The Library of Congress Educational Outreach Division, in October of 2008, asked seventeen practicing educators for input on how to teach other teachers about primary sources as well as how to integrate them into their classroom instruction. These seventeen educators came from locations across the country and included teachers from a variety of grade levels, professors, and school librarians.

Vision for Professional Development

In designing their vision of online professional development, the Library of Congress chose to align the proposed content with the American Association of School Librarians' (AASL) Standards for the 21st-Century Learner, the International Society of Technology in Education's (ISTE) National Education Technology Standards for Teachers, and the National Staff Development Council (NSDC) Professional Development Standards. AASL was, therefore, asked to nominate two members with an interest in primary sources and standards based teaching. As a result, Kathy Lehman from Virginia and the author of this article, Melissa Johnston, were nominated to serve on this committee to represent school librarians.

The goal of this project is to provide wider professional development opportunities for educators that will enable them to learn how to use primary sources in the classroom. Primary sources provide an engaging way to teach students not only about the past, but also about current events, and all curricular content areas. The use of these digital resources encourages critical thinking skills, promotes inquiry, and provides a way to integrate technology into instruction. The resources found at the Library of Congress site can and should be an integral part in teaching students critical thinking and inquiry skills they need as 21st-century learners.

When the committee first met last October, lessons that had been developed by library staff and educators from Teaching with Primary Sources (TPS) partners were reviewed. These lessons were examined for connections to standards, applicability, usability, and relevance to the K-12 community content areas. This review process took place in face-to-face meetings at the Library of Congress and included intensive examinations and edits of each activity by multiple pairs of educators. This work then continued virtually throughout the year. The results of these efforts were unveiled at National Education Computing Conference (NECC) in July with the launch of TPS Direct.

What Is TPS Direct?

In order to make their professional development offerings available to the widest audience possible, the Library of Congress has designed a truly flexible and customizable delivery method that offers multiple avenues to learn how to integrate primary sources into teaching. Participants not only become familiar with the Library of Congress'
digital primary sources, but also learn to understand the value of using primary sources in instruction, and to create inquiry-based learning experiences for their students.

**Professional Development Builder**

Users can customize a plan and activities using the Professional Development Builder, which allows choices to be made based on the needs of those receiving the training (see Figure 1, right). This easy-to-use tool guides users step-by-step in selecting activities for an individualized professional development plan and in identifying the resources to use for training educators.

Modules in the database begin with a basic overview to guide participants in defining what primary sources are for anyone new to using them. More advanced modules are also included that introduce how to analyze primary sources and address ethical use and copyright issues. Additionally, there are modules on teaching with primary sources to meet content standards and make connections for students. Finally, there are activities for teachers to introduce the integration of primary sources into the inquiry process. Once activities are selected, they are combined with the primary source materials needed to teach the activities and, then, are compiled into a PDF file that can be easily downloaded and printed.

**Self-Paced Option**

Self-paced interactives are also available so participants can work through the content at their own pace (see Figure 2, right). These modules integrate multimedia and create an engaging interactive one-hour professional development experience. The topics include: a basic introduction to the Library of Congress and primary sources, information on how to navigate the Library of Congress Web site, searching tips and techniques in order to locate the

---

**Figure 1. Professional Development Plan Builder**

![Professional Development Plan Builder](image)

**Figure 2. Self-Directed Modules**

![Self-Directed Modules](image)
resources needed, a look at the American Memory Collection pieces that can be used in the classroom, and finally, a review of the resources found on the America's Story page for younger children and The Learning Page resources for educators (The Library of Congress 2009).

How Can School Librarians Use TPS Direct?

All school librarians should be an active part of their schools' professional learning activities. TPS Direct can provide an opportunity for school librarians to provide leadership and serve as a resource for teachers by showing them how to effectively integrate these digital resources into their instruction. These new online modules can also provide a cost-effective way for school librarians to provide professional learning experiences for teachers that will impact student learners as well. A professional development plan for the teachers can be effectively designed to meet the curricular needs of their specific grade level and students. The Professional Development Builder allows the school librarian to create activities that are meaningful and relevant to each group, customized to grade level and needs.

Flexibility

The possibilities for using the Self-Directed Modules are endless! For example, participants could work through some of the self-paced activities for background knowledge before face-to-face training sessions and, thus, reduce meeting time. There is even a certificate of verification that participants can print out as they complete the interactives.

One of the most common complaints from teachers, when using primary sources from the Library of Congress, is that they cannot easily search and find items they need. The professional development and teaching tools found in TPS Direct can help educators easily identify and locate excellent sources within the Library of Congress collection. These resources can be used to build students' critical thinking skills in an engaging way.

The Self-Directed section, available online anytime, can serve as a reference after training to help busy teachers navigate the Library of Congress' immense collection of resources. These self-directed interactives can also provide professional development opportunities for school librarians themselves to expand their knowledge and use of these resources.

Overall, the Self-Directed modules provide a great opportunity for professional growth that allows participants to work at their own pace, when the need occurs, and at a time that is convenient.

Implementing 21st-Century Learning Standards

As school librarians search for ways to put AASL's Standards for the 21st-Century Learner into action, primary sources offer a great opportunity. It is also important to note that several states now require knowledge and understanding of primary sources in the content area curriculum standards. School librarians can use TPS Direct with teachers to illustrate how they can develop information skills and meet content standards with lessons that integrate these resources.

The pairing of TPS Direct and AASL's Standards for the 21st-Century Learner is natural because both have an inquiry focus. Using primary sources in instruction is a great way for learners to "use skills, resources, and tools to: inquire, think critically, and gain knowledge;" and to "draw conclusions, make informed decisions, apply knowledge to new situations, and create new knowledge" (AASL 2007, 3-4). For example, many of the skills in Standard 1 relate to following an inquiry process, questioning, and making sense of information. Some of the activities found in the Professional Development Builder that reflect these skills include Analyzing Photographs, Analyzing Maps, and Connecting with Primary Sources. The wonderful aspect of TPS Direct content is that it includes several examples tied to standards in a variety of curricular areas and grade levels. TPS Direct is yet another way for school librarians to work with teachers to impact student learning.

Work in Progress

The Library of Congress launched TPS Direct at the July 2009 NECC Conference, but this project is still a work in progress. The Review Committee met again after the Conference launch to test and critique the Web site and to further review more modules that should be released before the end of the 2009. The online nature of the content facilitates constant updates and changes as needed. The Library's content is applicable for educators across all grade levels and content areas and can be used independently or integrated into other professional development programs. Most importantly, this resource can be an integral tool in helping school librarians implement AASL's Standards for the 21st-Century Learner.

References


Melissa P. Johnston has been an elementary school librarian in Georgia for the past twelve years and is currently pursuing her Ph.D. in Library and Information Science at Florida State University. Johnston was a member of the AASL Standards for Learning Task Force for the recently published Standards for the 21st-Century Learner in Action. Email: mpj07@fsu.edu