



CSLA's

INFORMATION LITERACY SUMMITS

AT CUE CONFERENCES



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Why CSLA Partners with CUE

Cultivating partnerships is a crucial advocacy strategy for school library associations building support for the work we do. School librarians can't do their work in isolation, so it makes sense for our associations to reach out to other associations whose members work with or could potentially support school libraries and school library staff.

In California partnership-building is especially important, since we have a dire shortage of school librarians. With just 859 credentialed school librarians reported as working in school libraries in 2014–2015, California is consistently last in the nation in the ratio of school librarians to students (California Dept. of Ed. 2017). In the majority of schools—and even in whole districts—teachers, administrators, and other staff have no experience working with a trained librarian. Indeed, with losses in school librarian jobs over many years, most school principals do not even remember having someone in that role while they themselves were students. These principals do not know what services a school librarian provides and have no concept of what they and their students are missing. Through state, regional, and district-level partnerships, we have a chance to make school librarians and the value of our work visible to educators who would otherwise not know what we do. We also have the opportunity to cultivate relationships so that others may speak up for us when we are absent at a policy-making table.

The California School Library Association (CSLA) is fortunate to have a strong, long-standing partnership with CUE (formerly Computer-Using Educators). CUE is the West Coast affiliate of the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE). CUE's membership is in the high thousands, and its annual

conferences attract approximately 7,000 attendees from all segments of education. It is the largest organization of its type in the western United States and one of the largest in the nation. It serves primarily California, as well as surrounding states. CUE's reach is, therefore, on a scale about ten times that of CSLA's, with our 700 members and conference attendance of approximately 625 each year.

As part of the CSLA-CUE partnership, we support each other's advocacy and marketing efforts. We exchange complimentary booth privileges and publicity at our annual conferences. When we were advocating at the California State Board of Education in 2010 for the adoption of the *Model School Library Standards for California Public Schools* (which have been adopted, see <www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/documents/librarystandards.pdf>), Mike Lawrence, CUE CEO at the time, was one of the speakers. We have periodically participated in membership incentives allowing CSLA members to become CUE members at a reduced rate. Glen Warren, the CSLA vice president of government relations, and Renée Ousley-Swank, CSLA president-elect, cochair the CUE Library Media Educator Network, one of CUE's special interest groups. Glen also represents CSLA and school libraries on the CUE Advocacy Committee.

Information Literacy Summits at CUE Conferences

In 2014 we took our partnership to a new level when our two associations agreed to have CSLA host a day-long Information Literacy Summit within the CUE Annual Conference. This now-annual summit has provided a number of benefits for both associations.

First, here is a snapshot of how the summit is organized. The summit consists of four sessions held during the four concurrent-session time slots on one of the CUE conference days. For the first time slot, we have a summit keynoter who is engaged by CUE as one of its Spotlight Speakers. CUE features several crowd-drawing speakers at each conference and pays them an honorarium and expenses. These Spotlight Speakers present three sessions during the conference. Since we began the summit, our keynoters (all financed by CUE) have been Gwyneth Jones (2014), Kathy Schrock (2015), Joyce Valenza (2016), and Mark Ray (2017), all outstanding leaders in our field. They were all selected through mutual agreement between CSLA and CUE. The other three summit sessions are presented by CSLA members and selected by CSLA's summit organizers. The selection process involves our identifying literacy-related topics of most interest to both school librarians and other teachers, and inviting some of our very best member practitioners and presenters. Conference attendees can come to the entire summit, or any one or more of the sessions. The audience is always a mix of school library professionals and other educators.

So, what are the benefits? CUE's conference organizers benefit from having sessions and speakers that will attract more school librarians and library support staff to attend the conference. While CSLA has its own annual conference and regular regional workshops, many school library professionals do their best to put CUE on their event attendance

list as well, or even instead of our own conference, in part because of these attractive summit keynoters. CUE appreciates getting a high turnout of attendees from the school library world. Likewise, we appreciate that the summit attracts school librarians who are not CSLA members, and we have the opportunity to publicize our association and encourage new members to join. We also appreciate CUE's financial support of nationally recognized speakers we want to hear and interact with. In addition to the keynoters at our CSLA conferences, we get a second chance each year right in California to hear from national thought leaders.

For CSLA and our school library advocacy efforts, the summit means that CUE and its attendees hear from high-profile, nationally

recognized school librarians as spotlight speakers. CUE members also learn about topics of value for all educators—but from the perspective of a school librarian. Unfortunately, with the dismal 1:7,187 ratio of credentialed librarians to students in California reported in 2014–2015 (California Dept. of Ed. 2017), many of the state's teachers and administrators lack experience in what a school librarian can provide. The CUE sessions may be the place where they find out what they



Gwyneth Jones, CSLA Information Literacy Summit Keynote, presenting and having her session recorded during the CUE Conference, March 2014.

are missing at their own schools, and become aware of the special expertise school librarians have to teach information literacy, digital literacy, and digital citizenship to students and to provide their teachers with professional development. In addition, those who attend the other summit sessions see that there are students and schools in California benefitting from school librarians' expertise. Perhaps this knowledge will encourage teachers to contemplate advocating to use local funding to get such staffing in their schools. The CSLA Summit raises awareness among CUE members of what school libraries and librarians do.

Finally, everyone benefits from the expertise shared in literacy-related sessions delivered by skilled library practitioners and from the networking and new relationships school librarians and other educators develop with one another both during the sessions and through interactions in between.

What You Can Do

Do consider having your own school library association reach out to your regional technology association, start cooperating, and propose offering a summit during the tech association's conference that will reach both school librarians and other educators. Everyone wins from this replicable partnership model! And, do not stop there. Think about other types of partnerships your association can develop. Below are a few ideas, based on CSLA's outreach efforts over the years.

Book award program partnerships: The California Young Reader Medal Program, established in 1974, encourages students to read, nominate, and vote for favorite books each year. It is administered through a partnership between CSLA and the California Reading Association, the California Association of Teachers

of English, and the California Library Association. The goal of the program is to inspire recreational reading by students, but the work of the committee also makes school librarians visible to other librarians and English teachers who may support us in other venues.

Reciprocal presentations at conferences: At some of our recent conferences, CSLA has invited other associations to partner with us by making a presentation and sharing in our exhibit hall. In 2016, for example, these associations accepted our offers: California Association for Teachers of English, California Library Association, California Reading Association, California Art Education Association, California Council for Social Studies, California Mathematics Council, California Science Teachers Association, and CUE. We have not, thus far, built this concept into ongoing reciprocal arrangements, but perhaps we will be able to in the future. Some of our members have taken the personal initiative to propose sessions at subject-area conferences and have thereby been able to share their expertise with teachers who might not have on-site librarians. School librarians typically have closer relationships with English and social studies teachers than with STEM teachers, but I have done some of my best collaborative units with science and math teachers. It would behoove us to reach out to all the subject areas. Why not, for example, propose a session at a computer science teachers' conference?

Union partnerships: CSLA has a long-standing relationship with the California Teachers Association (CTA). CTA funds a school librarian representative's attendance at CSLA's board meetings to report on CTA activities, and learn about CSLA activities to report to CTA. A

number of our members, working in their local districts, have been able to work with their unions to get support for school libraries. Repeatedly, we see that school librarians who are willing to become active volunteers in their unions can leverage that involvement to get better union support for libraries and librarians.

We all need to think beyond the obvious and brainstorm within our own state associations and local regions about different types of groups we can partner with for mutual benefit. The more we do, the more others will know and understand our work and become our advocates.



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California, before retiring in 2016. She is now a library advocate and part-time instructor in the Rutgers University librarian preparation program. She is a past president and honorary member of the California School Library Association. She was recently the chair of AASL's Social Media Recognition Committee and social media chair for the November 2017 AASL National Conference. She is the current chair of AASL's Best Websites for Teaching and Learning Committee. She served as co-coordinator of CSLA's CUE conference summit from 2014 through 2017. Read more about her experiences on Twitter @jane_librarian and her blog at <www.janelofton.com>.

Work Cited:

California Department of Education. 2017. "Statistics about California School Libraries." <www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/lb/schoollibrstats08.asp> (accessed October 2, 2017).