

Your Hidden Asset

Need an expert to help students meet **COMMON CORE** goals?
Look to your librarian.

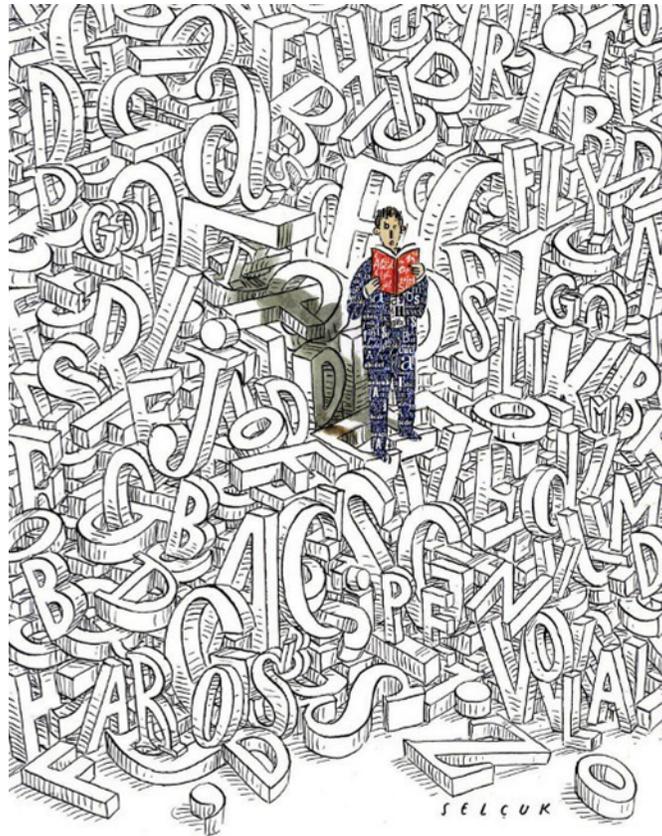
BY PAIGE JAEGER

BEFORE THE BUDGET AX FALLS on your district's libraries, consider for a moment the ways libraries are helping to meet the demands of 21st-century learners. Whether your teachers are operating with Common Core or other state standards, reading is—and always will be—the crux of curriculum delivery. It is through reading that students discover new knowledge. And since achievement is indisputably linked to reading, a strong library program will only fortify classroom instruction.

The more students read, the better they read. The better they read, the more they comprehend. The more they comprehend, the better they achieve. Writing is essential to meeting the Common Core ELA standards as well. “Read like a detective and write like a reporter,” says David Coleman, the chief architect of the standards. This message is not new, but how and what students are reading and writing has changed.

Know Your Readers

IT IS HARD FOR PRINT TO compete with the sensory stimulation of the Internet. Some call reading in this virtual ecosystem transliteracy. Students are expected to gather information and meaning from a variety of mediums, including print, video, audio, and blogs. This “transliterate” reader will need encouragement to disconnect from devices and read longer novels, high-



interest nonfiction titles, and other wonderful books that build knowledge and encourage reading stamina. Your librarian will be instrumental in this.

Research on the millennial generation indicates that our students, in addition to being technologically savvy, are self-savvy and benefit from an element of choice in their reading assignments. They often evaluate the merits of an activity based upon a quick cost-benefit analysis. That is the essence of the “relevance” in the Common Core. We need rigor and relevance. Rigor should be

packaged with relevance for motivation, and this applies to independent reading. Libraries provide that choice.

If you don't embed an element of choice, you will be behind from the start when you ask your students to read black-and-white text, top to bottom, left to right. A librarian works to build robust nonfiction collections, makes recommendations for reluctant readers, runs reading incentive programs, holds book clubs, and inspires kids to read to achieve. Too many schools trying desperately to meet Common Core expectations have eliminated “free

reading choices” and are instead defining what their students should read. This will not instill a lifelong love of reading.

In professional development seminars, I often suggest that teachers package independent reading assignments with the following essential question: “How will this book make you smarter, wiser, richer, or more successful in life?” Students can use evidence-based claims to respond to the question. In doing so, librarians will make reading an active, student-centered process.

Create Savvy Researchers

SOME SAY THAT BECAUSE WE are living in the Information Age, we no longer need libraries in our schools. This espouses a dangerous mode of operation: student self-sufficiency on the Internet. In the book *Web of Deception*, Anne Mintz exposes the extent of errors running rampant on the Internet and builds the case that we are operating in the Age of Misinformation. Our students need desperately to understand the difference between credible, accurate information and biased, unsubstantiated claims. Strong library programs teach students to evaluate all sources critically. Just as a detective scrutinizes information and frequently asks, “What's your source?” students must evaluate the sources they use in their research and writing. Great nonfiction collections and

authoritative databases also provide them with alternatives to information dumping grounds like Google.

Higher-education institutions often complain that our high school graduates are not arriving at college research-ready. If our K–12 schools don't require students to be critical users of information, then they will not graduate research-ready students. In a copy-and-paste society, educators must model correct information-gathering habits for their students. Plagiarism, too, is a widespread problem. Schools that eliminate librarians will be inadvertently incubating this misinformation pandemic.

The Common Core writing standards require students to “build and present knowledge.” Your librarian can help teachers construct authentic research projects to meet these expectations. Inquiry-based research models allow students to

investigate, synthesize, and conclude—moving beyond merely fetching facts and reporting them. Research is the only learning endeavor that embraces all informational writing standards.

In addition to providing rich reading and research resources, your libraries serve as a place of discovery, a sanctuary from lunchroom bullies, a warehouse of data facts for math teachers, a refuge from the misinformation tsunami, and other immeasurable respites from our hurried world. Now, that is an evidence-based claim that meets the objectives of the Common Core State Standards. ■

Paige Jaeger is a librarian turned administrator who frequently contributes to professional journals. She is the coauthor of Rx for the Common Core: Toolkit for Implementing Inquiry Learning.

THE MISSING LINK Librarians are your secret weapon for implementing the Common Core. And, according to a new report, you'd be remiss not to use their skills as you transition to digital learning. *Leading In and Beyond the Library*, published in January by the Alliance for Excellent Education, argues that librarians should have a seat at the table when districts and states implement instructional technology changes. The authors view librarians as content specialists, early adopters of technology, and professional developers.

DESPITE THESE MERITS, POSITIONS FOR SCHOOL LIBRARIANS DECREASED BY

8 PERCENT
BETWEEN THE
2006–07 AND
2010–11 SCHOOL
YEARS.

Bob Wise, president of the AEE, an education policy and advocacy organization, says librarians can reshape the traditional definition of libraries as we know them. “With skilled librarians leading the charge, school libraries can evolve from quiet reading zones to hubs for student innovation and promotion of digital literacy,” he says. A full copy of the report is available on the organization's website (all4ed.org).

SCHOLASTIC

The Common Core Reading Standards have this end goal:

Students need to be able to read complex texts independently.

Jennifer Serravallo's ***Independent Reading Assessment*** can get you there.

Independent Reading Assessment provides data-driven reading instruction to help students access complex texts.

- **CCSS-aligned rubrics** show teachers just what comprehension skills to teach to help students progress
- Embedded **professional development** helps teachers develop their own expertise in text complexity
- **200+ lessons** to use for whole-class, small-group, and individual instruction



For more information, contact Scholastic at 1-800-387-1437, ext. 747 or visit www.scholastic.com/IndependentReadingAssessment