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# Librarians Connected to National Future Ready Initiative

MARK RAY AND SARA TRETTIN

As schools have increasingly embraced digital tools and services to personalize learning for students, school librarians and libraries have often been left out of the conversation, viewed as obsolete or simply overlooked. The impacts vary from the loss of trained librarians to library programs no longer perceived as relevant by digitally savvy students and teachers. Some believe that librarians are simply not part of the future of schools.

But a funny thing happened on the way to the future: Leading superintendents, educational leaders, and school districts increasingly recognize strong librarians and vibrant libraries are essential to future ready schools. In fact, in many districts, librarians are intentionally connected to strategic initiatives ranging from the curation and use of openly licensed educational resources to the effective implementation of 1:1 device deployments.

## FUTURE READY

And now that idea has a name: Future Ready Librarians (FRL). FRL is an expansion of the Future Ready initiative led by the Alliance for Excellent Education in partnership with the U.S. Department of Education and was simultaneously

announced at the American Library Association Annual (ALA) and the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) conferences in June 2016. Launched at the White House in 2014 in support of President Obama’s ConnectED initiative, Future Ready has the attention and interest of forward-leaning superintendents and school districts across the United States. FRL offers a unique opportunity to connect libraries to this fast-growing movement.

Today, more than 2,200 district superintendents have signed the Future Ready Pledge committing to “plan and implement personalized, research-based digital learning strategies so all students can achieve their full potential” (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2016c). Once districts sign the pledge, they are encouraged to complete a self-assessment aligned to the Future Ready Framework. This framework, focusing on components for successful transitions to digital learning, includes

- collaborative leadership
- personalized professional learning
- robust infrastructure

- curriculum, instruction, and assessment
- budget and resources
- community partnerships
- data and privacy
- use of space and time (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2016b)

Districts that have signed the Future Ready Pledge are encouraged to participate in free regional Future Ready events designed to bring together district leadership teams to learn and share their work. In addition to the participation of leading school districts, Future Ready has partnerships with the U.S. Department of Education and more than 50 coalition partners.

With the launch of FRL, librarians and libraries have become part of the national conversation about future ready schools. From the Office of Educational Technology at the U.S. Department of Education to regional Future Ready Summits, there is shared focus among educational leaders on two key questions: How can librarians and libraries support future ready schools? How can librarians and libraries themselves become more future ready?

“As Future Ready expanded across the country, it became clear that librarians could not only support but play a leading role in this critical work,” says Joseph South, director of the Office of Educational Technology at the U.S. Department of Education (personal communication, August 1, 2016). South emphasizes,

“We’ve been dismayed by the number of districts eliminating professional school librarian positions at a time when the expertise of librarians could not be more suited to a future where digital learning is core to how schools function. Future Ready Librarians provides



Fig. 1. Future Ready Librarians Framework

an opportunity to help schools recognize how critical these professionals are to accomplishing their Future Ready goals.”

## FUTURE READY LIBRARIANS

In February 2016, the U.S. Department of Education and the Alliance for Excellent Education assembled a team of library and education leaders at the San Francisco Public Library to inform the vision and direction for FRL. Participants included thought leaders associated with Follett’s Project Connect and the Alliance’s 2014 report *Leading in and Beyond the Library*. In San Francisco, these thought partners took a close look at the Future Ready Framework and identified how librarians can support future ready schools, laying the foundation for the Future Ready Librarians Framework (see Figure 1).

Jennifer Boudrye, director of library programs at DC Public Schools (personal communication, July 29, 2016), stresses the importance of the joint support for FRL:

“The fact that the Alliance for Excellent Education and the U.S. Department of Education are supporting Future Ready Librarians provides credence and relevance so this message will be heard more clearly and directly by those who are leading the efforts to get our schools and students to be future ready.”

Figure 1 shows the connections between the seven Future Ready “gears” and specific principles that demonstrate how librarians can lead, teach, and support the Future Ready goals of schools and districts. There is an intentional emphasis on leadership by librarians, which is consistent with Future Ready’s definition of collaborative



## JUNIOR NONFICTION

### DRONES

Faust, Daniel R. **Flying Robots** (Robots and Robotics). Rosen PowerKids, 2017. 32p. LB \$26.25. ISBN: 978-1-4994-2167-5. Grades 3-6. With increasing interest in flying robots or drones, this series covers seven types of robots from fighting to underwater. Here drones are compared to helicopters, with their similar lift principles. Colorful photos, diagrams, glossary, index, and websites are included.

Hustad, Douglas. **Discover Drones** (Searchlight Books: What's Cool about Science?). Lerner, 2017. 40p. LB \$22.99. ISBN: 978-1-5124-0810-2. Grades 3-5. Colorful photographs and fact boxes give readers a high-interest and scientific look at drones, how they work, and their uses. A glossary and brief index complete the back matter. Additional trendy titles in the series are Discover...Bionics, Cryobiology, Cutting-Edge Medicine, Forensic Science, Nanotechnology, Robotics, and Space Exploration.

Mangor, Jodie. **Drones** (How it Works). Rourke Educational Media, 2017. 24p. LB \$29.93. ISBN: 978-1-68191-686-6. Grades PK-2. Young readers will be delighted to find basic information about drones with color photos, fact boxes, and a picture glossary. Other popular topics in the series are about cotton candy machines, go-karts, roller coasters, wave pools, and windmills.

Marsico, Katie. **Drones** (True Book: Engineering Wonders). Scholastic: Children's Press, 2016. 48p. LB \$29.00. ISBN: 978-0-531-22480-9. Grades 3-5. As noted here, drones were originally used for military purposes, but much has changed with use in the private sector. Controversy and the future of technology make this a timely read in the "True Book" fashion. Included in this series are titles about bridges, giant trucks, self-driving cars, skyscrapers, and warships.

leadership found in the Future Ready Dashboard:

The Future Ready Framework provides a roadmap toward digital learning; success within a district is dependent on innovative leadership at all levels. First and foremost, leaders within a district must be empowered to create cultures of innovation and must believe in the district's shared, forward-thinking vision for deeper learning through effective uses of digital, 21st century technologies (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2016a).

The FRL Framework connects librarians to the broader shared vision and strategic goals of their district. As an example, many librarians are already curating digital resources and tools, one of the components in the FRL Framework. However, the ability to link this to the curriculum, instruction, and assessment component of the broader Future Ready Framework creates new opportunities for collaboration. First, it connects work that may already be happening in the library to the work of the school or district. Second, it puts both librarians and school leaders on the same page, specifically focused on building future ready schools. Finally, it creates an opportunity for conversations around systemic innovation and change.

According to Boudrye (personal communication, July 29, 2016),

The Future Ready Librarians Framework is going to feel familiar to many teacher librarians—it's what we know we can and should be doing. But the framework provides a clear pathway for teacher librarians, teachers, and administrators who may have an outdated concept of what is possible in library programs.

### THE FRAMEWORK IN ACTION

Since the FRL announcements at ALA and ISTE, librarians, and school, district, and state leaders have begun sharing stories of how they plan to use the framework to

**Create opportunities for engagement between librarians and leadership.** The FRL Framework is a conversation starter between librarians and building and district administrators. In some cases, librarians are using it as an entry point to ask leaders, "What can I do to help us accomplish our Future Ready goals?" Administrators are using it to begin conversations with librarians about evolving and improving practices and programs. Future Ready serves as a common language and set of goals that can be shared by librarians and district leaders.

**Plan district-level professional learning.** District library and technology coordinators are inviting their district librarians to use the framework as a self-evaluation tool to identify strengths and areas for growth, both individually and as a district. These conversations are informing librarians' professional learning plans and district-level professional learning opportunities.

**Identify the expertise within a district.** The components of the FRL Framework can help spotlight specific skill sets among librarians. Once these are identified, librarians can be included in school or district work groups or committees and tagged as experts or leaders for consultation.

**Re-envision school library programs.** As states and districts seek to re-imagine and align librarians and library programs with Future Ready outcomes, the framework serves as a

useful starting point for visioning and planning.

Through generous support from Follett, FRL is now an identified strand of the Future Ready Schools initiative. Work will continue to expand awareness of the initiative to both librarian and educational leader audiences and develop implementation resources.

In 2016, Alliance for Excellent Education president Bob Wise (2016) stated,

“In today’s digital world, the school library has evolved from a place to merely check out books to one that offers opportunities for collaboration, project-based learning, and online access. Similarly, librarians are now playing central roles in school leadership and working daily with students, teachers, and administrators. Through Future Ready Librarians, school librarians will be better equipped to support teachers in their transition to a digital learning environment while themselves becoming more future ready.”

Library director Jennifer Boudrye (personal communication, July 29, 2016) shares her thoughts about FRL:

“I feel that this is one of the first times that we have clear support and direction from beyond our own choir. This feels new. It feels directly connected to work that is being done, in a direction we all need to move, and it highlights exactly what role the librarians are able to play in this movement.”

For more information about FRL, please see [FutureReady.org/Librarians](http://FutureReady.org/Librarians).

## REFERENCES

Alliance for Excellent Education (2014). *Leading in and beyond the li-*

*brary*. Retrieved from <http://all4ed.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/BeyondTheLibrary.pdf>

Alliance for Excellent Education. (2016a). *Across the gears: Collaborative leadership*. Retrieved from <https://dashboard.futurereadyschools.org/framework/empowered-innovative-leadership>

Alliance for Excellent Education. (2016b). *Future ready framework: A systemic approach to implementation*. Retrieved from <http://futureready.org/about-the-effort/take-the-pledge/>

Alliance for Excellent Education. (2016c). *Take the pledge: Join over 2,200 superintendents that have taken the pledge!* Retrieved from <http://futureready.org/about-the-effort/take-the-pledge/>.

Wise, B. (2016). *Alliance for Excellent Education: Future ready schools announces new project to recognize school librarians as leaders in school transformation*. Retrieved from <http://futureready.org/about-the-effort/librarians/>.

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## FUTURE READY RESOURCES

The following website links and documents are mentioned in the article and can be used to learn more about Future Ready schools and FRL.

*Leading in and Beyond the Library* (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2014), <http://all4ed.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/BeyondTheLibrary.pdf>

Future Ready Framework, <http://futureready.org/about-the-effort/framework/>

Future Ready Librarians, [FutureReady.org/Librarians](http://FutureReady.org/Librarians)

Future Ready Librarians Framework, <http://futureready.org/about-the-effort/librarians/>

Future Ready Partners, <http://futureready.org/about-the-effort/partners/>

Future Ready Summits and Workshops, <http://futureready.org/summits/>

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