

Ten Hot Topics and Trends for School Librarians

Spring 2023

1. Challenges to the Freedom to Read

- a. *National Library Week kicks off with State of America's Libraries Report, annual 'Top 10 Most Challenged Books' list and a new campaign to fight book bans.* (2022, April 4). <https://www.ala.org/news/press-releases/2022/04/national-library-week-kicks-state-america-s-libraries-report-annual-top-10>
“The American Library Association (ALA) kicks off National Library Week with the release of its State of America's Libraries Report, highlighting the challenges U.S. libraries faced in the second year of the pandemic – as well as the ways they innovated to meet the needs of their communities. Library staff in every state faced an unprecedented number of attempts to ban books. ALA’s Office for Intellectual Freedom tracked 729 challenges to library, school and university materials and services in 2021, resulting in more than 1,597 individual book challenges or removals. Most targeted books were by or about Black or LGBTQIA+ persons.”
 - b. *American Library Association releases preliminary data on 2022 book bans.* (2022, September 16). <https://www.ala.org/news/press-releases/2022/09/ala-releases-preliminary-data-2022-book-bans>
“Eight months into 2022, the number of attempts to ban or restrict library resources in schools, universities and public libraries, is on track to exceed record counts from 2021, according to preliminary data released today by the American Library Association (ALA) in advance of Banned Books Week (Sept. 18-24). Between January 1 and August 31, 2022, ALA documented 681 attempts to ban or restrict library resources, and 1,651 unique titles were targeted. In 2021, ALA reported 729 attempts to censor library resources, targeting 1,597 books, which represented the highest number of attempted book bans since ALA began compiling these lists more than 20 years ago.”
 - c. *Virginia Library Association (VLA) Intellectual Freedom Committee.* (2021). <https://www.vla.org/intellectual-freedom-committee>
“Purpose: To uphold the value of intellectual freedom in Virginia's libraries by monitoring and reporting on intellectual freedom issues in the Commonwealth. Include[d] Intellectual Freedom Issues and General Resources; Privacy Issues; Banned Books; Fake News Info & Resources; School Censorship; Reporting Challenges; Book Resumes; Virginia Intellectual Freedom in the News; Court Cases in Virginia Beach.”
 - d. *Moms for Liberty.* (2022). <https://www.momsforliberty.org/>
“Our Mission: Moms for Liberty is dedicated to fighting for the survival of America by unifying, educating and empowering parents to defend their parental rights at all levels of government.”
--Little, O. (2022, September 20.) Moms for Liberty is hiding behind these front groups as they gut public school libraries. <https://www.mediamatters.org/moms-liberty/moms-liberty-hiding-behind-these-front-groups-they-gut-public-school-libraries>
 - e. *Selection & reconsideration policy toolkit for public, school, & academic libraries.* (2018, January). <https://www.ala.org/tools/challengesupport/selectionpolicytoolkit>
Includes an introduction, basic components of a selection policy, reconsideration procedure, and appendices.
- ✓ “**The school library plays a unique role in promoting, protecting, and educating about intellectual freedom. It serves a point of voluntary access to information and ideas and as a learning laboratory for students as they acquire critical thinking and problem-solving skills needed in a pluralistic society.”** *National School Library Standards for Learners,*

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School Librarians, and School Libraries, p. 241. (Appendix E2 Access to Resources and Services in the School Library Program: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights; also available from <https://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretations/accessresources>)

2. Intellectual Freedom for All Learners

- a. Dawkins, A. M. (2022, September 14). Community of courage. Building a community network to defend intellectual freedom. *School Library Connection*.
<https://schoollibraryconnection.com/content/article/2285409>
“Nothing is more powerful in defending intellectual freedom than when ordinary people stand up and demand to be heard. Developing and nurturing community support for your library is essential during these difficult times. Many parents and caregivers have little knowledge of what a modern, innovative school library can contribute to the education of their children because their only frame of reference is their own childhood experience.”
 - b. *Unite Against Book Bans*. (2022). <https://uniteagainstbookbans.org/>
“Unite Against Book Bans is a national initiative to empower readers everywhere to stand together in the fight against censorship. We are not alone. On both sides of the aisle, large majorities of voters and parents oppose book bans.”
 - c. American Library Association. (2022). *Fight censorship*.
<https://www.ala.org/advocacy/fight-censorship/>
“With the unprecedented surge in local and statewide book challenges, ALA offers this clearinghouse of resources to assist library workers and advocates in responding to and supporting others facing those challenges.”
 - d. #Freadom. (n.d.) <https://www.freadom.us/>
“How we started: On November 4, 2021 a group of librarian #FReadom fighters organized a twitter takeover of the #Txlege. We highlighted positive books and invited families, authors, librarians, teens, and parents to join. We shared this Information <https://bit.ly/FReadom>
Our mission and goals: We are committed to highlighting the positive work of librarians, to speak up in support of authors and students, and to provide professional resources for librarians, teachers or authors facing book challenges.
We invite you to join us, check out resources on our website, and follow along on hashtag #FReadom.”
 - e. *Reed & Grijalva introduce Right to Read Act to invest in literacy & address disparities in access to school library resources*. (2022, October 6).
<https://www.reed.senate.gov/news/releases/reed-and-grijalva-introduce-right-to-read-act-to-invest-in-literacy-address-disparities-in-access-to-school-library-resources/>
“Literacy opens the door for lifelong opportunity and economic success. To make sure this door is open to every child, U.S. Senator Jack Reed (D-RI) and U.S. Representative Raúl Grijalva (D-AZ-03) introduced the Right to Read Act (S. 5064 / H.R. 9056), which will address disparities in access to school library resources and surge federal investment in support of increasing student literacy across America. The Right to Read Act would reauthorize the Comprehensive Literacy State Development grant program at \$500 million and the Innovative Approaches to Literacy program at \$100 million...The Right to Read Act reaffirms that first amendment rights apply to school libraries in response to the alarming trend of book banning, and it protects school librarians and other educators in carrying out their duty to protect students’ right to read.”
- ✓ **“Intellectual freedom is every learner’s right.”** *National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries*, p. 13. (Common Belief #5)

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3. Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners

- a. Hill, J. T. (2022, March 3). Building a dual-language library. *School Library Connection*. <https://schoollibraryconnection.com/Content/Article/2275033>
“The school library is an essential component to developing strong biliteracy. School libraries provide a plethora of resources in various languages and reach students at their point of need. In the beginning of 2021, I was asked to help create a Spanish dual-language immersion (DLI) program and build a new K-5 library to support it.”
 - b. DeGroat, W. (2022, August 11). Collaboration, inclusivity, and trust-building: Diverse political voices in high school collections. *School Library Connection*. <https://schoollibraryconnection.com/Content/Article/2285406>
“Tensions are high as some Americans seek to suppress ideas and experiences that don't mirror their own by censoring curriculums and library books. While we defend students' freedom to read novels with a wide range of characters and stories, this is an opportune time to ensure our collections also reflect diverse political voices and viewpoints.”
 - c. Green, L. S., Spiering, J., Kitzie, V. L. , & Erlanger, J. (2022, August 3). Beyond building the collection: Make your teaching practice LGBTQIA+ inclusive. *School Library Connection*. <https://schoollibraryconnection.com/Content/Article/2285404>
“There are a variety of learning structures and activities that can be designed to increase visibility and awareness of LGBTQIA+ lives, improving student empathy, perception of safety, and sense of belonging. We would like to cover a few of those approaches in this article.”
 - d. Malespina, E. (2022, August 30). Understanding inclusion. [Infographic]. <https://twitter.com/elissamalespina/status/1564673009352425477/photo/1>
Malespina’s infographic addresses equality, diversity, equity, acceptance, belonging, and justice.
- ✓ **“The school library builds empathy and equity within the global learning community by ensuring that all learning needs are met through access to information and ideas located in a diverse collection of sufficient size for the learner population and supported by reliable hardware and software.”** *National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries*, p. 77. (School Library Standards, INCLUDE, Grow, 1)

4. Genrefication for Access?

- a. Lee, C. R. (2019, October 3). Fiction genrefication at the elementary school level. *Knowledge Quest*. <https://knowledgequest.aasl.org/fiction-genrefication-at-the-elementary-school-level/>
- b. Torres, J. (2021, September/October). The switch to genrefication: Reorganizing the school library supports adolescent readers. *American Libraries*, 52(9/10), 48.
“The author relates the advantages of switching to genrefication, the process of organizing fiction collection by genre, to Denver Public Schools, Montbello campus. Four librarians from the district helped in the effort which involves pulling a list of the library's books and assigning genres to the uncategorized titles. She notes an increase in circulation when school opened and students participate in the practices of connected reading.”
- c. Greenberg, K. (2022, July 27). Genrefying the high school library. *Knowledge Quest*. <https://knowledgequest.aasl.org/genrefying-the-high-school-library/>
“This year, I began to wonder how genrefication would impact my students.... At the end of the school year, after classes were over and finals were under way, I decided to take on the project. It was a daunting task but I dove in and didn’t look back.”

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- d. Herring, M. (2019, November 1). Surveying genrefication and the results. *School Library Connection*. <https://schoollibraryconnection.com/Content/Article/2209708>
 “My research study looked at whether there was a correlation between genrefication and book circulation. Did circulation increase because the library was genrefied? What are the advantages of genrefication?”
- ✓ **“The school library engages the learning community in exploring resources by describing, organizing, and promoting the collection for maximum and effective uses for multiple learning applications.” *National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries*, p. 95. (School Library Standards, CURATE, Grow, 1)**

5. Graphic Novels—Again? Still? Absolutely!

- a. D’Orio, W. (2022, March 10). Comics, graphic novels drive popularity of early readers. *School Library Journal*. <https://www.slj.com/story/comics-graphic-novels-drive-popularity-of-early-readers>
 “A great early reader book is a book that welcomes any kid—and makes them excited to open a book again. It’s as simple, and as important, as that,” according to Taylor Norman, editor at Chronicle Books.”
- b. Greenberg, K. (2022, January 27). Literacy through graphic novels and comic books. *Knowledge Quest*. <https://knowledgequest.aasl.org/literacy-through-graphic-novels-and-comic-books/>
 “Encouraging high school students to read for pleasure is not an easy task. What I’ve found, however, is that sometimes when I present them with graphic novels and comics, I see more interest than if I give a book talk about a novel.”
- c. Abdul, A., Alfageeh, S., Shammass, N., & Tarbox, G. A. (2022, July). For the love of graphic novels: A roundtable on inclusive stories [Video]. *School Library Connection*. <https://schoollibraryconnection.com/Content/Webinar/?learningModuleId=2284475&terms=for+the+love+of+graphic+novels&topicCenterId=2247902&citeId=3>
 “This roundtable webinar brings together four distinct perspectives on graphic novels to explore how this unique form of storytelling can promote inclusivity and help students find their own voice. Albany High School librarian and graphic novel champion Alicia Abdul sits down with *Squire* (HarperCollins 2022) co-creators Sara Alfageeh and Nadia Shammass and professor of comics studies and children’s/YA lit Dr. Gwen Athene Tarbox to talk about the transformative power of this dynamic literary genre.”
- d. ALA Graphic Novels and Comics Round Table. (2022). *Resources and toolkits*. <https://www.ala.org/rt/gncrt/tools>
 An amazing collection of resources for graphic novels from cataloging to addressing challenges to “Best” reading lists
- ✓ **“School librarians foster learners’ personal curiosity by encouraging learners to read widely and deeply in multiple formats.” *National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries*, p. 104. (School Librarian Standards, EXPLORE, Think, 1)**

6. Meeting Our Learners’ Special Needs

- a. Layman, M. (2022, October 4). Serving students with print disabilities with accessible books from NLS. *Knowledge Quest*. <https://knowledgequest.aasl.org/serving-students-with-print-disabilities-with-accessible-books-from-nls/>
 “I’ll take a few minutes here to tell you a little more about NLS and how we can help students you serve who have visual impairments, a reading disability or a physical disability that prevents them from using regular

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print materials....You can use NLS resources guides and activity sheets to build disability awareness for your entire school and give eligible students access to the NLS collection.”

- b. Sannwald, S. A. (2022, February 15). Reading and communicating in many ways: Supporting library visits with special education reading classes. *School Library Connection*. <https://schoollibraryconnection.com/content/article/2273784>
“Suzanne Sannwald reflects on the highlights of her collaboration with moderate/severe special education reading classes in the library, including collection development, browsing and communicating, and circulation and sharing.”
 - c. White, A. (2022, March 9). Collection development for neurodivergent students. *School Library Connection*. <https://schoollibraryconnection.com/Content/Article/2275034>
“Today's library patrons are hearing an inspiring rallying cry: "Libraries are for everyone." However, if we stop to take a closer look at the diverse books being shared in our libraries, we might notice that a certain demographic is at risk of being left out. Far too often, our definition of diversity fails to include a surprisingly large marginalized group. One in four Americans are disabled in some way, but only 3.4% of children's books feature a disabled main character. Even rarer are books about, or written by, neurodivergent individuals.”
 - d. *A novel mind*. (n.d.). <https://www.anovelmind.com/>
“Welcome to A Novel Mind, a resource for exploring children's literature that deals with mental health and neurodiversity issues....Our site offers 3 resources: the Database, the Educator Resource Pages, and the Blog Page, where today's preeminent children's writers write about aspects of mental health, neurodiversity, and children's books every week during the school year.”
 - e. Vardell, S. M. (2022, April 12). Book connections and intersections. Celebrating neurodiversity. *School Library Connection*. <https://schoollibraryconnection.com/Content/Article/2275032>
“As we think about how to create a more welcoming environment for all the students we serve, we continue to educate ourselves about their needs and backgrounds so we can do better and be better. For me, that has meant focusing on learning more about cultural diversity and becoming actively anti-racist. But recently, I've been tuning more into neurodiversity and what that might mean.”
 - f. *Project Enable*. (n.d.). <https://projectenable.syr.edu/>
“Our vision is to provide professional development to library professionals from all types of libraries in order to build capacity for providing equitable access and services to patrons with disabilities, an underserved population.”
- ✓ **“The school library represents all members and their place in a global learning community by establishing and maintaining a collection of reading and information materials in formats that support the diverse developmental, cultural, social, and linguistic needs of the range of learners and their communities.” *National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries*, p. 77. (School Library Standards, INCLUDE, Create, 1)**

7. Information Literacy for Learners

- a. Lewis, C. (2022, January/February). Envisioning effective digital instruction: Moving away from just-in-time information literacy instruction to a more meaningful approach. *Knowledge Quest*, 50(3), 8-15.
“A personal narrative is presented which explores the author's experience of the pandemic centers on the weekly department meetings I would have with my middle school and lower school librarians to discuss our age 3 through grade-12 approach to managing instruction during spring 2020.”

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- b. Mignardi, D. (2021, November/December). Graduating information- and media-literate students. *Knowledge Quest*, 50(2), 8-14.
“The article discusses need to broaden the understanding of media literacy for all stakeholders. Topics discussed include work on creating micro-credentials for teacher mastery of media literacy competencies; develop a research stamina that have them willing to not take the first easy answer; and need a robust curriculum that addresses the critical thinking skills.”
 - c. Stanford History Education Group. (n.d.). <https://sheg.stanford.edu/>
“The Stanford History Education Group is an award-winning research and development group that comprises Stanford faculty, staff, graduate students, post-docs, and visiting scholars. SHEG seeks to improve education by conducting research, working with school districts, and reaching directly into classrooms with free materials for teachers and students. SHEG’s Reading Like a Historian curriculum and Beyond the Bubble assessments have been downloaded more than 10 million times. SHEG’s current work focuses on how young people evaluate online content. SHEG has created a Civic Online Reasoning curriculum to help students develop the skills needed to navigate our current digital landscape.”
- ✓ **“School librarians promote information gathering appropriate to the task by fostering the questioning and assessing of validity and accuracy of information.” *National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries*, p. 94. (School Librarian Standards, CURATE, Create, 3)**

8. Social and Emotional Learning to Honor Student Voice

- a. Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). (n.d.). <https://casel.org/>
“The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning is helping make evidence-based social and emotional learning an integral part of education from preschool through high school.... The CASEL 5 addresses five broad and interrelated areas of competence and highlights examples for each: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.”
- b. Hill, K. (2022, April 12). Libraries and schoolwide transformative social emotional learning. *School Library Connection*.
<https://schoollibraryconnection.com/Content/Article/2275036>
“Imagine a school environment that prioritizes relationships, acceptance, mindfulness, social responsibility, and decision-making skills. This is the type of environment that promotes learning, because when students’ physical, mental, and emotional needs are met, they can focus on academic growth. Transformative social emotional learning is an ongoing learning process for all stakeholders, bringing together school staff, students, families, and community members in meaningful ways that promote learning.”
- c. Hill, K. (2022, August 11). Social emotional learning and book bans: How libraries create safe spaces. *School Library Connection*.
<https://schoollibraryconnection.com/Content/Article/2285417>
“Social emotional learning (SEL) has been targeted by some parents and politicians who see it as a sort of tool for indoctrinating students in schools. The misinformation circulating around SEL has confused many, but SEL is more important now than it ever has been before as students adapt to changing educational and social climates exacerbated by a global pandemic.”
- d. Naderi, S. (2022, August 25). A little courage: Share these SEL books with kids when scary things happen. *School Library Journal*. <https://www.slj.com/story/sharing-books-with-kids-when-scary-things-happen>

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“Although these titles tackle different topics, it all comes down to how these characters deal with their feelings of fear, uncertainty, and anxiety, and even, at times, learn to overcome their difficulties. The good news is that educators with the right resources can help.”

- e. Fitzpatrick, J. (2022, August 31). Different types of SEL activities to build school library culture. *Knowledge Quest*. <https://knowledgequest.aasl.org/different-types-of-sel-activities-to-build-school-library-culture/>

“School libraries are often a refuge for learners who feel overwhelmed, need a safe space, or just want somewhere to go. At the start of the school year many are feeling stress and anxiety about the unknown of what the school year holds so I always try to make a point to do as many SEL activities to reduce stress for our learners across campus.”

- ✓ **“School librarians explicitly lead learners to demonstrate empathy and equity in knowledge building within the global learning community by creating an atmosphere in which learners feel empowered and interactions are learner-initiated”** *National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarian, and School Libraries*, p. 76. (School Librarian Standards, INCLUDE, Grow, 1)

9. For the Love of Reading

- a. Grover, R. (2021, September 30). Creative book displays to get students reading (Part 1). *Knowledge Quest*. <https://knowledgequest.aasl.org/creative-book-displays-to-get-students-reading-part-1/>

“When students enter my middle-school library, they come with many different backgrounds and opinions about reading. Some of them are super excited about all the different choices around them; in a sense, it is their version of being a kid in a candy store. Other students walk in with a sense of dread; it wasn’t their idea to come in the first place, but maybe a teacher or friend coerced them to come. ... Having creative book displays can help suggest interesting titles that students may not have selected otherwise. The key is to keep displays as engaging and innovative as you can.”

- b. Grover, R. (2021, November 2). The art of creating book displays (Part 2). *Knowledge Quest*. <https://knowledgequest.aasl.org/the-art-of-creating-book-displays-part-2/>

“There is a true art to creating a successful book display, one in which students will stop and scan the titles, maybe browse a few, and check out at least one. It is important to be intentional about the topic you choose and the types of books you include. The goal of the display is to be appealing to as many students as possible so the books get checked out!”

- c. Bogan, K. (2022, February 28). Dynamic shelving pt. 1: Introducing dynamic shelving. <https://dontyoushushme.com/2022/02/28/embracing-dynamic-shelving/>

“One of the things I’ve become known for is my colorful and visually engaging (and non-typical) shelving strategies. I like to call this “Dynamic Shelving” and I love employing these strategies in a library, because my goal is to entice students to leave the library with a book that interests them, in their hands. Ideally, multiple books!”

- d. Bogan, K. (2022, October 10). Dynamic shelving pt. 2: A practical guide.

<https://dontyoushushme.com/2022/10/10/dynamic-shelving-a-practical-guide/comment-page-1/>

Bogan responds to comments and questions from her previous blog post and gives dynamic shelving strategies and examples.

- e. Fitzpatrick, J. (2022, September/October). Librarian in the huddle: Student book clubs for athletes, leaders, and reluctant readers. *Knowledge Quest*, 51(1), 44-51.

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“The article offers information on the Librarian in the Huddle program started simply because of a desire to get our athletes interested in the school library. It discusses that students look up to coaches on the high school level—to be completely honest, even on the junior high/ middle school level; and mentions that to make the most successful team possible, coaches build relationships with their athletes to create a team atmosphere.”

f. Schu, J. (2022). *The gift of story*. Stenhouse.

“*The Gift of Story* is a celebration of the ways we define, revise and imagine ourselves through literacy, a celebration of the way we connect to others and build community through reading, a celebration of children, authors, illustrators, teachers, librarians, books, and readers---and, ultimately, a celebration of hearts and the stories they hold dear.”

- ✓ “**School librarians foster learners’ personal curiosity by encouraging learners to read widely and deeply in multiple formats.” *National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries*, p. 104. (School Librarian Standards, EXPLORE, Think, 1)**

10. Airplanes and Oxygen

a. Sturge, J. (2022, May 19). Passion, power, and positives: Book clubs for professional development. *School Library Connection*.

<https://schoollibraryconnection.com/content/article/2282632>

“These days, while I am always reading a book for my own enjoyment, I find that I spend just as much time reading for professional development. I read to learn. One way to do that is through the book club model. School library supervisors, this article is for you! Keep reading to learn more about book clubs for professional development that will save you time, energy, and genuinely benefit your district.”

b. Merga, M. K. (2022, July 18). The wellbeing of school library professionals: Challenges and possibilities. *School Library Connection*.

<https://schoollibraryconnection.com/content/article/2284984>

“In my recent book *School Libraries Supporting Literacy and Wellbeing*, while my focus was on student wellbeing, I also considered challenges to the wellbeing of contemporary school library professionals, some of which I explore here. If you are looking to reset and recharge, it might be worth critically reflecting on these challenges. I also conclude with some tips school library professionals can draw upon in order to enhance their wellbeing and professional satisfaction.”

c. Hendry, J. (2022, July). Avoiding burnout and remembering you are an awesome librarian. *School Library Connection*.

<https://schoollibraryconnection.com/content/article/2285114>

“It’s no secret educators are experiencing more burnout now than we ever have before. Teachers and librarians are now at their breaking points. Why? There are many reasons. It’s important to acknowledge why we burn out so we don’t criticize ourselves for the state we are in.”

- ✓ “**The school library assists in the growth and development of learners by leading other educators and learners to embrace a growth mindset through lifelong learning.” *National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries*, p. 105. (School Library Standards, EXPLORE, Grow, 1)**

American Association of School Librarians. (2018). *National school library standards for learners, school librarians, and school libraries*. ALA.

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