The field of school librarianship is sometimes erroneously described as a “lone ranger” profession when, in fact, one of the most ubiquitous terms in school library publications, materials, presentations, and conversations is “collaboration.” We are continuously encouraged to collaborate with classroom teachers, students, administrators, community organizations, parents, and public and academic librarians. Over time, these conversations have generated an impressive list of examples and models for collaborative projects to which school librarians may refer for guidance. Beyond one-time collaborative efforts, I have dedicated much of my career as a school library researcher to the concept of the collaborative partnership, “a long-term, mutually beneficial relationship that is nurtured to meet both professional and educational goals” (Green and Green 2014, 100). Within a collaborative partnership, mutual trust and regard are built over time, and those involved in such a structure can articulate and employ strengths, skills, and resources available to both partners.

The theme of this issue of Knowledge Quest is collaborative partnerships between school librarians and school library educators in higher education. While past issues of KQ have highlighted the research conducted by school library educators on various aspects of school library practice (for example, see the January/February 2015 issue, guest-edited by Dr. Carol A. Gordon), many of the writings in this issue focus on long-term collaborative relationships between these two groups. These articles provide excellent examples for developing collaborative partnerships that bridge research and practice.

Kaye Dotson, a school library educator at East Carolina University, and Christine Clark, a school librarian in North Carolina, developed a rich collaborative partnership that prepared and supported Christine as she became a leader in professional development at her school. Their article describes how Christine used a variety of resources—including resources at East Carolina University—to learn and grow as a technology leader. With the support of ECU, Christine was able to provide professional development opportunities for educators within and beyond the walls of her school.

My hope is that these discussions will also exemplify the need for school library educators to continuously pursue collaborative partnerships with school librarians that go beyond data collection and analysis.
Susan Grigsby of Forsyth County (GA) Schools, Jennifer Helfrich of Gwinnett County (GA) Public Schools, and Christa Deissler, a school library educator at the University of Georgia, describe a year–long collaborative partnership between school librarians, school library media coordinators, and school library educators in the state of Georgia. The work of the Georgia School Library Media Consortium resulted in a professional–evaluation instrument that advocates for strong school library programs—and does so in a language and format accessible to K–12 administrators. The instrument developed by the consortium is available as an online exclusive.

Meghan Harper, a school library program coordinator at Kent State University, and Liz Deskins, a high school librarian, engaged in an action research project to assess and advocate for innovative design changes in Liz’s school library, a relatively new space. Liz realized she needed data to make the case for these changes—changes that would support the prolific use of technology at her campus. This partnership helped Liz with funding and data analysis, and, in the process, strengthened her voice within the school community.

Eileen Schroeder, a school library educator at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, and Stacy Fisher, a school librarian, describe advocacy and professional–recruiting efforts in Wisconsin through a partnership called Wisconsin’s Emerging Roles of Librarians (ERL). Eileen and Stacy were instrumental in the establishment of ERL, which comprised educators from the University of Wisconsin School Library Education Consortium, members of the Wisconsin Educational Media and Technology Association, and staffers at the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. The ERL worked with exemplary school librarians to recruit future school librarians, as well as inform teachers and administrators of the changing nature of school librarianship and its impact on student academic achievement.

Craig Shepherd and his team at the University of Wyoming present an exciting and unique approach to collaborative partnerships between higher education and school librarians. In this article, the authors discuss establishing and conducting a program that provided pre–service teachers with service–learning opportunities in school libraries. The possibilities suggested by this project, which combined the resources and expertise of school librarians and teacher educators, will inspire you! Pre–K–12 students, pre–service teachers (some in the early stages of their training), and school library programs all benefited from the collaboration.

These articles invite you to consider the possibilities of partnering with school library educators and other higher education faculty to extend the reach of your school library program. My hope is that these discussions will also exemplify the need for school library educators to continuously pursue collaborative partnerships with school librarians that go beyond data collection and analysis. Like wings on an airplane, research and practice cannot function without the other.

But wait! There’s more! I’ve described only some of the collaborations and topics explored in this issue. Be sure to check the table of contents; in this issue we have food for thought for everyone!

Lucy Santos Green is an associate professor of instructional technology and the program director for the MEd in Instructional Technology and School Library Media at Georgia Southern University. She is past president of the School Media Technology Division for the Association for Educational Communications and Technology, a member of the 2015 national conference planning committee for AASL, and the chair of AASL’s Best Websites for Teaching and Learning Committee. She coauthored (with Stephanie Jones) “Instructional Partners in Digital Library Learning Spaces,” which was published in the March/April 2014 issue of KQ and was named a 2014 Top Twenty Library Instruction article by ALA’s Library Instruction Round Table. A member of ALA, International Association of School Librarianship, and Association for Library and Information Science Education, Lucy frequently researches and publishes on global school librarianship, school librarians in digital learning environments, and instructional partnerships between school librarians and other education professionals.

Work Cited: