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The School Librarian’s Summer Project List

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Sometime every March, I come to the realization that I am not going to get everything done before the end of the school year. That’s when I start my summer project list. This list is a combination of personal and professional tasks. On the personal side are projects like organizing all my photographs and reading that stack of books sitting on the floor by my bed. On the professional side are tasks such as cleaning up my e-mail and reading the other pile of books on the floor by my bed. By the time summer comes, my list is so long that I’m overwhelmed and I never get it all done.

This year, instead of working on that project list, I think I will follow some of the suggestions offered in the articles of this issue of Knowledge Quest. The authors offer a variety of ways to spend your summer, from preparing to work with your teachers and students in the coming school year to participating in learning activities for your own gratification.

Tina Genay, winner of the 2014 Innovative Reading Grant Award, tells the story of how she saw the need for her students to have access to books during the summer. How she went about meeting that need is truly innovative and inspirational.

Jennifer Colby jumped in feet first and created an opportunity for her students to have a coding experience. She has paved the way for many of us to experiment with coding and helped us to see that we can do this for our students.

Jeff Whittingham and Wendy Rickman give us some tips on how we can help our students avoid the “summer drift” through booktalking. If you need convincing that booktalking can motivate summer reading, they provide plenty of research to show how successful it can be.

Wendy Rickman also presents a study on collection development behaviors in school librarians. It is a real eye-opener and certainly gives us something to think about as we make decisions on what to add to our collections in the coming year.

Suzy Groff gives us a different take on the summer book mobile. Her story demonstrates how, with few resources and lots of creativity, it is possible to give your students a great summer reading experience.

I know this time of year is very busy, wrapping up one school year and getting ready for the next. But take some time to read this issue. It may totally change how you spend your summer.
Susan Ballard gives us some great resources for planning Banned Books Week and Banned Website Awareness Day activities. You know you need it; those events come so soon in the school year.

Rebecca J. Morris gives some great advice on how to welcome new teachers into your building and turn them into collaborative partners.

Teri S. Lesesne examines summer reading programs and offers a strategy for improvement through choice, access, soliciting responses, and providing models of enthusiasm.

Julie Marie Frye and Vaughn Nuest introduce several National Park Service sites and offer seven benefits a school librarian can gain from visiting one or more of these sites this summer.

Aaron J. Elkins urges you to play. He recommends several games that foster 21st-century literacies school librarians should explore and resources to support gaming in school libraries.

Jil’Lana Heard describes how she engages her students in recreational reading through book clubs. You’ll get lots of great ideas from her article.

Sarah Couri gives a different perspective in her article on summer reading clubs at the public library. She highlights a number of ways school librarians can partner with public librarians on these programs.

And in her online exclusive article, Jessica Klein tells a compelling story of how her community, Rockaway Beach, New York, came together in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy using social media.

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I would like to express my appreciation to the Knowledge Quest Editorial Board for giving me the opportunity to be a guest editor. It was great fun to take the theme of Summer Learning and build an entire issue around it. I felt a little bit like a detective tracking down authors who had something to say about this subject. But I couldn’t have found them all without the help of friends and colleagues who recommended topics and authors. So, thank you.

Cassandra Barnett is program advisor for school libraries at the Arkansas Department of Education. An active member of AASL, she has been a member of numerous committees and served as 2009–2010 AASL President. She co-chaired the 2003 National Conference Committee in Kansas City and co-chaired the task force that wrote the Standards for the 21st-Century Learner.