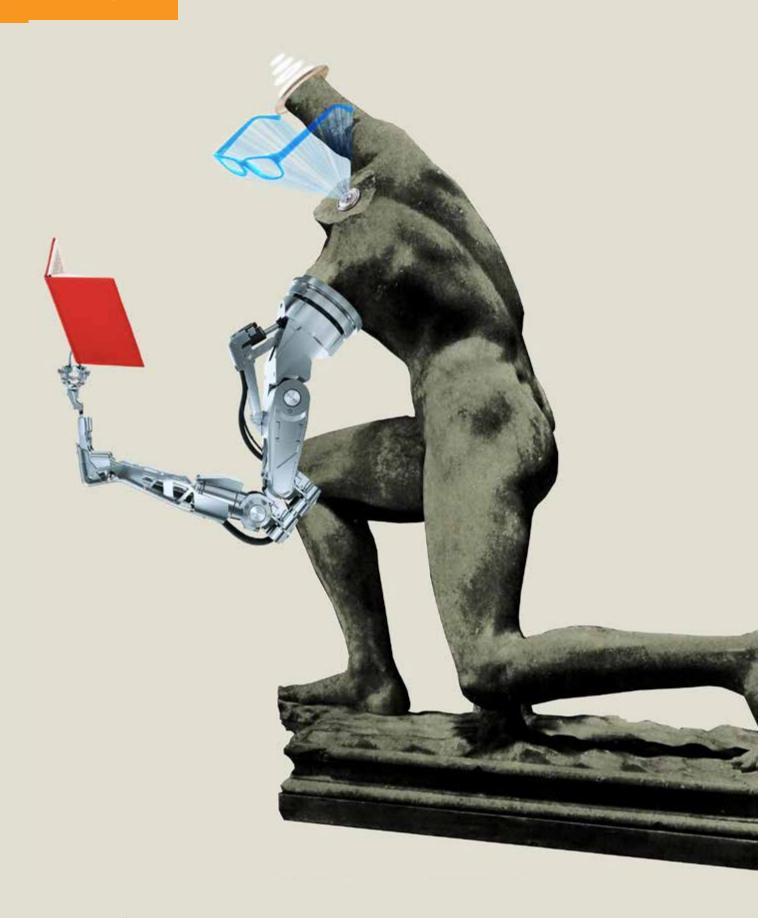# *FUTURING*

for

FUTURE READY LIBRARIANS

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At the FutureReady.org website, visions for a Future Ready Librarian and Future Ready Library are clearly expressed; the site explicitly identifies the areas in which school librarians can lead, teach, and support their school and district Future Ready Schools goals. But how can we find the inspiration and innovation to lead change in the key areas identified in the Future Ready Librarians Framework? And how can school librarians, AASL, and other organizations continue to find the relevant advocacy messages to keep the school library and school librarians at the center of a Future Ready Schools conversation?

Thinking Like a Futurist—Trends and Changes

Futurists and foresight professionals offer several guiding principles for thinking about the future. These principles can help all of us to think about the future and become more powerful players in shaping the preferred futures we want for ourselves and our communities. The principles also fit in well as strategies to support the Future Ready Librarians Framework.

For many futurists and foresight professionals, the first step in thinking about the future is to think about changes and trends (Bishop and Hines 2012; Cornish 2004; Rhea 2005). If we activate our minds to notice trends and changes in our world—especially sustained trends that are distinct from just fads or changing fashions—we can better anticipate the likely futures that those trends will advance. Working to observe trends broadly across sectors helps ensure that we are aware of the many possible futures that might become the present.

In their day-to-day work, school librarians have opportunities to witness trends at work: the ways that students learn and behave, the experiences of classroom teachers and administrators, the aspirations and concerns of parents and families. Changes and trends also happen outside of school librarians' immediate professional and school

LOOKING FOR A SHORTCUT?

ALA's Center for the Future of Libraries <www.ala.org/libraryofthefuture> works to identify emerging trends relevant to libraries and the communities they serve. The center's trend collection features a growing list of trends with information about how the trend is developing and why it might matter for libraries and librarians.

Additionally, the center's weekly e-newsletter, *Read for Later* (subscription information available at <www.ala.org/tools/future/engage/ReadforLater>) helps to summarize the week's trend-focused news and provides a quick reference for changes in demographics, education, economics, the environment, technology, and society.

environments, so it's important to look broadly. Recognize the opportunities you have to learn outside of work, while on social media, enjoying hobbies, traveling or shopping, and even when talking with family members and friends. Try to take time every day to notice the things that are changing—technologies, spaces, services, behaviors, expectations—no matter where you see them. Once we activate our minds to look for trends, we will be surprised at how easily they appear.

Thinking Like a Futurist—Prioritize and Organize

In the same way that school librarians prioritize certain information sources for students' reading and research, we also need to prioritize the trends and changes we observe in the world. An essential part of trend scanning is deciding which trends and changes are most important to you and to the community that you serve. Some of the trends found will be of interest but not of relevance. Some of them may be important for libraries but perhaps not of immediate importance to *your* library. Priorities can be based on the ambitions and aspirations of students, colleagues, families, and communities. What are the issues they are discussing or pursuing—and which of the trends speak to those aspirations and goals?

The eight focal components of the Future Ready Librarians Framework provide an excellent guide to help organize and prioritize trend scanning. As you identify trends and changes, consider how those might factor into each of the components of the framework:

- Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment—Builds instructional partnerships, empowers students as creators, and curates digital resources and tools

- Use of Space and Time—Designs collaborative spaces

- Robust Infrastructure—Ensures equitable digital access

- Personalized Professional Learning—Facilitates professional learning

- Budget and Resources—Invests strategically in digital resources

- Community Partnerships— Cultivates community partnerships

- Data and Privacy—Advocates for student privacy

- Collaborative Leadership—Leads beyond the library (Future Ready Schools n.d.)

Those trends that might prove especially useful for advancing a component may be worthy of deeper consideration, especially if it is a component that is particularly important for your library's mission and the library's users.

For example, if in your trend scanning you begin to notice the growing popularity of 360-degree photo and video as a part of virtual reality's expanding popularity, you might connect that trend to the Future Ready Librarians Frame-work's emphasis on empowering students as creators. In another trend direction, you might begin to notice the growing popularity of pop-up spaces developed by retailers, government agencies, and commu-nity-based organizations. You could connect this trend to the framework's focus on designing collaborative spaces.

Again, think of trends and changes that line up with your commu-nity's priorities and with suggested priorities from the Future Ready Librarians program, or the AASL Standards, or another guide that helps you organize your work. If a

trend doesn't immediately fit with your priorities—or if its fit with local priorities is not yet obvious—the time may not be right for you to act on the trend. It is still worth noticing, even though you don't yet act on it.

As you continue your trend scanning and prioritization, you will discover

change comes at us from lots of areas: societal shifts, technological advances, and political, economic, and environmental changes. The majority of what we experience is inbound change. The signals for the future arrive as inbound change, but the future that we create is the result of outbound change—the change that

by CONNECTING LIBRARY PROGRAMS *and* SERVICES *to* REAL-WORLD TRENDS YOU HELP LIBRARY USERS PLACE *a* PROGRAM *or* SERVICE *in the* CONTEXT *of a* CHANGING WORLD.

that you are better able to combine trends and their implications across priorities or categories, to create more-robust visions for how the trends might fit into your future. You will begin to see how the trends combine with each other and advance each other. You might also see places where the trends are in tension and a need for greater consideration might exist.

Thinking Like a Futurist— Actions and Learning

Trends are mostly inbound change, change that happens to us (Bishop and Hines 2012, 20). Inbound

we create for ourselves (Bishop and Hines 2012, 20).

Awareness of inbound change improves our chances for success creating outbound change. The trends and changes that you identified and prioritized as aligning with your goals for a Future Ready Library become starting material for innovations and improvements.

Trends and changes can be important factors to consider as you contemplate the actions and learning that you could implement in your life. **Rather than thinking of the future as entirely new inventions,**

think of future relevance as incremental alignment that reflects the larger world's ongoing change. What elements of the trends you have identified can you bring to efforts to achieve goals that have a high priority for you?

To go back to the previous trend examples, having identified 360-degree video as a trend and aligning it with the goal of empowering student creators, you may decide to introduce the technology into future instruction sessions. Going further, as your comfort with the technology grows, you may recognize its importance in developing instructional partnerships and curating digital resources and tools, and so embark on a classroom partnership that has students record and use 360-degree video and curate digital portfolios to share with parents and the school community.

With the trend around pop-up spaces that complements your goals to design collaborative spaces, you may decide to introduce a mobile makerspace that pops up during students' free periods or in teacher lounges to allow students and teachers to tinker, play, and explore. As you continue to explore the pop-up trend you may find ways that it supports goals to cultivate community partnerships. As you think more about this trend, you might see opportunities to introduce pop-up exhibits through a partnership with a local museum or other partner.

Trend-based incremental changes to existing programs or services allow you to maintain relevance and experiment with new models. Because you have aligned these trends to existing goals and priorities, there is less risk that your efforts will deviate from your mission and purpose. At the same time, because

you have witnessed these trends in the larger world and your users are likely also familiar with them, there is a greater chance that the program or service will resonate with users' emerging interests and expectations.

Some trends reveal our need to learn more about a topic before we can move to integrate it into library services. Trends are signals of change, and sometimes we need additional time and focus to understand the change and all its implications. If you encounter a trend that aligns with your priorities, but that you can't immediately find a means of integrating and experimenting, maybe you need to learn more about it. Use those opportunities to seek out professional development, talk with expert colleagues, or partner with individuals or groups more experienced in those trend areas.

Thinking Like a Futurist— Communicate and Advocate

Trends-based and values-based innovations provide great opportunities for advocacy and communication.

Having collected relevant trend signals from the larger environment, you have built-in talking points to help explain the changes you are making in your school library. As you talk with students, administrators, or teachers, frame your new programs and services in terms of the trends you have observed. Library stakeholders have probably also, knowingly or unknowingly, observed and experienced those trends in their lives. By connecting library programs and services to real-world trends you help library users place a program or service in the context of a changing world.

At the same time, having aligned those trends to the principles promoted by the Future Ready

Librarians Framework, you can also explain these programs and services as being consistent with the fundamental values and purposes of school libraries. This explicit alignment helps reinforce users' understanding of what a school library and librarian do, even as it expands stakeholders' vision for how the benefits of school libraries can be made available to learners. Using the language of trends keeps the vision fresh, while using the language of values keeps your mission and purpose consistent.

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