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Education for school librarians traditionally blends elements from the fields of library/information science and education. A thorough preparation in both professions is necessary since school librarians hold state teaching certification in K-12 library media. States vary as to the coursework or competencies that are required to attain this certification (Jesseman, Page, & Underwood, 2010). The assumption is made, however, that the new school librarian will have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that will enable him/her to manage a complex school library program from the first day on the job, usually as the only school library professional in the school.

A variety of standards from professional organizations can guide school librarians in performing these multi-faceted roles, and accordingly, inform the curricula of school librarian preparation programs. The American Association of School Librarians (AASL), the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE), and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) all have relevance to school librarians teaching effectively, administering successfully, and growing professionally (AASL, 2007, 2009a, 2010a; ISTE, 2008; NBPTS, 2001). Conversely, the plethora of standards may actually make it more difficult to determine what standards to include in Library Information Science (LIS) curricula and when to include them when educating future school librarians. In the analysis that follows, a panel of library
educators discusses the implications of competitive aspects of inclusion of each of these standards in school librarian education programs.

The American Association of School Librarians (AASL) and the School Librarian

Guidelines for establishing an effective school library program have been associated with school libraries since the early 1900s (AASL, 2009a). Through the years, these guidelines have provided school librarians with the current thinking addressing the roles they fulfill in the school arena. As early as 1945 the standards reflected a shift in the focus of the school librarian’s role from providing resources to interacting with students and teachers (AASL & AECT, 1998). This focus continues today. To understand the role of the school librarian, one must reflect on the current AASL standards and Empowering Learners: Guidelines for School Library Programs (AASL, 2009a).

In 1998 the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) and the Association for Educational Communications and Technology (AECT) published Information Power: Building Partnerships for Learning. This work contained the Information Literacy Standards for Student Learning and the guidelines for establishing an effective school library program. The Planning Guide for Information Power: Building Partnerships for Learning with School Library Media Program Assessment Rubric for the 21st Century (AASL, 1999) provided school librarians with assistance in establishing their programs and an assessment rubric that helped the school librarians assess their individual programs and determine how these programs aligned with the principles in
Information Power. These documents provided the school librarians with a concrete method of gathering data to analyze their program.

In the early 2000s, AASL collected data from its members with the intention of reviewing and updating Information Power (1998) to reflect the changing landscape of education and to identify the opportunities and challenges for the 21st-century school library (AASL, 2009a). The following documents resulted from this data gathering:

- **Standards for the 21st Century Learner** (2007) identifies four learning standards, associated skills, dispositions, responsibilities, and self-assessment strategies, and offers nine common beliefs that guide school library programs.

- **Standards for the 21st Century Learner in Action** (2009b) specifies benchmarks for select standards.

- **Empowering Learners: Guidelines for School Library Programs** (2009a) presents guidelines for establishing an effective school library program.

- **A Planning Guide for Empowering Learners with School Library Program Assessment Rubric** (2010b) identifies the basic steps for implementing the guidelines and provides a formative rubric for evaluating the school library program.

These documents create a concise package of materials explaining the roles and responsibilities of school librarians and assisting with evaluating and assessing their programs.
Empowering Learners: Guidelines for School Library Programs

This document presents a road map for the school librarian to use in establishing an effective school library program. In addition the guidelines help define the future directions of school library programs and assist the school librarians “in establishing a program empowering students to be critical thinkers, enthusiastic readers, skillful researchers, and ethical users of information” (AASL, 2009a, p. 5). The guidelines include four major sections: Developing visions for learning, Teaching for learning, Building the learning environment, and Empowering learning through leadership.

Developing visions for learning.

This initial section of Empowering Learners (2009a) explains that the mission of the school library program is to ensure that the students and staff are effective users of ideas and information (p. 8). This section identifies the roles of the school librarian as an instructional partner, information specialist, teacher, program administrator, and leader. The first four roles are identical to the roles listed in Information Power (1998). The emphasis is different, however, and in the 2009 guidelines, the school librarian must establish himself/herself as an instructional partner with the teacher. In addition to these four roles, Empowering Learners adds a fifth responsibility for the school librarian, that of being a leader. This section of the guidelines also discusses the common beliefs and the learning standards for the students.
Teaching for learning.

The guidelines in this section emphasize promoting collaboration and reading; providing instruction that addresses multiple literacies including media literacy, technology literacy, visual literacy, and information literacy; modeling inquiry-based learning; and conducting regular assessment of student learning. The explanation of these items encompasses the school librarians’ instructional partnership and teaching roles.

Building the learning environment.

This section examines the extensive role of the school librarian as administrator. It encompasses the development of policies and procedures, staffing, budgeting, collection development, and advocacy to name a few. The responsibilities addressed in this section illustrate how the school librarian must establish a school library as a functional program with a solid infrastructure so that the members of the learning community want to come to the library and understand that in the library they will have access to the materials they need to find the information they want.

Empowering learning through leadership.

The final section of Empowering Learners (2009a) discusses the concept of leadership and the school librarian. This role was added to the 2009 roles since school librarians must be leaders to establish their programs in the school surroundings. This leadership role extends to
Empowering Learners: Guidelines for School Library Programs (2009a) is an extensive document that outlines and explains the roles and responsibilities of the school librarian in establishing an effective program. To assist with this process, AASL has provided a planning guide and an assessment rubric school librarians may use to ascertain how closely their program aligns with the program guidelines. This rubric is a formative assessment to assist in improving the school library program. LIS instructors should provide opportunities for potential school librarians to work with these guidelines and the assessment rubric so that the LIS candidates have a clear understanding of how this information will help them establish a flexible school library program preparing students to be effective users of ideas and information. (NOTE: Candidate refers to those individuals enrolled in school library preparation programs; student refers to those individuals enrolled in K-12 schools.)

NCATE ALA/AASL Standards for Initial Preparation of School Librarians

Many school librarian preparation programs are housed within education units at colleges and universities which seek accreditation from NCATE, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education. (It should be noted that in Fall 2010,
NCATE and TEAC (Teacher Education Accreditation Council) agreed to create a new accrediting organization that would maintain flexibility of accreditation choices. At this writing, NCATE and TEAC are working to establish the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). During the two-year transition from NCATE and TEAC to CAEP, new standards, new policies and procedures, and new governance structures are being created. Program review will remain an option under the CAEP structure, but specific impacts are unknown at this time. “NCATE’s mission is to provide leadership in developing a system of quality assurance for the teaching profession” (ALA/NCATE Popup, 2010). The American Library Association, partnering with NCATE since 1988, has delegated responsibility for standard development and program review to the American Association of School Librarians (AASL). Early review of school librarian preparation programs involved folio review of syllabi to affirm competencies. In 2003, as NCATE shifted its focus from syllabi review to candidate outcomes, AASL developed its first set of program standards. In October 2010, a revised set of standards was approved by the Specialty Areas Studies Board of NCATE. The 2010 ALA/AASL Standards for Initial Preparation of School Librarians reflect the concepts found in AASL’s Empowering Learners: Guidelines for School Library Programs and Standards for the 21st Century Learner. They consist of five standards, each with four elements. Standards and elements can be viewed in Table 1.

[insert Table 1 here]
The emphasis of the instructional role of the school librarian is evident by the intentional placement of teaching for learning as a first standard. The importance of literacy and reading in the practice of school librarianship is demonstrated by its placement as the second standard. With the information and knowledge standard, candidates are expected to be proficient not only in knowledge of information sources and services but also in research, information generation, and the creation of knowledge. The fourth standard, advocacy and leadership, focuses on the librarian’s proactive role and effective outreach. Management and administration, as the final standard, address the foundational activities and structures that must be in place in an effective school library program.

NCATE ALA/AASL Standards in the LIS Curricula

School librarian preparation programs seeking national recognition from AASL through NCATE must identify six to eight key assessments that demonstrate candidate mastery of these five standards. Hence, the standards must be embedded into and across course content. At Longwood University, for example, both objectives and assignments for each course in the program are aligned to the NCATE ALA/AASL standards. Assessments are developed that allow candidates to demonstrate proficiency in these areas.

One key assessment for a preparation program might be an advocacy plan. As a course assignment, candidates would be required to create an advocacy plan for their school library programs. A rubric would be used to evaluate the assignment, and elements on the rubric
would demonstrate how the assignment addressed various standards. With the creation of this advocacy plan, candidates might meet Standard 4, Advocacy and Leadership, element 4.4, which requires that “Candidates identify stakeholders within and outside the school community who impact the school library program. Candidates develop a plan to advocate for school library and information programs, resources, and services” (AASL, 2010a, p. 27). Other standards that might easily be addressed in the context of this assessment include the following:

- Standard 3, Information and Knowledge, “3.4 Research and Knowledge Creation: Candidates use evidence-based, action research to collect data. Candidates interpret and use data to create and share new knowledge to improve practice in school libraries” (AASL, 2010a, p. 22), and

- Standard 5, Management and Administration, “5.4 Strategic Planning and Assessment: Candidates communicate and collaborate with students, teachers, administrators, and community members to develop a library program that aligns resources, services, and standards with the school’s mission. Candidates make effective use of data and information to assess how the library program addresses the needs of their diverse communities” (AASL, 2010a, p. 29).

In order to earn national recognition, a program must demonstrate that “all five standards were met and sufficient evidence was provided to demonstrate that candidates have developed a basic understanding and mastery of key concepts within each standard” (AASL,
Incorporating the 2010 *ALA/AASL Standards for Initial Preparation of School Librarians* throughout the LIS curricula allows a program to document how it is preparing quality school librarians.

**National Board for Professional Teaching Standards**

In 1983 the National Commission on Excellence in Education released *A Nation at Risk* (Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession, 1986) lambasting the U.S. education system and starting a series of education reforms – one being keeping the nation’s best teachers in the classroom. This resulted in the creation of an independent agency, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, which developed a system, similar to board certification for physicians and other professionals, for National Board Certification of “highly qualified” teachers. In 1993-94 the first two certificate areas were offered and it was not until 2001 that the Library Media certificate was offered.

The 2001 standards, updated in 2010, are currently in press. The categories of the 2010 standards can be viewed in Table 2.

[insert Table 2 here]

Standards in each of the areas are written in narrative paragraphs of two to five pages each with numerous examples of how the standards come to life in different settings. They identify specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes that support accomplished practice,
while emphasizing the holistic nature of teaching. These standards illustrate how a teacher’s professional judgment is reflected in action. Candidates are encouraged to read through the standards in the beginning of the process and write reflections at the end to prepare for National Board Certification. The certification involves a four-part portfolio and six assessment center exercises, and trained peers score entries. The cost to apply for National Board is $2500 and it is estimated it takes about a year to complete the process successfully (NBPTS, 2011a). Currently there are 2584 National Board certified school librarians in the United States, representing about 2% of all in the profession (NBPTS, 2011b). Advantages of achieving National Board Certification are economic incentives, prestige, professional development, and the portability of moving between states with varying certification requirements (NBPTS, 2011a).

**National Board Standards in the LIS Curricula**

Since the National Board process is aimed at the “accomplished” educator (with at least three years experience) there can be competition within the curricula between these standards and those for initial preparation due to time constraints. However, there are distinct benefits for students candidates who know about the National Board process and the standards. There is unique content within the National Board standards that cannot be found in the other standards. One relevant example is within the standard on leadership. Other standards maintain school librarians should be leaders, but don’t say how or why. The National Board
standards provide concrete examples of leadership. Second, the concept of reflection, which has been integral to the National Board process since its inception, is extremely valuable. The goal of National Board Certification is not to produce a “perfect” school librarian, but one who can reflect on his/her experiences and make adjustments to make things better the next time, pulling from their resources to do this. This reflective cycle, which can include videotaping of teaching, is valuable to all candidates but particularly to school librarians who are traditionally the only one in their buildings performing this role.

It is useful for candidates to be aware of the National Board process and that it exists for reasons of morale. An underlying concept of the National Board is that there is a method to advance oneself in a career that has been traditionally known as parallel or stagnant. A school librarian can excel in his/her library without advancing to be a principal. Similarly, when other teachers find out for the first time that school librarians can also be National Board certified, it can raise their level of respect for them. The standards are also a method to communicate to school administrators just what they might expect from an accomplished school librarian.

The National Board standards provide opportunities beyond the standard curricula for professional development offered through LIS programs that offer continuing education credit for introducing the standards and the process. Another option is a certificate program such as that offered at Florida State University whereby four master’s level courses focus on one National Board portfolio entry and their related standards. Candidates can take this 12-credit
certificate program either within their master’s degree, as a stand-alone certificate after graduating, or as part of a specialist degree. By embedding this in the coursework, candidates are prepared to achieve National Board certification.

**Additional Standards**

Although most school librarian preparation programs are built on the standards of NBPTS, NCATE ALA/AASL, and the AASL *Empowering Learners* guidelines, there are other important national curriculum standards. As was noted in the beginning, school librarians stand at the intersection of library science and education. Education standards, curriculum frameworks, and initiatives must be considered as part of preparation. Table 3 summarizes some of the major standards.

[insert Table 3 here]

**Issues and Concerns**

Each set of standards is written for a different audience. Preparation standards such as *ALA/AASL Standards for Initial Preparation of School Librarians* are written for LIS educators. NBPTS standards are written for accomplished practitioners. *AASL Standards for the 21st Century Learner* are written for those teaching K-12 students, and *Empowering Learners* is written for practicing librarians managing building level programs. NETS are written for K-12 students, classroom teachers, and school administrators. *Common Core* and *P21* standards are
written for parents and policymakers. The school library profession encompasses all of these audiences.

Additionally, school librarians are teachers licensed by the state in which the program is housed. As such, the licensure regulations for each state must be followed in order for the preparation program to have the authority to produce school librarians. These regulations typically specify the coursework content, field experience, and sometimes teaching or learning methodologies any of which may conflict with the curriculum standards and accreditation guidelines of the American Library Association. At the very least, the overwhelming number of the curricular requirements for school librarians sometimes means that they have a completely different program of study than those heading for other types of libraries. The discussion of the place of school librarian preparation within the context of LIS education is not new. This dichotomy of purposes for LIS education was discussed in depth in 1984 in a series of seminar papers held for the purpose of discussing the Carnegie Foundation’s *A Nation at Risk* (Dougherty, 1984). Even then, there were voices that called for the removal of school librarian preparation to the teacher training basis of the colleges of education, while other voices demanded that school libraries stay in the heart of library science.

The compilation of standards that underlie school librarian preparation brings the questions of time and rigor to the forefront. Many school library programs are embedded in a library school with a core curriculum, required field experiences, and only one or two courses
in which to specialize the preparation of the school librarian. Content and standards should be addressed across courses rather than concentrated in a course or two. The need to know every set of standards applying to both library science and education and the need to understand the landscape of standards implementation in schools and libraries presents challenges. There is not enough time for in-depth analysis, and even an overview of the major players turns a methods course based on implementation into a survey course based on knowledge. As the need to teach information literacy skills to patrons in all types of libraries grows, the magnitude of the content multiplies.

**Vision for the Future**

It is comforting to note that in the standards and guidelines addressed here there are commonalities and overlaps. How are the standards alike and how are they different? As Table 4 demonstrates, common themes exist. All the standards explored address effective use of information; five specifically address collaboration and literacies. Four emphasize inquiry learning, leadership, reading, and student assessment. Not only are there commonalities and overlaps within the standards but also applicability to academic, public, and special library settings as well. Librarians of all types are concerned with providing access to information, with promoting reading, and with helping patrons become effective users of ideas and information. Academic,
public, school, and special librarians must manage their library programs, demonstrate professional ethics, and practice leadership.

[insert Table 4 here]

**Further Research**

The lack of a strong research base for school librarian preparation, however, is a concern. Although preparation has always been based on standards, the proliferation of standards, the need to align national standards with state curriculum frameworks, and the importance of school librarian preparation remaining coherent with LIS education, has made the question of *how much can be taught* of primary importance. This entire area is a fruitful one for research to guide LIS programs. Some examples of research questions are:

1. Which standards are the most important in terms of school librarian on-the-job performance?
2. Which standards are the most important in terms of K-12 student learning outcomes?
3. How does candidate knowledge of standards impact the success of their implementation in LIS?
4. How do successful school library programs choose which standards to address?
With the exception of a few studies (Everhart & Dresang, 2007; Isenberg, 2003), there is little research concerning university programs that incorporate National Board Standards. Questions need to be answered on the impact on graduates’ performance and whether or not it is too much information too soon. Additionally, state economic incentives for National Board educators are being eroded in the current economic climate and the impact on the sustainability of the certification needs to be determined.

This discussion brings to the forefront the various sets of standards, guidelines, and competencies to be addressed in school librarian preparation programs. As ALA accreditation moves to a competency-based approach, school library faculty members can serve as valuable resources in this transition based on their experience in this area.
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Table 1. ALA/AASL Standards for Initial Preparation of School Librarians

**Standard 1: Teaching for Learning**

1.1 Knowledge of learners and learning
1.2 Effective and knowledgeable teacher
1.3 Instructional partner
1.4 Integration of 21st century skills and learning standards

**Standard 2: Literacy and Reading**

2.1 Literature
2.2 Reading promotion
2.3 Respect for diversity
2.4 Literacy strategies

**Standard 3: Information and Knowledge**

3.1 Efficient and ethical information-seeking behavior
3.2 Access to information
3.3 Information technology
3.4 Research and knowledge creation

**Standard 4: Advocacy and Leadership**

4.1 Networking with the library community
4.2 Professional development
4.3 Leadership
4.4 Advocacy

**Standard 5: Program Management and Administration**

5.1 Collections
5.2 Professional ethics
5.3 Personnel, funding, and facilities

5.4 Strategic planning and assessment

Table 2. National Board for Professional Teaching Standards - Library Media Standards

What Library Media Specialists Know

Knowledge of Students
Knowledge of Teaching and Learning
Knowledge of Library and Information Studies

What Library Media Specialists Do

Leadership
Administration
Integration of Technologies
Access, Equity, and Diversity

How Library Media Specialists Grow as Professionals

Ethics
Outreach and Advocacy
Reflective Practice

Table 3. Summary of Some of the Major Standards

National Educational Technology Standards (NETS). Developed by the International Society for Technology Education (ISTE), the NETS standards have been adopted by many states as the authoritative guidelines for technology skills (http://www.iste.org/standards.aspx).
Common Core State Standards. These standards were developed by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers as a state-led effort to develop a consistent national curriculum. The initiative was developed to “provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn, so teachers and parents know what they need to do to help them” (http://www.corestandards.org).

Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21). The Partnership for 21st Century Skills framework was developed to ensure that students were learning skills that would enable them to compete in a global economy. Although the founding members of the partnership were from the business sector, educational foundations and education groups are now a part of this effort (http://www.p21.org).

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<th>NBPTS</th>
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Table 4. Common Themes of Standards and Guidelines
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EL=Empowering Learning: Guidelines for School Library Programs

NCATE ALA/AASL= ALA/AASL Standards for Initial Preparation of School Librarians

NBPTS= National Board for Professional Teaching Standards

NETS-T= National Educational Technology Standards for Teachers

CCSS= Common Core State Standards

P21= Partnership for 21st Century Skills