

## School Library System of GVBOCES

### **Libraries.Today: A National Forum Series on Post-COVID School Libraries**

The School Library System (SLS) of the Genesee-Livingston-Steuben-Wyoming Board of Cooperative Educational Services (GVBOCES) is submitting a proposal for a National Leadership Grant - National Forum Grant to fund a series of national meetings to address the challenges and opportunities for school librarians in the post-COVID educational landscape. Topics will include instructional design for remote librarianship, emerging services for teaching and learning, defining the role of the school librarian, and program considerations for new learning models. Work within these topics is being shaped in situ during the pandemic, but will need to be more carefully considered for long-term adoption in the next few years. Reports generated from these forums will provide actionable recommendations for school librarians across the country. The School Library Systems Association of New York State will serve as an implementation partner.

The SLS is a state funded agency housed at GVBOCES, a regional educational services agency supporting 22 small, rural school districts in western New York with a total student population of 21,684. The SLS of GVBOCES is uniquely situated to lead this national effort. Our team of five certified school librarians acting in a regional, administrative capacity supporting district librarians is the second largest in the country with one less certified position than the New York City School Library System. Led by Dr. Christopher Harris, the team at the GVBOCES SLS has been recognized nationally with two current members (Dr. Harris and Andy Austin who will be working on this project) and two former members named as Library Journal Movers & Shakers. Dr. Harris was also the lead presenter on a series of international webinars hosted by EveryLibrary on preparing school libraries for the pandemic [<https://www.everylibraryinstitute.org/school-libraries-and-covid>]. The School Library Systems Association of New York State will also be a partner on this grant to provide support from the other 41 School Library Systems.

### **Statement of National Need**

Across the many emerging models of in-person, hybrid, and remote learning around the country, there is a single constant; the need for a greater understanding about the role of school librarians and the services they provide within the new normal of education. The American Association of School Librarians (AASL), a division of the American Library Association (ALA), has been tracking school librarians' situations within the pandemic since March, 2020 [<http://www.ala.org/aasl/about/pandemic>]. The surveys revealed a rapid shift to online teaching and remote delivery of services, but also that the transition was problematic in many situations. Reopening surveys are continuing to collect information on changes in the moment, but with no real analysis.

Even after COVID-19 is no longer directly threatening our schools, the long term changes brought about by this pandemic will still be a factor in our education systems. School librarians will be adopting new practices made necessary by the pandemic situation over the coming school year, yet there may not always be the time to carefully consider the validity and efficacy of those practices within the moment. This forum series will provide an opportunity to look back at the changes and intentionally accept or reject modified practices moving forward as a profession.

For example, will communal spaces like school libraries return to pre-COVID use models, or will emerging models of use prevail? Given changing roles of school librarians during this school year, what expectations will take root over the next few years? How much need is there for a physical collection moving forward? These questions can best be explored within the larger perspective provided by a series of national forums bringing together school librarians, school administrators, and other stakeholder groups from related library and educational fields.

### **Project Design**

This project will run for two years and will include four online forums as well as potential presentations and in-person gatherings and listening sessions if/when physical conferences return. In the first year, beginning in September, 2021, the SLS will move quickly to convene an advisory team to begin planning for the first national forum in the series to be held in January, 2022. The remaining forums will be held in May, 2022, September, 2022, and January, 2023. The forums will be held online during a one week period with both

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synchronous and asynchronous interactions for sharing expert views and receiving feedback from participants in a presentation/reflection/response format. Other School Library System Directors will assist as moderators and facilitators during the forums. As the week of the forum progresses, moderators will guide the discussion towards consensus adoption of recommendations for practice in the field.

Reports from each forum will be developed and disseminated within three months including specific recommendations for implementation in school libraries around the country. The reports will also be used to develop a series of professional development workshops that will be made available for free use across the country.

The core leadership team for the project will consist of SLS staff including the system director; the Director of the Professional Learning Services Department for GVBOCES; an academic librarian from SUNY Geneseo, the only four-year college in our service area; and a local public library representative. Additional advisory team members will be recruited nationally to provide a broader perspective on needs both across the series and within specific forum topics. Advisory team members will be drawn from different types of schools across the country to ensure urban, suburban, rural and tribal representation, as well as from school librarian preparatory program faculty. To strengthen support and adoption within school systems, school superintendents will also be invited to join the advisory team. Additional staff will be retained as contractors to help facilitate information gathering during the forums and to assist with writing and producing the reports. All work from the forums will be shared on a project website at <https://libraries.today>.

### National Impact

New York's School Library Systems are unique in the country as state-funded, regional offices dedicated to the improvement of school libraries. Given this, and combined with the full backing and support of the School Library Systems Association and the other School Library System Directors in New York, the GVBOCES SLS is uniquely situated to lead this effort on behalf of school librarians across the country. We have the existing capacity to undertake a large project and publish findings and action recommendations widely. A national forums grant would make the work more efficient by consolidating the work within a single project that draws from national stakeholders and creates actionable outcomes for all school librarians in the country.

### Budget Summary

The SLS is requesting \$150,000 in funding to make the Libraries.Today National Forum Series possible. The budget will include a portion of the salary and benefits for the SLS Director and additional team members who will be working on the project, assisting with reporting, and developing the professional development based on findings and recommendations from the forums (\$30,000 per year). Small honoraria will be provided for the advisory team members to thank them for their work (\$1,000 per year). The majority of the budget will directly support the work at the forums including honoraria for invited experts (\$5,000 per forum), platform costs (\$18,000 based on costs for [hopin.to](https://hopin.to))

and costs for contracted report authors (\$5,000 per forum). Additional funds will be used to design, develop and host the [libraries.today](https://libraries.today) website (\$10,000 year) and for project members to attend AASL and/or ALA conferences to present on progress of the project as well as hold in-person meetings and listening sessions (\$6,000 per year).

### Budget Overview

SLS Staffing	\$30,000/year	\$60,000
Advisory Team honoraria	\$1,000/year	\$2,000
Forum Expert Honoraria	\$5,000/forum	\$20,000
Forum Platform Costs	\$18,000/year	\$18,000
Report Authoring	\$5,000/forum	\$20,000
Website/Publishing Costs	\$10,000/year	\$20,000
Conference Attendance	\$5,000/year	\$10,000
<b>Total Budget</b>		<b>\$150,000</b>