Exploring Library Connections from A to Z: Ten Topics and Trends

2026 VAASL Fall Conference
Williamsburg, VA

1. Advocacy

a. AASL Advocacy Committee. (n.d.) What is advocacy?
https://www.ala.org/aasl/advocacy/definitions
"On-going process of building partnerships so that others will act for and with you, turning passive support into educated action for the library program. It begins with a vision and a plan for the library program that is then matched to the agenda and priorities of stakeholders."

b. Tetrault, S. (2026, June 2). Advocacy: It's what you do every day (literally)
https://knowledgequest.aasl.org/advocacy-its-what-you-do-every-day-literally/
"When you share what your program is doing for students and staff, what you're really doing is saying, "Our students deserve a good education." Because a school library is a vital part of a good education. That's not an opinion – research has repeatedly demonstrated it. …it's vital that we help others see the myriad ways a school library program supports the entire school."

c. American Library Association (2026). *Show up for our libraries!*
https://www.ala.org/advocacy/show-up-for-our-libraries
Ideas for ways to show up for our libraries if you have five minutes, 10 minutes as well links to advocacy resources
Advocacy story template: https://www.ala.org/sites/default/files/2025-03/StoryTemplate_example.pdf

d. Montgomery, D. (2026, September 1). Thank you, school librarians. *American Libraries.*
https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/2026/09/01/thank-you-school-librarians/
"A fully funded and staffed school library is essential to learning and growth…School librarians work hard to turn their classroom—the library—into the well-loved hub and heart of the school."

✓ **"The school library is a unique and essential part of a learning community." *National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries,* (2nd ed.), p. 4. (Common Belief #1)**

2. Artificial Intelligence

a. American Library Association. (2026). *Guidelines on the use of artificial intelligence in libraries.* https://www.ala.org/tools/standards-and-guidelines/guidance-use-artificial-intelligence-libraries
"The purpose of this document is to provide ALA guidance for libraries developing or revising local artificial intelligence (AI) use policies, procedures, and vendor-review practices. This guidance identifies professional values and decision points for deciding when and whether to use AI systems, AI-enabled features, and vendor integrations."

b. Malespina, E. (2026, July 30). *ALA just released its first comprehensive AI guidance for libraries: Here's what every school librarian needs to know.*
https://aischoollibrarian.substack.com/p/ala-just-released-its-first-comprehensive
"7 takeaways every school librarian should know: ALA's new guidance provides a values-based framework to help libraries make thoughtful, ethical, and people-centered decisions about AI."

Audrey Church, Ph.D.
http://www.longwood.edu/staff/churchap
churchap@longwood.edu

c. *Teaching about AI: A project of the School Library System Genesee Valley BOCES*. https://teachingabout.ai/
Includes links to *Reframing K-12 AI Policy, Report for the K-12 Field, The Rochester Provocations,* and *LibraryReady.AI Scope and Sequence.*

d. Grover, R. (2026, August 18). The case for using AI as a co-librarian. https://knowledgequest.aasl.org/the-case-for-using-ai-as-a-co-librarian/
"Last year, I started including AI in my workflow to see if it could save me some time and energy. At first, I hated it; I wasn't getting what I wanted from it and I was super frustrated. But once I stopped expecting it to give me completely finished products and started using it as a sounding board, everything shifted for me."

✓ **"Learners follow ethical and legal guidelines for gathering and using information by responsibly applying information, technology, and media to learning."** ***National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries,*** **(2nd ed.), p. 80. (Learner Competencies, ENGAGE, Think, 1)**

3. Freedom to Read

a. Taylor, K. R. (2026, October 2). Could Congress create a national book ban? *School Library Journal.* https://www.slj.com/story/Could-Congress-Create-National-Book-Ban
"Librarians have long dealt with different and unclear rules regarding book bans and classroom teaching materials from state to state and even district to district. Now, some Republican lawmakers in Congress want to expand federal authority over public school curricula, materials, and parental involvement."

b. American Library Association. Office for Intellectual Freedom. (2025). *Let books be: School library censorship overview*. https://www.ala.org/bbooks/book-ban-data (Scroll down to the OIF School Library Censorship 2025 link to download the pdf.)
"In 2025, OIF documented threats to intellectual freedom at 216 school districts. OIF provided 145 instances of support to school library workers and administrators in 2025 across 30 states."

c. American Library Association. Office for Intellectual Freedom. (n.d.). *Back to school, ready for anything: Intellectual freedom tips for school libraries*. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hRwiDE8kyFc3l9K14Q4-GBKf0U00n-Ys/view?usp=sharing
Six tips and a great list of resources PLUS
OIF Intellectual Freedom Policies and Contacts Worksheet
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ke2owuS7U_ebNw23GMrMqXq-qMyT0Ipi/view?usp=sharing

d. Jones, E. (Ed.) *Intellectual freedom manual.* (11th ed.). ALA Editions, 2026.
"The newest edition of this essential resource offers clear, up-to-date insights on protecting intellectual freedom, fighting censorship, safeguarding privacy, and many other key IF topics."

e. Hermon, A. (Host). (2026, August 14). *371 Intellectual freedom manual*. [Audio podcast]. https://schoollibrariansunited.libsyn.com/371-intellectual-freedom-manual
"Editor Erin Jones shares insights into her work in librarianship, the development of the 11th edition of the Intellectual Freedom Manual, and the importance of accessible, inclusive resources for all library professionals." (Full discussion of content begins around 2:00.)

f. Virginia General Assembly. (2026). SB19 *DOE; policies relating to instructional material that contains sexually explicit content.* https://lis.virginia.gov/bill-details/20261/SB19
HB1499 *DOE; policies relating to instructional material that contains sexually explicit content* https://lis.virginia.gov/bill-details/20261/HB1499
"SB19/ HB1499 amends the current law requiring parental notification of instructional material that contains sexually explicit content to clarify that "instructional material" does not include public school library

materials unless they are specifically assigned by a teacher for an assignment. This legislation further clarifies that the parental notification law is not to be used to censor or remove books from any public school library. The original 2022 law was used by some school districts as justification for removing library books, negatively impacting students' access to diverse literature.

This amendment will lead to an updated model policy from the Virginia Department of Education and clearer guidance for school districts across the Commonwealth." – VAASL Listserv, 4/9/2026

✓ **"Intellectual freedom is every learner's right." *National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries,* (2nd ed.), p. 7. (Common Belief #5)**

4. (Hot-Off-the-Press) Professional Resources

a. All4Ed. (2025). *Future Ready Librarians®Hub.* https://all4ed.org/future-ready-librarians-hub/
"The Future Ready Librarians® Framework guides and inspires the professional practice of librarians, directly linking the library program to the strategic needs and priorities of schools and districts. Future Ready Librarians challenges librarians, educators, and the community to see school libraries informed by the past, grounded in the needs of the present, and planning for a dynamic future."

b. *AASL standards 2nd edition resources*. (2026). https://www.ala.org/aasl/pubs/standards2nd and https://standards.aasl.org
Resources to support the second edition of *National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries*

c. *Virginia School Librarians Resource Hub.* (2026).
The Virginia School Librarian Resource Hub, supported by the Office of Innovation, is now live. Join this dynamic space designed specifically for school librarians across Virginia. This course serves as a centralized hub to support school librarian work and resources, foster collaboration, and stay informed. Stay up to date with important Announcements featuring VDOE updates, upcoming events, and conference opportunities. This resource hub is open to all school librarians, library media specialists, and library assistants in Virginia. To request access to this resource hub, complete this form."

✓ **"School librarians demonstrate the importance of personal, social, and intellectual networks by cultivating networks that allow learners to build on their own prior knowledge and create new knowledge." *National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries,* 2nd ed., p. 52. (School Librarian Competencies, COLLABORATE, Create, 2)**

5. Librarians of Color

a. Hinton, M. (2023, February 2). Black librarianship: Stories of connection and impact. *School Library Journal.* https://www.slj.com/story/Black-Librarianship-Stories-of-Impact-and-Connection
"Eboni Henry works hard to make her library at Truesdell Elementary School in Washington, DC, more than a place for books. It is a welcoming space to take a break and feel supported. It is a place where so many of her students can see themselves in their librarian. And it is a place where they can feel seen and understood."

b. Johnson, C. R. (2025). Perspectives of Black female school librarians on recruitment and retention. *School Library Research, 28.* https://www.ala.org/sites/default/files/2025-09/johnson.pdf

"This study explores the lived experiences of Black female school librarians. Studies on school librarians of color are limited to historical research, and more exploratory and empirical studies on Black female school librarians are needed. The study explores the question: What can we learn from the lived experiences of current Black female school librarians to increase recruitment and retention in school librarianship?"

c. Long, E. (Ed.) (2026). *Why are all the Black librarians gathering in the school library?* Bloomsbury.
"While roughly fifty percent of students enrolled in public schools are Black or people of color, eighty-seven percent of school librarians are white. In a profession that fails to mirror the demographics of the learners served, Black school librarians continue to lead and innovate. This collection of personal narratives illuminates the unique and sometimes overlooked perspectives of Black school librarians within the context of today's complex library climate."

d. Hermon, A. (Host). (2026, September 25). *377 Why are all the Black librarians gathering in the school library*. [Audio podcast]. https://schoollibrariansunited.libsyn.com/377-why-are-all-the-black-librarians-gathering-in-the-school-library
"Erika Long shares the journey of creating a book which amplifies Black librarians' voices, the importance of community and how conferences inspire action and advocacy." (Full discussion of content begins around 2:00.)

✓ **"School librarians <u>demonstrate the importance of personal, social, and intellectual networks</u> by cultivating networks that allow learners to build on their own prior knowledge and create new knowledge."** ***National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries,*** **2nd ed., p. 52. (School Librarian Competencies, COLLABORATE, Create, 2)**

6. Passive Programming

a. Programming Librarian, American Library Association. (n.d.). *Passive programming doesn't mean boring: 5 passive program ideas for school librarians.* https://programminglibrarian.org/articles/passive-doesnt-mean-boring-5-passive-program-ideas-school-libraries
"Passive programs can be a great way to regularly attract students into the library without having planned, specific events. Pick a corner of the library that can be designated for these drop-by activities, set out the supplies and some instructions, and let it go!"

b. Hincks, K. (2023, March 2). *3 reasons to love passive programming.* https://knowledgequest.aasl.org/3-reasons-to-love-passive-programming/
"Here is how I define passive programming:
- Monitored by the school librarian, but the librarian is not there to tell students how or when to complete the task
- Interactive and give students something to think about or create
- Encourage many students and staff to participate
- Can be located in the school library or in other places around the school building"

c. Brown, H. (2023). *Easy passive programming.* https://www.canva.com/design/DAFI2VTe_vg/JIlyyuIaTYfLFayRGZh81Q/view
Holly Brown shares her ideas for online and in-person passive programming for libraries with limited staff and budget.

d. North Dakota State Library. (2026, July 20). *Programming: Passive programming.* https://library-nd.libguides.com/programming/passive

"Passive programs are wonderful programs for libraries that have limited staff time or budgets for programming. They are informal and interactive events that occur over the course of a predetermined day, week, or month. The beauty of passive programming is that everyone who walks through the door is encouraged to participate. There is no registration required, and the set-up can be as minimal or fancy as you decide."

e. Bubert, L. (2024, September). DIY to the rescue. *School Library Journal, 70*(9), 41-43.
"The article presents 10 librarian-tested passive programming activities that can spark excitement among students. It suggests that libraries can allow their patrons to show their own collections of special items using the libraries' display cases. The use of photo booth is also suggested which doubles as a simple and inexpensive way of marketing libraries."

✓ **"The school library supports learners' personal curiosity by <u>fostering opportunities for learners to demonstrate personal curiosity and creation of knowledge</u> through engaging with a wide variety of resources and technology."** ***National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries,*** **2nd ed., p. 71. (School Library Alignments, EXPLORE, Think 2)**

7. Sensory Spaces

a. ABA. (2026, May 20). *Best practices for sensory-friendly libraries and reading rooms.* https://www.allaboutaba.com/blog/best-practices-for-sensory-friendly-libraries-and-reading-rooms
"Sensory-friendly environments are critical in supporting neurodiverse individuals, including those with autism spectrum disorder, ADHD, and sensory processing sensitivities. This article explores best practices, design strategies, and real-world case studies that demonstrate how libraries can effectively implement sensory-friendly spaces, programs, and inclusive design principles to foster a truly accessible environment."

b. Frank, J. L., & Pawlak, J. (2025, June 24). Making room for everyone: A practical guide to creating sensory spaces in libraries. *The Journal of Creative Library Practice.* https://creativelibrarypractice.org/2025/06/24/making-room-for-everyone/
"Offering sensory spaces in libraries is a unique, fun, and specific way to better meet the needs of neurodivergent users… By creating sensory spaces, libraries not only provide specialized support for neurodivergent patrons, they also benefit everyone by enhancing spaces and offering greater variety."

c. *Top 5 sensory friendly library design concepts for schools.* (2nd ed.), https://storyscapebyfg.co.uk/top-5-sensory-friendly-library-design-concepts-for-schools/
"Sensory friendly library design within schools is becoming an increasingly important part of creating inclusive and effective learning environment. Libraries are no longer just quiet book storage areas. They are active learning spaces that need to support focus, wellbeing, and a wide range of sensory needs.."
statistics and learner feedback, school librarians can avoid personal biases and tailor their services to meet the needs of learners effectively. Assessment methods like surveys and performance-based assessments help school librarians continuously improve their programs, demonstrate value to stakeholders, and foster a culture of reflection for personal growth and adaptability."

✓ **"The school library builds empathy and equity within the global learning community by <u>enabling equitable access to learning opportunities, academic and social support, and other resources necessary for learners' success</u>."** ***National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries,*** **2nd ed., p. 45. (School Library Alignments, INCLUDE, Grow 2)**

8. Virtual Author Visits

a. *Scholastic Storyvoice.* (2026). https://storyvoice.scholastic.com/
"Storyvoice is Scholastic's free, online platform for live author events and read-aloud shows for kids. Each month, Storyvoice offers a variety of reading programming for classrooms to meet award-winning authors and illustrators.."

b. *Authorfy*. (2026). https://authorfy.com/about/
"Authorfy brings readers and writers closer together through exciting author videos, creative resources, downloadable book extracts and more. Whether you're a teacher, parent, student, librarian, aspiring author or reluctant writer, there's something for everyone on Authorfy."

c. *Bookbreak*. (2026). https://bookbreak.org/
"Our innovative platform connects students with renowned authors virtually, allowing schools to participate who would not normally be able to afford the speaking fees of bestselling authors. With BookBreak, you can offer your students the excitement and inspiration of a live author event, empowering them to thrive as readers and writers."

✓ **"School librarians foster learners' personal curiosity by encouraging learners to read widely and deeply in multiple formats and write and create for a variety of purposes."** ***National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries,*** **2nd ed., p. 70. (School Librarian Competencies, EXPLORE, Think 1)**

9. Work-Life Balance for Educators

a. Walker, T. (2025, November 3). Report: Schools must prioritize teacher work-life balance. *NEAToday.* https://www.nea.org/nea-today/all-news-articles/report-schools-must-prioritize-teacher-work-life-balance
"A new survey finds educators face more job intrusion and job flexibility issues than other working adults. There are more than a few ways school districts can help address this imbalance."

b. Markowitz, S. (2026). How to: Teacher work life balance. https://progresslearning.com/news-blog/teacher-work-life-balance/
"Educators today face an array of problems that can lead to burnout, stress, and a diminishing passion for teaching. What are these challenges, what is the impact of an unbalanced work-life routine, and what practical strategies are there for achieving a sustainable work life balance for teachers?"

c. Delguidice, M. (2011, January). Avoiding school librarian burnout: Simple steps to ensure your personal best. *Library Media Connection, 29*(4). https://schoollibraryconnection.com/Content/Article/1979591
"The article discusses the dangers of librarian burnout and the serious threat that it poses. It explores the helpful ways to prevent burnouts through following some simple steps. One important aspect is to attend conferences and workshops which is a type of professional development valuable to the state of mind. It also mentions learning to say no to too much activities, asking for help when necessary, and beating the budget blues by reaching out to other librarian colleagues for assistance."

✓ **"Qualified school librarians lead effective school libraries."** ***National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries,*** **(2nd ed.), p. 5. (Common Belief #2)**

10. Zines

a. *Zines at the Library of Congress*. (2022, July 8.) https://guides.loc.gov/zines

"The Library of Congress has a growing collection of zines. Additionally, the Library has hosted a Zine-Making Workshop at the National Book Festival annually since 2017. In general, zines are: self-published, self-created, self-distributed, and non-commercial. Zines resist formal definition, so the best way to get acquainted with the format is to start reading or making zines yourself. This guide will provide resources on how to do both!"

b. *Intro to zines*. (2026). https://www.zinelibraries.info/running-a-zine-library/intro-to-zines/
"Zines are usually created with the intention not to profit monetarily but to share one's thoughts, feelings, creativity, experience, and/or knowledge with others. Zines are part of a DIY (do it yourself) culture which often includes people from marginalized communities or those who don't have access to more mainstream publishing options."

c. Camper, C. (2023, March). Zines: Cut and paste publishing for the people. *School Library Journal, 69*(3), 42-27.
"The article offers information on zine, a self-published or indie publication. Topics discussed include a great way to introduce zines to teenagers, examples of recently published zines, and benefits of zine making to children. Also mentioned are zine's micro-historical topics and a short history of zines."

✓ **"School librarians foster learners' personal curiosity by encouraging learners to read widely and deeply in multiple formats and write and create for a variety of purposes."** ***National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries,*** **2nd ed., p. 70. (School Librarian Competencies, EXPLORE, Think 1)**

American Association of School Librarians. (2026). ***National school library standards for learners, school librarians, and school libraries*** **(2nd ed.) ALA Editions.**