Celebrating 30 Years of supporting instructional program and informational needs of the students and professional staff in school districts across New York State.
The New York State School Library Systems, established by Commissioner’s Regulations in 1985, is a state funded program which supports the instructional program and informational needs of the students and professional staff in school districts across the state.

The mission of the SLS is to facilitate the development and functioning of our member librarians and libraries by actively promoting optimal service and access to information regardless of format, to all member schools.

The School Library Systems facilitate the sharing of library resources for both public and nonpublic school libraries. State aid supports interlibrary loan delivery, continuing education, coordination of collection development, automation and database building activities, and service to clients with special needs.
Dedication

This retrospective on the School Library Systems of NYS is dedicated to Joseph F. Schubert, who served as State Librarian from 1977-1996 and whose vision, dedication and perseverance led to the formation of School Library Systems, and to Joseph Mattie, Carol Desch, and all the original Pilots who were the leaders in the implementation of this program.

The retrospective is the work of many past and present School Library System Directors, including: Bea Angus, Gail Barraco, Sue Bartle, Katie Bertrand, Deb Booth, Kimberly Bramfeld, Linda Cruttenden, Erin Dineen, Anne Evans, Denise Graminski, Kate Hammill, Anthony Hosmer, Sara Kelly-Johns, Sue LeBlanc, Judy Marsh, Lynn Miller, John Monahan, Linda Nichols, Dee Portzer, Colleen Sadowski, Angus Saunders, Betsy Sywetz, Patty Vilello, Carl Vitevitch, Mary Kay Welgoss, Kelly Wilson, Stephanie Wilson, Katherine Winderlin, Danielle Yeomans and Marla Yudin.
In 1978 the NYS Legislature enacted Chapter 787, which provided funding for three different School Library System pilot programs across the state. Their primary function was to facilitate inter-library loans between schools in their region and align these new systems with the public library systems and with the reference and research library resources systems. The concept of the regional intersystem cooperative networks was intended to provide the sharing of resources, ideas and services between and beyond libraries of the same type within regions. The first pilots were started for the 1979-80 school year and each pilot had two liaisons assigned to them, one from the State Education Department and one from the State Library. The Regents Library Legislative Proposal for 1978 had sought authority to establish as many as 49 school library systems throughout the entire state. These would be based in the 44 BOCES and the Big 5 city school districts. In addition, the school library system would provide special services and materials which are either impractical or too expensive for the typical school library.

There were three groups included in the original pilots: two regional groups and a group referred to as “non-affiliated school library system pilot projects(s)”. The first of two...
The second regional network pilot (INTERSHARE) included:

- New York City School Library Systems - Community District #5,
- Putnam-Northern Westchester BOCES
- Yonkers City Schools
- New York Metropolitan Reference and Research Library Agency
- New York Public Library
- Brooklyn Public Library
- Queens Public Library
Westchester Library System

Their SED/SL liaison contacts were: Dorothy Smith – Associate in the BRLS and Beatrice Griggs–Associate in SLS – BSL.

The above pilots were to implement their resource sharing across the multi-type systems for three years. They were authorized for $600,000 each year for the first three years and were funded through their regional networks.

The non-affiliated pilots were not regional or multi-type library systems. These School Library System pilot projects were to focus on cooperation among school libraries while preparing for cooperation with other system types in their region. Five pilots were initiated:

- Albany, Schoharie, Schenectady BOCES
- Broome-Delaware-Tioga-BOCES
- Delaware-Chenango-Madison-Otsego BOCES
- Oswego County BOCES
- Syracuse City SLS

Their SED/SL liaison contacts were: Bob Barron, Associate in School Library Services – Bureau of Specialist Library Services and R. Edwin Berry, Associate in LS – BRLS. Each of these pilot projects received up to $50,000 annually.

In 1981, the Legislature approved Chapter 718 which authorized $185,000 for at least 20 “shoe-string” grant projects, which established a maximum of $10,000 per project. Their purpose was to begin implementation of resource sharing and 25 grants were awarded. While State Librarian, Joseph Shubert, realized the funds were limited, he wanted to assist schools in the sharing of library materials to prepare for participation in regional intersystem library networks. Twenty-one systems received only a fractional part of the funding compared to the pilots. Some recipients of the “shoe-string” grants included:
In 1985, the Legislature expanded the grants to include all BOCES and Big City districts. The funding was multi-faceted, with the amount of basic aid received by each System calculated on the total square miles of area served, and total student population of public school districts and private schools served. This funding formula remains in effect today. Systems now receive basic aid through a formula that takes into account the number of member school districts, the number of pupils served, and the square mileage of the service area. Systems qualify for basic aid based on a Plan of Service and annual budget, both approved by the state. Basic aid for all School Library Systems currently totals $5,434,400. Systems also receive additional automation funds totaling 10% of the basic aid, amounting to $543,400. In 2013, the supplemental aid of $2,000,500 which had been added a few years earlier was finally made permanent, resulting in a total state aid package of $8,000,400.

After the New York State Legislature approved the formation of School Library Systems, each SLS worked throughout that first year, publicizing their resource sharing services and encouraging schools to join by completing a Member Plan. Also in 1985, with funding secure, the School Library System Association of New York State (SLSA) was formed, and we celebrate our 30th anniversary with this informational booklet.

From the beginning, the formation of School Library Systems was a Regents initiative. The Board of Regents had the vision to see that school libraries needed the
network connections for resource sharing. Their ability to share that vision with the Legislature so that funding was provided for the project has led to a full network across the state for all students and educators. The 2012 publication “Creating the Future: a 2020 Vision Plan for Library Services in New York State” written by the Regents Action Committee, continues to ask the NYS Board of Regents to support, affirm and enhance the role of the School Library Systems and school libraries in supporting the education of the students of New York State.

Services Offered Through the School Library System

In 1948 the New York State legislature created Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) to provide shared educational programs and services to school districts within the state. Today there are 36 BOCES, incorporating all but nine of the state’s school districts. BOCES partner with districts to provide a broad range of services that help meet the evolving educational needs of students.

CoSer is an acronym for COoperative SERvice and describes a regional educational support program housed at a BOCES in New York State. These services are centralized in order to save money for participating school districts or to allow smaller districts to have services which they might not be able to afford on their own.

BOCES membership is not currently available to the "Big Five" city school districts: New York City, Buffalo, Rochester, Yonkers, and Syracuse. However, these cities also offer these services to their schools with city funds. The BOCES network is capable of including municipalities and divisions of the state with school districts in the provision of cost-effective services. The CoSers most common in School Library Systems are:

• **Library Automation** – the online library catalog that provides access to the books and other materials in the school library. School Library Systems manage the collection of all of their member school libraries via a Union Catalog which is a requirement for School Library System membership. School Library Systems also provide support for library automation in the school districts, assist with upgrades, communications with vendors, and training for librarians subscribing to these services.
• **Online Information Resources** – These are the online resources that School Library Systems make available to their member school libraries for student research and assignments. They are available 24/7 and include subscriptions purchased through School Library Systems as well as those available to all New Yorkers through NOVELny.

• **Digital Media** – These are the video streaming resources that support units of instruction which are accessible via computer, a smart board, etc. for whole class instruction.

Other CoSers which may be part of a School Library System Director’s responsibility may include: Arts in Education; Model Schools; Distance Learning; Professional Development; Itinerant Librarian; Computer Repair; Exploratory Enrichment; Odyssey of the Mind; Regional Science and Math.

All CoSers have to be approved by the State Education Department as to their suitability, cost effectiveness, district demand, and ability to share the expense through the BOCES. It is a stringent review and takes a great deal of time and focus to prepare and work through with the State Education Department.

Of the School Library Systems that reside in the BOCES, the following survey results reflect the services they offer through various cooperative service agreements or CoSers:
• 29 School Library Systems (85.29%) offer Online resources Cosers through the School Library Systems located in the BOCES.
• 18 School Library Systems (52.94%) offer a Digital Media Coser.
• 29 respondents or (85.29%) offer a Library Automation Coser.
• Two SLS Directors also manage a Distance Learning Coser, (5.88%).
• One manages the Model Schools Coser for their BOCES (2.94%).
• Five School Library System Directors manage Arts in Education Cosers for their BOCES (14.71%).
• Ten manage a variety of other Cosers such as: Itinerant Librarian; Computer Repair; Exploratory Enrichment; Odyssey of the Mind; Regional Science and Math (29.41%).

Scholarships and Grants
Given By School Library Systems

Many school library systems offer grants to their member library media specialists. These grants enhance library programs and student outcomes in countless ways. For example, full or partial grants for attendance at professional development events, such as the annual New York Library Association’s Section of School Librarians Conference, enable library media specialists to bring back to their schools the latest and best practices in technology, inquiry, and makers-spaces, to name just a few. Similarly, the annual Leadership Institute, held at Cornell University each summer, is geared to equip library media specialists with the skills and knowledge to act as instructional leaders in their schools, in accordance with the latest state and national educational initiatives.

Grants offered to school libraries from School Library Systems also support curriculum and instruction in more direct ways. For example, many systems offer project-based grants, funding the technology to support sustained
collaborative projects developed by teacher-librarian teams, or the professional hours to create new curriculum. One recent grant funded the work of secondary research teams composed of social studies teachers and librarians who created research projects integrating the Empire State Information Fluency Continuum (ESIFC) with technology. At the elementary level, grantees transformed a first grade NYS CC ELA module into an inquiry based project that utilized the ESIFC and resources from that system’s media catalog. Due to its huge success, that project will be replicated in other schools within that BOCES and perhaps even across the state.

School library collection development is another area funded by School Library System grants. Grantors provide funding to participating school libraries for collection development to support student literacy and school curriculum, including for systems-level e-book collections. Some of these initiatives have included training on building robust collections. SLS grants also support after school library programs or summer school library literacy programs, keeping school libraries open and sustaining literacy initiatives for underserved areas.

SLS Directors Cont’d:

New York City
- Maddie Brandley
- Esther McRae
- Judith Schaffner
- Geraldine Clark (Pilot)
- Dr. Phyllis Fisher
- Neerajana Ghosh
- Ellen Johnson
- Sandra Kennedy-Bright
- Batya Lewton (Pilot)
- Beth Peller
- Shirley Rogers
- Merill-Elise Sanyal
- Mary Sgoros
- Olga Nesi
- Dr. Barbara Stripling
- Judi Dzikowski
- Lisa Denton
- Corrine Wightman
- Karen Kell-Deyo
- Judy Jerome
- Barbara Wall
during hours when library access would be otherwise unavailable. Of course, keeping in the spirit of grants, library media specialist grantees not only report on their program, experience, or initiative, but they share their learning with colleagues through a variety of modes and forums, from “turn-key” presentations to the sharing of curriculum & instruction plans. In this way, the long-term effects of the grants are multiplied.

Professional Development - A Core Value

Trainings, workshops, and conferences provided throughout the School Library Systems have strengthened the abilities of school librarians as teachers and as library program administrators. In 1985 when the architecture of the School Library System was developed our country was just starting to use personal computers and the Internet was still called Arpanet. Technology was just starting to drive changes in school libraries.

The first major professional development undertaken by the School Library Systems was to provide opportunities for librarians to learn about and implement an automated catalog system locally as well as create a union catalog of materials throughout each region. This huge undertaking took more than 15 years to complete. A few examples of these regional union catalogs include: South Central Organization Of School Library Systems Schools Cat with seven School Library Systems participating and the Western New York School Library Systems Union Catalog (WNYSLSCAT) with four SLSs participating. Ongoing training has been an important component to maintain and update the automated library catalogs with the School Library Systems leading the way.

We know that effective School Library Media programs increase student achievement by supporting and complementing all the teaching and learning that
happens within a school. Librarians working in isolation do not help students and they do not help educators, either. Therefore, School Library Systems have developed professional learning opportunities that foster collaboration among various educators, to strengthen the learning needed to elevate all student achievement. Additionally, School Library Systems have formed collaborations within their own BOCES or Big 5 Cities to provide dynamic, timely professional development, and have also collaborated with cultural institutions and educational agencies throughout New York State to bring quality learning to all educators, not only school librarians.

From national library and education speakers to bestselling authors, the School Library Systems provide robust learning experiences. Workshop topics have included: library automation, copyright, quality nonfiction, Common Core Learning Standards, online databases, and reference research to name a few. School Library Systems continue to play a pivotal role in moving school libraries into the 21st Century. Possible topics for upcoming professional learning will always continue to support teachers and librarians in their goal of increasing student achievement.

Empire State Information Fluency Continuum

Inquiry is the fundamental building block of teaching and learning that empowers students to follow their sense of wonder, discover knowledge, and
gain insight into how the world works. The Empire State Information Fluency Continuum (ESIFC) is a curricular tool for teaching inquiry and information literacy skills to students in grades K-12 in a coherent, developmental spiral of instruction and practice. The ultimate goal of the ESIFC is to encourage students to become independent learners—college and career ready thinkers, explorers, and citizens who are capable of utilizing and applying information to any situation.

Developed by the New York City Library System under the leadership of Barbara Stripling (former Director of the NYC School Library System; ALA President 2013-14; Senior Associate Dean, Syracuse University iSchool), the ESIFC outlines an inquiry learning process that is intellectually active, question-based, personalized, open-ended and transformative and which is based on authentic learning tasks. The ESIFC includes grade-specific benchmarks and assessments that are aligned to the New York State Common Core Learning Standards in reading, writing, speaking and listening and has proven to be an invaluable tool for encouraging collaboration among librarians and classroom teachers at all levels of instruction.

SLSA endorsed the ESIFC in 2012, and since then librarians have worked diligently to incorporate it into classroom and library instruction, in all academic disciplines across New York State. Because school librarianship is built upon the belief that librarians play a key role in nurturing critical and creative thinking skills and strengthening student literacy, the ESIFC will continue to be an invaluable resource for our instructional practice for years to come.

SLSA and Online Resources for Education (SCORE)

The School Library Systems Association of New York State (SLSA) offers coordinated consortia purchasing of online and e-book resources for K-12 students in the 700+ public school districts and over 500 non-public schools in New York State. The goal of this
initiative is to provide New York State Students with the best quality resources at the most cost-effective pricing.

Many years prior to the creation of Vision 2020, SLSA created a “model of success” to provide discounted pricing for New York school libraries which “encourage[s] school districts to actively expand and promote access to the school library collection of online resources, e-books, and web 2.0 tools, available 24/7, to create learning and enrichment opportunities that reach beyond the school day and encourage year-round learning.”

In 1998 a SLSA committee submitted a grant proposal that was successfully funded with supplementary State funds. This first proposal was to offer ProQuest NY Direct as a statewide database for all New York Students. This was a two-year grant and the initial beginnings of consortium pricing for students in grades 4-12. This became known as the ProQuest NY Direct subscription package. At the end of the grant SLSA formulated a framework to work on various publishers for statewide pricing for New York school libraries and students. The SLSA Online Resource Committee, worked with a growing number of vendors to obtain pricing that benefits SLS members across the state. With one round of New York State supplemental automation funding, all the members of SLSA joined together to purchase the TeachingBooks.com resource for all schools in the state including remote access as well as in-school connections. This arrangement to provide information on children’s and young adult literature and authors is still in effect today, after more than ten years of
coordination through SLSA.

The development of a state-wide database quoting/listing system, the Online Resource Consortium (ORC), was first developed by the Genesee Valley SLS. ORC grew from the long history of the five school library systems of the greater Rochester region collaborating on database price negotiations. ORC provided a framework for this collaboration to extend across the state.

The project was so successful that SLSA adopted the model to create SCORE through a federal Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grant in 2005.

The need to offer additional resources continued to expand and thus in 2007, SLSA hired an outside consultant to negotiate statewide pricing, organize and continue to expand and ultimately create a database gathering consortial pricing and publisher information for SLSA members.

SLSA continues to “develop innovative and entrepreneurial services” as recommended in Vision 2020.

Today SCORE annually accounts for upwards of seven million dollars in purchasing of online resources for New York State’s k-12 students at lower costs to their schools.

**Other Responsibilities**

Annual Professional Performance Reviews (APPR) and Student Learning Objectives (SLO’s) have become new buzzwords in the education field. We were all intrigued but uncertain when these terms were first introduced. Librarians are always ready for a new challenge and we tackled them with vigor! Across New York State, librarians met with their colleagues at their school districts, in their BOCES school library systems groups, and with their school library associations. We formed committees and met with representatives from the New York State Department of Education. We discussed the
new regulations and how librarians fit into the equation. We then began work on how to create SLO’s for librarians and to support teacher SLO’s that would benefit our students, and increase the positive impact of the APPR process on school libraries and school librarians. Many questions arose during this time. Where do librarians fit in? How will APPR affect librarians?

Little by little, we received further guidance. In order to be subject to the new APPR regulations, a librarian has to be assigned as the teacher of record for a particular group of students. This applies primarily to elementary librarians as the students visit the library on a regular basis, according to a schedule. For those who are not a Teacher of Record, the current guidance has been that part of our APPR is based upon a building aggregate of all the students in our building on the ELA exams.

Librarians and teachers in general have no objection to being evaluated; we just wanted to be evaluated fairly. A secondary librarian may not see all of the students in a given school more than a handful of times. Likewise, there may be teachers who do not bring their classes to the library. We felt that it was unfair to judge our performance on that of a teacher who never came to the library.

The assessment piece has become our biggest challenge. The “List of Approved Student Assessments for Use by School Districts and BOCES in Teacher and Principal Evaluations – Assessments for Teachers of All Content
Areas Except CTE Areas” does not include an assessment for school libraries. Some districts have used TRAILS or Project SAILS. While these may have been acceptable for Education Law 3012c, it is unclear if they will be permitted for use under Education Law 3012d.

There have been numerous studies across the country showing a direct correlation between student achievement and schools that have a quality school library program staffed by a full-time, certified school library media specialist. APPR and SLO’s can help provide librarians with the chance to shine – to validate their impact on student achievement. We expect that the results of the SLO’s will indicate that schools with a full-time certified library media specialist who is running a quality school library program will outperform schools without the benefit of a full-time certified library media specialist.

**Future**

As we look back and celebrate the creation, development, and enduring impact of SLSA, we must, at the same time, consider what lies ahead. In the words of Abraham Lincoln, “the best way to predict your future is to create it.”

SLSA can and will ensure its continued significance and relevance by building and sustaining partnerships with school districts and educators, school libraries and librarians, public and academic library systems, and local communities. With nearly half its members beginning their careers as SLS Directors, SLSA, by offering professional development and mentoring opportunities, builds capacity in its emerging leaders, who will continue to guide the work of school libraries across the state.

The enduring impact of SLSA can and will continue in the years to come. SLSA, and its members, will continue to embrace the educational, technological, and
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societal changes that both challenge and reward the increasingly diverse students, schools, and communities across New York State.

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