

## Editorial

# Questions, Concepts, Understandings: New Research in School Librarianship

This issue of *School Libraries Worldwide* provides access to new research in school librarianship—research that invites us to consider new ways of thinking about important aspects of our field. The research comes from around the world—Norway, Canada, Brazil, and the United States—and it addresses a wide range of questions that I found challenging and interesting:

- Is a school library a place for work or pleasure? Can it be, should it be, both?
- Are ethical and critical thinking part of our information literacy practices? How do we engage in the “new literacies” as teachers and leaders?
- How do we prepare school librarians to teach information literacy? Is an understanding of your own information literacy skills sufficient to the teaching task?
- What does it mean to say that school libraries contribute to teaching and learning? What does it mean “to help” a student or a teacher?

Thank you to Theme Editor Ross Todd and his team for their excellent work on the Theme Section “Student Learning Through Ohio School Libraries.” Ann E. Tepe and Gayle A. Geitgey, Project Director and Assistant Project Director of the Ohio Research Study, provide an introduction to the study, including an explanation of its genesis in the work of four library stakeholders in the state of Ohio: the Ohio Educational Library Media Association, INFOhio (the K-12 information network for Ohio), the Ohio Department of Education, and the State Library of Ohio. Together, they created a new organization called Leadership 4 School Libraries that worked to secure funding for the research and then to support and guide the research. Leadership 4 School Libraries represents, in Tepe and Geitgey’s words, “a unique collaboration between all four school library stakeholders.” The Ohio Research Study has been completed, but Leadership 4 School Libraries continues to work to improve school libraries. This collaborative approach is one that could be replicated in many other parts of the world for the good of school libraries.

The focus question of the Ohio Research Study was “How do school libraries help students with their learning in and away from school?” The findings of the study are reported in two articles by the chief researchers for the project, Ross J. Todd and Carol C. Kuhlthau, working out of the Center for International Scholarship in School Libraries (CISSL) at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey. The first article focuses on the perspectives of students and the second on the perspectives of teaching faculty. The

magnitude of the study is impressive: 39 school libraries across Ohio; 13,123 students in grades 3 to 12; and 879 faculty members. The study generated both quantitative and qualitative data. Analysis of the data showed that students and faculty recognized that school libraries helped students with their learning in many ways across the various grade levels. Teaching faculty valued the school library and saw it playing an important role in student learning, particularly in terms of using computers, finding and locating information, and using information to complete assignments. Students also rated these three areas of help very highly.

Thank you to the researchers whose articles begin this issue: Elisabeth Rafste from Norway, Marlene Asselin from Canada, and Bernadete Campello and Vera Lúcia Furst Gonçalves Abreu from Brazil. Thank you for sharing your fascinating work and giving us much to ponder. The unique contexts of your studies and your careful examination of significant questions of practice within those contexts challenge us to think in new ways about the field of school librarianship.

*Dianne Oberg*