Educators are very aware of standards such as state content curriculum standards, Common Core State Standards, AASL's Standards for the 21st-Century Learner, and ISTE's National Educational Technology Standards-Students (NETS-S). They work to increase knowledge and understanding of these standards so that they can weave them together to plan, implement, and evaluate instruction. But what about professional standards for the library field? While licensure and certification requirements vary from state to state, what goes into the preparation of a good, strong librarian who positively impacts student learning? What should those coming into the field know and be able to do?

This article will take a brief look at the history of preparation program standards, the framework of the NCATE program report and review process, and the new ALA/AASL Standards for Initial Preparation of School Librarians (2010).

History of Preparation Program Standards

Many programs that prepare school librarians are housed within education units at colleges and universities. Beginning in 1988, the American Library Association (ALA) partnered with the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), “an agency authorized by the federal government to accredit units within colleges and universities that prepare classroom teachers and other pre K-12 school personnel.

…NCATE's mission is to provide leadership in developing a system of quality assurance for the teaching profession” (http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/aasl/aasleducation/schoollibrary/NCATEPop-up.cfm). ALA delegated the responsibility for guidelines development and folio review to the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) in 2003. Working through ALA's Office of Accreditation, AASL has developed preparation program guidelines and standards and has provided teams of program reviewers composed of school library education faculty and practitioners within the field.

In the 1990s and early 2000s, programs were evaluated using the Curriculum Folio Guidelines for the NCATE Review Process—School Library Media Specialist—Basic Preparation, which were based on the 1988 publication Information Power: Guidelines for School Library Media Programs. Programs gained recognition by submitting curriculum folios for review. These folios consisted of an overview and scope of the program, a matrix demonstrating how competencies were addressed in various courses, and course descriptions and syllabi for all courses in the program. Competencies addressed included: Professional studies in teacher education, Professionalism, Communications and group dynamics, Collection management, Organization, Instructional leadership, and Access (American Association of School Librarians 1989). National recognition is earned when a program successfully addresses these competencies in its courses.

In 2003, NCATE approved the ALA/ AASL Standards for Initial Programs for School Library Media Specialist Preparation. Using this set of standards, updated to reflect concepts and content from the 1998 Information Power: Building Partnerships for Learning, programs seeking national recognition were required to address the following four standards:

▶ Use of Information and Ideas (Efficient and ethical information-seeking behavior, Literacy and reading, Access to information, Stimulating learning environment);
▶ Teaching and Learning (Knowledge of learners and learning, Effective and knowledgeable teacher, Information literacy curriculum);
▶ Collaboration and Leadership (Connection with the library community, Instructional partner, Educational leader); and
▶ Program Administration (Managing information resources, Managing program resources, Comprehensive and collaborative strategic planning and assessment).

During this time period, NCATE revised its program review process as well. National recognition was no longer based on content covered in courses but rather
on candidate outcomes. National recognition requires that programs, from this point on, provide data demonstrating that candidates have mastered the standards.

Program Report and Review Process

As required by NCATE, the Program Report for the Preparation of School Librarians—American Library Association/American Association for School Librarians must be submitted. Central to the program report are the six to eight assessments that show how candidates in the program demonstrate mastery of the program standards. Assessments must come from classes that all candidates in the program are required to take. Assessments one and two must show candidates’ content knowledge in the field of school librarianship. If a state requires a licensure test, this test data must be submitted for assessment one. Comprehensive exams or portfolios are sometimes submitted for assessment two. Assessment three must demonstrate candidates’ ability to plan to meet library program needs, while assessment four must come from the practicum or internship. Assessment five must show candidates’ effect on student learning; programs frequently submit collaborative lessons for assessment five. An additional requirement is that programs “include assessments that address collaborative instruction, comprehensive reading encouragement, and integration of technology” (http://aims.nocate.org/ProgRev/Agreements/Form203.pdf). Assessments six through eight can be used to address these requirements.

A report by the school librarianship preparation program is submitted to NCATE, complete with assessments, candidate data, and an analysis of how assessment results are used to improve not only the program but also candidate performance. A team of three trained reviewers then evaluates the program, using the National Recognition Report Initial Preparation of School Library Media Specialists. Following this evaluation, the review team awards one of three program recognition decisions: Nationally Recognized, Nationally Recognized with Conditions, or Further Development Required/Nationally Recognized with Probation/Not Nationally Recognized. Currently there are thirty-nine nationally recognized school librarian preparation programs in the United States (ALA/NCATE-AASL Reviewed and Approved SLM Education Programs). A list of these programs is available on the AASL Web site (http://www.al.org/ala/mgrps/divs/aasl/aasleducation/schoollibrary/ncateaasl-reviewed.cfm).

Initial Preparation of School Librarians was approved on October 24, 2010, by the NCATE Specialty Areas Studies Board. The ALA/AASL Standards for Initial Preparation of School Librarians (2010) reflect the concepts found in Empowering Learners: Guidelines for School Library Programs and in AASL’s Standards for the 21st-Century Learner. They contain five standards, each with four elements. The five standards are Teaching for Learning, Literacy and Reading, Information and Knowledge, Advocacy and Leadership, and Program Management and Administration.

▶ Standard 1: Teaching for Learning was deliberately placed as Standard

▶ Are school librarians entering the field prepared to teach for learning, promote literacy and reading, administer their programs, advocate for students and the profession, and serve as instructional leaders within their schools?

▶ What quality assurance is in place to ensure that newly prepared librarians have the required knowledge and skills?

Important Information in the ALA/AASL Standards for Initial Preparation of School Librarians

As required by NCATE, program standards are on a seven-year cycle for review and revision. In 2008, the AASL/NCATE Coordinating Committee began the standards revision process. They solicited comments on the current standards through various professional listserves, developed revised standards, and held hearings at the 2009 and 2010 ALA Midwinter and Annual Conferences. The final draft of the revised standards was posted for public comment in spring 2010 and submitted to NCATE for approval in August. The ALA/AASL Standards for

One to reflect the importance of the school librarian’s teaching role in 21st-century schools. Elements in this standard include Knowledge of learners and learning, Effective and knowledgeable teacher, Instructional partner, and Integration of 21st-century skills and learning standards. To demonstrate mastery of this standard, candidates must show that they are effective teachers who are able to collaborate, provide instruction in multiple literacies, foster inquiry-based learning, and integrate 21st-century skills instruction into the content curriculum.

▶ Standard 2: Literacy and Reading was elevated from an element within a standard in the 2003 standards to standard level to reflect its impor-
tance in school library programs. Elements include Literature, Reading promotion, Respect for diversity, and Literacy strategies. To demonstrate mastery of this standard, candidates must be familiar with a wide range of literature and be able to promote reading for leisure and enjoyment, develop library collections that support students’ diverse learning needs, and reinforce reading instructional strategies that strengthen students’ comprehension skills.

**Standard 3: Information and Knowledge** focuses on access to information and generation of knowledge. Elements include Efficient and ethical information-seeking behavior, Access to information, Information technology, and Research and knowledge creation. To demonstrate mastery of this standard, candidates model and promote ethical and equitable access to information in all formats; they are able to collect, interpret, and use data to generate knowledge to improve practice.

**Standard 4: Advocacy and Leadership** emphasizes the importance of the leadership role of the 21st-century librarian. Elements include Networking with the library community, Professional development, Leadership, and Advocacy. To demonstrate mastery of this standard, candidates must show that they are able to connect with the larger library community, value ongoing professional growth, are able to take an instructional leadership role within their schools, and can develop an advocacy plan for their libraries.

**Standard 5: Program Management and Administration** addresses knowledge and skills needed to effectively administer a 21st-century library program. Elements include Collections; Professional ethics; Personnel, funding, and facilities; and Strategic planning and assessment. To demonstrate mastery of this standard, candidates must show that they are able to implement principles of collection development and put into practice the various codes of professional ethics; can practice solid management in the area of staff, budgeting, and facilities; and can plan strategically to support the school’s mission and goals.

The full text of the 2010 standards, including rubrics that reviewers can use to evaluate a program and research in support of each standard, can be found at the ALA Web site (http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/aasleducation/schoollibrary/2010_AASL_standards_schoollibrarian_preparation_approved.pdf) (accessed December 16, 2010).

**In Summary**

Training for program report writers and reviewers is held regularly at the ALA Midwinter and Annual Conference. A session is also scheduled for the AASL 15th National Conference in Minneapolis in October 2011. Becoming a program reviewer allows school librarians to contribute to the future of the profession.

Are school librarians entering the field prepared to teach for learning, promote literacy and reading, administer their programs, advocate for students and the profession, and serve as instructional leaders within their schools? What quality assurance is in place to ensure that newly prepared librarians have the required knowledge and skills? These recently approved ALA/AASL Standards for Initial Preparation of School Librarians can provide insight to the answers for these essential questions.

**Future NCATE Name Change**

In October 2010, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) agreed to merge to create a new accrediting organization for educator preparation: the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). This name change will go into effect in the near future. The program review process to earn national recognition will remain the same.