

The Origin of BAISL

(Written by Jane Lesh; edited by Carolyn Karis)

BAISL was born from need.

In the seventies, a small group of independent school librarians met in San Francisco a couple of times a year. They met when one of them had a problem, or needed advice, or a shoulder to cry on. They referred to themselves as the least organized library organization in the world, but planned to get organized “someday.”

The catalyst to organize more formally came when they attended a CAIS program on the peninsula and met some other CAIS librarians. Listening to the prominent library director from the East explain how to run a library with a staff of 16, they realized that organization might give them more influence. As they were still trying to get part-time clerical help and trying to make sure their libraries were used for study and research and not as study halls, they realized that strength in numbers might make achievement of their modest goals more feasible. They knew they needed to get organized enough to design the programs they needed.

They met in San Francisco in 1978 and 1979 at Schools of the Sacred Heart on Broadway. They decided to meet on a regular basis, and started calling themselves the Bay Area Independent School Librarians or BAISL.

And they decided that the important thing about being a member wasn't whether the school was in CAIS, or if you had a special degree, but that you could mutually give support and encouragement to independent school librarians by sharing expertise, materials, programs and solutions.

The Founders of BAISL were Jane Lesh, Eloise Andrus, Brenda Brown, Eleni Coltos, Jane Folz, Ann Ogilvie, and Kit Wilson.