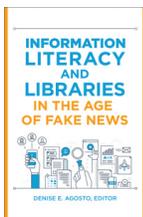# School's Out—Time to Reflect

Here at School Library Connection, we're always advocating for the importance of making time for reflection, both for our students and for ourselves. In the name of practicing what we preach, our editors took a moment to look back over all the incredible work we published in print and online over the last year—from articles, to webinars, to lesson plans—to remind ourselves of the trends, new ideas, and interesting questions that cropped up during a very busy year. Here are some of the ideas that got us talking!

News Literacy: Going Beyond Authenticity

If you're anything like us, you're sick to death of hearing the term "fake news." Something interesting we've noticed as we gain distance from the election of 2016, however, is a broadening of scope in the way school librarians are discussing this topic, from a narrower focus on teaching source evaluation to a more ambitious goal of getting students to think critically about themselves as news consumers. This marks a shift from seeing "news literacy" mostly as a series of research skills to be mastered and applied in an academic setting to a critical civic literacy with authentic real-world applications.

We first noticed this in 2018 with some exceptional work by student leaders under the guidance of school librarian Tasha Bergson-Michelson, where students developed tools and resources to support reading across the political spectrum. Over the latest school year, Michelle Luhtala and Jackie Whiting dug deeper in that same vein with their webinar on news literacy. Another article on student media consumption that got us talking here at SLC was an exploration by Suzanne Sannwald of how teachers often know very little about students' information communities of choice and how this creates missed opportunities to transfer information skills students have acquired organically into new contexts.

Other resources from Libraries Unlimited:

Information Literacy and Libraries in the Age of Fake News
Denise E. Agosto, editor

"easy-to-implement steps that will aid patrons in discerning what is truthful and what needs at least a more careful examination. . . A worthwhile purchase."—*Booklist*

News Literacy: The Keys to Combating Fake News
By Michelle Luhtala and Jacquelyn Whiting

"A superb road map for those teaching media literacy."—*School Library Journal,* starred review

See the SLC review here

Put Your Systems Thinking Cap On

Systems thinking versus computational thinking—so how are those two concepts different again? If you would struggle to distinguish between them (or to define either of them!) you are not alone. Dr. Lucy Santos Green really got us going this year by challenging school librarians to consider their role in fostering systems thinking skills in their learners—and for those looking for a visual primer, she helped us tie it up with a bow in this easy-to-understand infographic on computational versus systems thinking. Dr. Green helped us out further by giving a more detailed introduction in her article on "Wicked Problems," and discussed more ideas on teaching problem solving with Michelle Maniaci Folk. Those interested in approaching systems thinking skills through coding instruction, whether they're new to coding or experienced, will not want to miss our incredibly informative archived webinar with Calypso Gilstrap and Kelsey Gourd, which got all of our attendees pumped!

Alexa, Is This a Good Idea?

Dr. Heather Moorefield-Lang and Ida Mae Craddock wrote an article on smart speakers that got us debating the potential benefits and dangers, challenges and opportunities, of deploying this technology in the school library. While sounding some notes of caution, they noted that the technology has particularly great potential for differently abled students, including those with dyslexia and visual impairments, and also for ESOL students. Their article also brought to mind a counterpoint by resident Scrooge Paige Jaeger raising concerns about privacy and enabling lazy thinking that we published on the old SLC blog.

More resources from Libraries Unlimited:

Siri, Alexa, and Other Digital Assistants: The Librarian's Quick Guide
By Nicole Hennig

""has an easy-to-read style that explains voice computing in a way that is easy for every reader to understand."—*Public Library Quartery*

Inclusive Makerspaces

Maybe five years ago now, I recall a conversation with Dr. Nancy Everhart, who was working on an IMLS funded project on autism, about the ways in which the needs of students with autism were not always being seen as the makerspace and learning commons trends accelerated. It was therefore with great enthusiasm that we saw the incomparable Gina Seymour tackling this topic, showing us with her usual mix of practical advice and creativity that students

with autism can also thrive in these environments when a thoughtful teacher librarian is at the helm. In a great follow-up to our monthly One-Question Survey, where only 1% of librarians referred to their maker philosophy as "structured," Jen Gilbert reminded us that even though we tend toward more guided and free learning models in our makerspaces, highly structured experiences can actually empower certain students and help them gain skills they otherwise wouldn't.

More resources from Libraries Unlimited:

Makers with a Cause: Creative Service Projects for Library Youth
By Gina Seymour

See the SLC review here

School Library Makerspaces in Action
Heather Moorefield-Lang, editor

"Whether readers are starting small or thinking big, they'll find this a valuable resource for fostering critical thinking and creativity."—*School Library Journal*

See the SLC review here

Championing Justice-Seeking Pedagogy

In her article from our March issue, Dr. Maisha T. Winn made a powerful statement when she referred to school librarians as the "embodiment of justice-seeking pedagogy in schools." Dr. Winn highlights four pedagogical "stances" necessary to a justice-oriented paradigm shift: History Matters, Race Matters, Justice Matters, and Language Matters. To help us ground these big ideas in librarians' everyday work, Dr. Rebecca J. Morris connects the dots in this infographic. Throughout the year, we saw a number of excellent examples of the librarian being a schoolwide leader in this area, from librarian Laura Ward taking responsibility in her district for cultural competency training as part of new teacher induction to Dr. Kathleen Budge and Dr. William Parrett's inspiring profile of the transformational learning for students living in poverty taking place at Parkway Elementary (Virgina Beach, VA.)

These are just a few of the fresh ideas and questions that stuck with our team as we were privileged to work on SLC over the year. As we take a little moment to breathe over the summer, we're already looking forward to seeing what exciting work from your peers we'll get to share this fall!

Happy Summer!

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