

Current and Future Directions for School Media Specialists

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ABSTRACT

School media specialists have served as technological experts for their schools and have been pioneers with digital natives, helping create good digital citizens and addressing digital gaps for learners and advocate for access no matter what barriers students face. School of Library and Information Science programs have focused on creating a curriculum that will help create a school technology expert for every school library. This served schools well during the COVID-19 shutdowns, where the school had to find new ways for students to learn remotely.

School media specialists have now become the target of hate in their schools. This has become increasingly complicated with states legislating what can be put in school libraries and how teachers can address historical events. School media specialists are required to make decisions on access or potentially losing their jobs. While these are important areas, they are just a small part of the job for school media specialists. The American Association of School Librarians has increased the expected role for school media specialists, having them often serve as teacher, instructional partner, information specialist, and program administrator, all in addition to serving as the expert technologist at their school. However, not all school media programs take this approach to pedagogy for school media.

School media specialists create technological opportunities for schools and are a key source for teachers seeking to reach students with diverse learning styles while informing and building relationships with families on internet safety and other important topics. Teachers depend on school media specialists to provide resources and support for the classroom while school media specialists also support students' intellectual freedom. Ultimately, the focus for school media

specialists has been to try to create a school library that represents everyone's values. While this sounds ideal, it has been a difficult road for the profession.

The position of school media specialist has changed dramatically over the last four years. This panel seeks to address research contributions to scholarship on school media specialists and how Schools of Library and Information Science are changing their programs to prepare school media specialists for the workforce. There will be a moderator and a panel comprised of four faculty members who are educators, practitioners, and researchers specializing in school media. Their perspectives and expertise will be present in this discussion, along with the following discussion topics:

What are your current research findings telling you?

What are practitioners experiencing?

What is working with educational pedagogy in school media?

What is not working with educational pedagogy in school media?

What new technologies have you incorporated into the curriculum?

What changes are being made at Schools of Information Science programs to help ready students for the current environment?

The panel will explore questions of education, research, and practitioner-based experiences to address concerns impacting school media specialists. The information will inform the future discussion and curriculum pedagogy for school media specialists. The panel discussion will be formatted around the expertise of the faculty with school media. These discussions will inform pedagogical teaching practices in school media programs and hopefully provide a framework for improvement.

Dr. Jennifer Steele is an Assistant Professor at Louisiana State University and will serve as moderator for this panel discussion. She is a former instruction librarian and has teaching experience in the area of information literacy instruction. Her research focuses on intellectual freedom, censorship, and information access. Current research is examining the perceptions of school media specialists on the integration of cultural heritage into the school curriculum and the role school media specialists should play in incorporating cultural heritage tools and resources into instruction.

Dr. Laura Clark Hunt is an Assistant Professor at The University of Southern Mississippi and teaches the technology course for the school media program along with several courses for children and youth services. Her contributions to research have focused on cultural heritage outreach assessment, censorship in public libraries, privacy, persons with disabilities, and

emergent literacy in public libraries. Recently, she began exploring school media specialists' perceptions of cultural heritage in the school curriculum, which is being impacted by hot topics such as Critical Race Theory and censorship. This research is examining the roles of school media specialists in the curriculum concerning cultural heritage tools and resources.

Dr. Jennifer Moore is an Associate Professor in the School of Information Studies in the College of Information and Communication at the University of South Carolina. She teaches graduate-level courses on instructional technology in school libraries, school library management and program development, pedagogy in school libraries, and youth literature. Her recent scholarly works include evidence-based practice in school libraries, librarians navigating their duties to young readers within restrictive political mandates for social media, integrating computational thinking into LIS curriculum, and self-censorship in school libraries. Her research has been supported by the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

Dr. Rita Reinsel Soulen is an Assistant Professor with the Master of Library Science Program at East Carolina University in Greenville, NC where she teaches in the school library concentration, including children's and young adult materials and instructional foundations. Her research focuses on school librarian collaborative relationships as mentors in communities of practice and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on children's access to reading materials. She is currently examining knowledge and use of digital literacies and media in a research-practice partnership with the university's laboratory school as engaged outreach scholarship.

Dr. Amelia N. Gibson is an Associate Professor in the School of Information Studies at the University of Maryland at College Park. Her work focuses on information marginalization, trust, and safety in health and learning institutions (libraries and education) and online, with a special focus on maternal health equity and disability justice. Her work on youth of color in libraries focuses on youth perceptions of belonging, safety, and risk, civic participation, and youth as "knowers." Her research has been supported by the Institute of Museum and Library Services and the American Library Association (among other funders).

ALISE RESEARCH TAXONOMY TOPICS

Education; Censorship; Curriculum; Education programs/schools; Pedagogy; Students.

AUTHOR KEYWORDS

Technology; Cultural heritage; Literacy; Youth of color; Disability justice; Self-censorship; COVID-19 effects on youth; Evidence-based practice in school libraries.

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