

# Children the journal of the Association for Library Service to Children & Libraries

Volume 5 Number 1 Spring 2007 ISSN 1542-9806



**ALSC**

Association for Library Service to Children  
50 East Huron Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611

Celebrating Día  
Special Section: Graphic Novels • Reading Readiness

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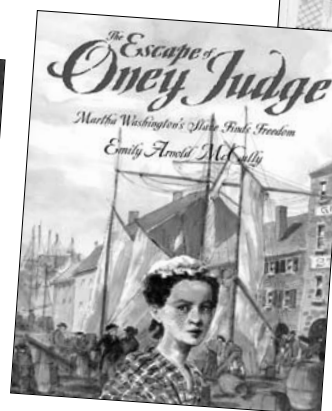
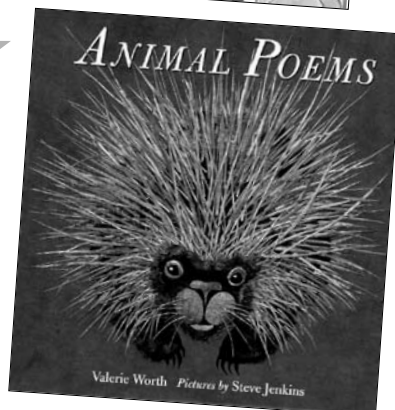
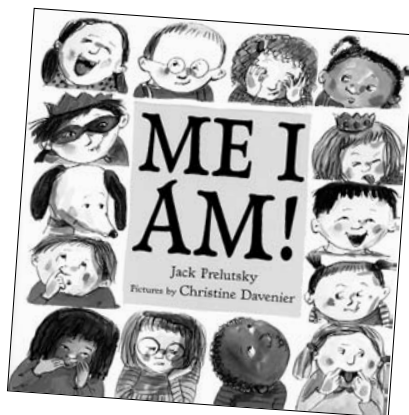
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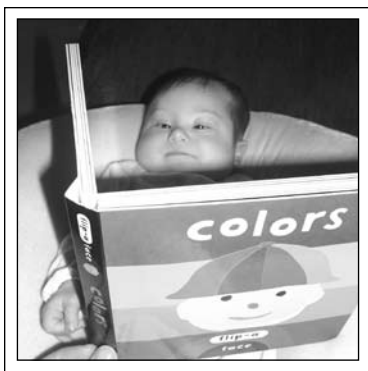
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Cover features a photo of the children of Ballet Papatlotl dancing at the 2006 *El día de los niños/El día de los libros* celebration at Midland Regional Library, a branch of Multnomah County (Ore.) Library.



Holland Verbeten and one of her beloved board books.

## Editor's Note Board Book Flashback

Sharon Verbeten

These past few months have been a flashback and, concurrently, a flash forward for me. I've been reading a thick stack of board books lately to my infant daughter, Holland. Right now, she just gapes at the big colorful pictures and occasionally tries to grab a page.

Reading the books is a flashback to my days as a children's librarian in Milwaukee, when I always took such joy in conducting storytimes. Even when the kids' eyes were roaming or they were a bit fidgety, I always felt like I was contributing something to their future.

My flash forward is looking ahead to the role reading will play in Holland's life. I've worn the hats of reader and writer almost all my life. Now in my role as mom, I feel even more strongly about fostering a love of reading in my daughter.

So, by the time you've finished reading this issue, I'll have finished probably twenty more board books or so. It's a pleasant diversion, one I'm sure you love as well.

Whether you have a new baby, grandchild, or just a new face in your storytime, continue to foster the love of reading in any children you encounter. And, hopefully, someday they'll thank you. Every time I hear Holland make an unintelligible babble, that's what I imagine she's saying. ☺



## Executive Director's Note Celebrate! Celebremos!

Diane Foote

The joyful image on the cover of this issue exemplifies the spirit of *El día de los niños/El día de los libros* (Children's Day/Book Day), known as Día. By the time you read this, the hundreds of Día celebrations that are taking place in libraries nationwide on or around April 30 will be over, but we hope the appreciation of children, literacy and language, and culture lasts far beyond the actual events.

Award-winning children's book author Pat Mora founded Día in 1996, and eleven years later, we've heard from nearly 350 libraries in thirty-five states about their Día plans and are celebrating our first year with Target, the official national sponsor of Día.

We hope you enjoy this issue's article on Pat Mora and the political aspects of literacy, as well as the timely features on graphic novels and the pieces on reading readiness. ☺

# Children & Libraries

the journal of the Association for  
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### Statement of Purpose

*Children and Libraries* is the official journal of ALSC, a division of the American Library Association. The journal primarily serves as a vehicle for continuing education of librarians working with children, which showcases current scholarly research and practice in library service to children and spotlights significant activities and programs of the Association. (From the journal's "Policies and Procedures" document adopted by the ALSC board, April 2004.)

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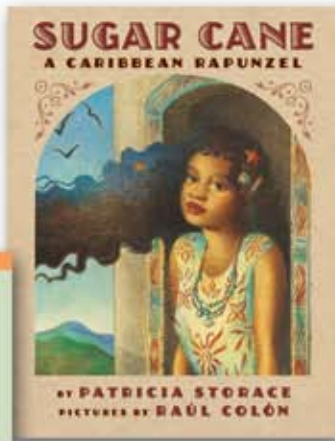
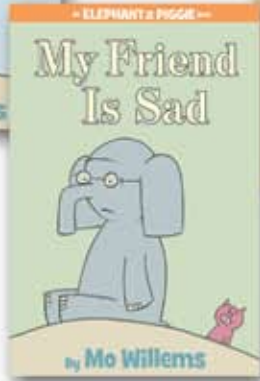
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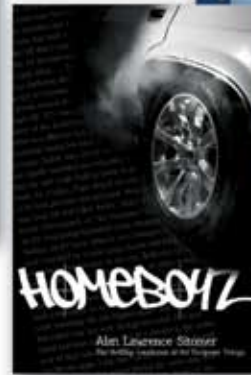
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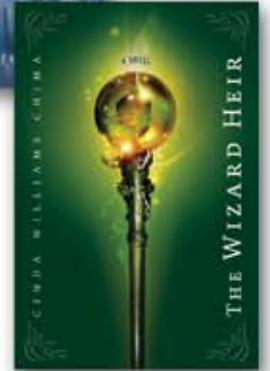
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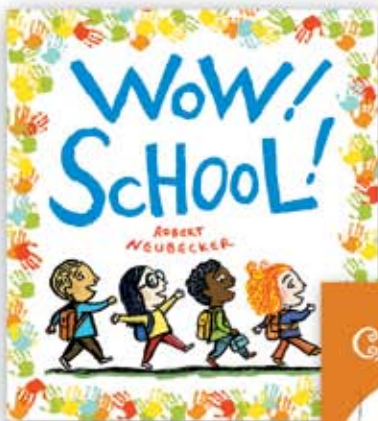


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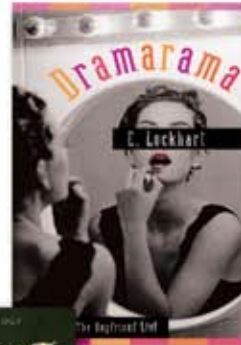
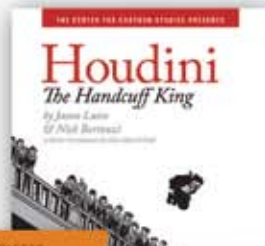
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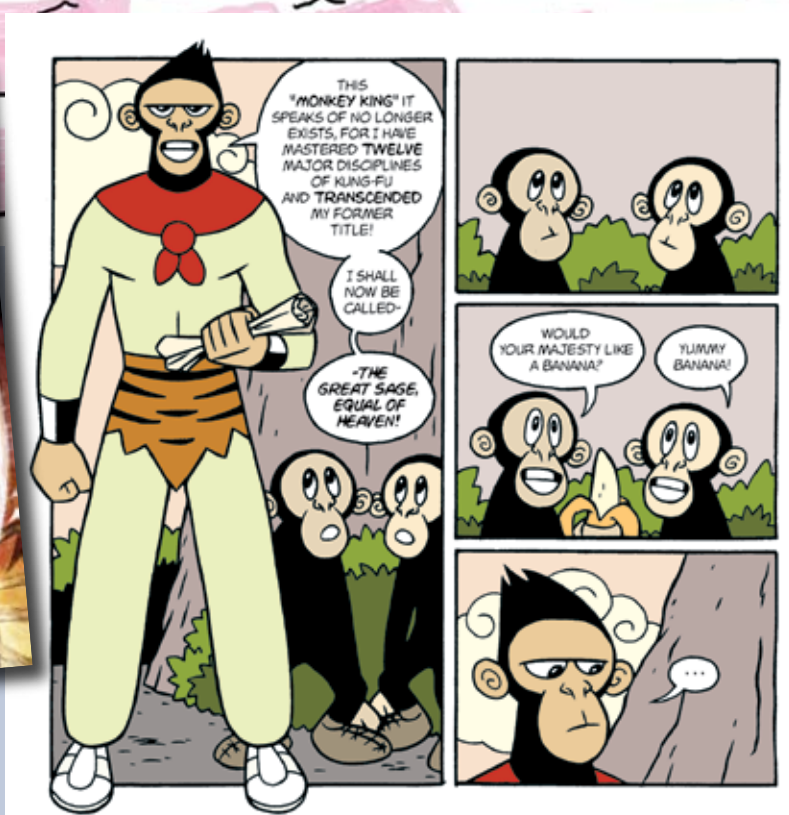


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# Getting Graphic

The Rise of Graphic Novels for Children

Top: Babymouse artwork courtesy Matthew Holm and Random House Children's Books; bottom, left to right: *Bone* and *Goosebumps* covers courtesy Scholastic, interior of *American Born Chinese* courtesy First Second.

# Got Graphic Novels?

## More Than Just Superheroes in Tights!

By Zahra M. Baird and Tracey Jackson

Either you get it, or you don't. Simply put, graphic novels get kids reading. Graphic novels use both words and pictures to appeal to readers of all ages; as the popularity of this format has grown, so has the genre's value, literary prowess, and role as a pathway to literacy.

Graphic novels are here to stay. A successful graphic novel starts with a stellar story told with words and pictures that augment the story, providing insight that text alone cannot do. Fans of the genre love graphic novels. Why? Because even before they pick them up, the covers capture their attention. Once opened, the story unfolds between the panels, steadily pulling readers in, quickly and completely. Like all good literature, the graphic novel moves readers to experience story. We love graphic novels. Why? Because even before we pick them up, the covers capture our attention. Once opened, the story unfolds between the panels, steadily pulling us in, quickly and completely. Like all good literature, the graphic novel moves us to experience story.

The wide range of genres and themes that graphic novels explore include: adventure, legends, fantasy, memoirs, comedy, horror, social issues, religion, and biography. Most graphic novels are original stories, though many classic works of literature have been adapted to the format.

And this year, the graphic novel is finally getting its due. The Young Adult Library Services Association awarded its 2007 Michael L. Printz Award for Excellence in Young Adult Literature to *American Born Chinese* by Gene Luen Yang (First Second, 2006), which chronicles a Chinese American teenager's effort to overcome racial stereotypes. *To Dance: A Ballerina's Graphic Novel* by Siena Cherson Siegel and Mark Siegel (Simon & Schuster/Aladdin, 2006) is an inspirational graphic memoir whose story and artwork merge, enabling readers to experience a girl following her dream. The Association for Library Service to Children named it a Robert F. Sibert Honor Book, making it

the first legitimate recognition of a graphic novel as successfully presenting, organizing, and interpreting documentable, factual material for children.

### History of the Graphic Novel

The graphic novel has had a colorful, shifting past and continues to evolve everyday. Will Eisner, the modern godfather of graphic novels, wrote *A Contract with God* (Baronet Pr., 1978), considered one of the first graphic novels. Art Spiegelman also helped set the cornerstone for graphic novels with his 1992 Pulitzer Prize-winning *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* (Scholastic, 1992). In 2005, Scholastic created an imprint called Graphix, launching it with a full-color version of *Bone Volume 1: Out from Boneville* (Cartoon Bks., 1995).

Definitions for graphic novels are rampant. The most straightforward comes from Allyson A. W. Lyga: "The graphic novel is usually a monographic work and has a storyline with a start and a finish. It is published on an independent schedule and is typically in bound book format (trade paperback) and has a higher quality."<sup>1</sup>

Many books incorporate comic-style illustrations, such as dialog balloons, and are sprinkled with panels while retaining the feel of the traditional chapter book. Differing from Western graphic novels, manga (Japanese comics) are a collection unto themselves; characters have overstated features, and heavy

*Zahra M. Baird is a Children's Librarian at the Chappaqua Library in Chappaqua, New York, and Tracey Jackson is a recent MLS graduate from the Palmer School at Long Island (N.Y.) University. Both enjoy reading and sharing graphic novels.*

emphasis is placed on the pictorial cues rather than on the text.

### Notable Graphic Novels

The scope and quality of graphic novels is wide. *Amelia Rules, Volume Three: Superheroes* by Jimmy Gownley (Renaissance Pr., 2006) is notable for the way it shows children dealing with tough life issues such as divorce, moving, death of a friend, and being bullied.

Breathing depth and dimension into a historical American figure is *Mother Jones: Labor Leader* (Graphic Library, 2006) by Connie Colwell Miller and Steve Erwin. This graphic biography has chapters, a glossary, bibliography, suggested further readings, an index, and a guide to related Web sites—all elements found in a traditional biography.

*Babymouse: Beach Babe* by Jennifer Holm and Matthew Holm (Random House, 2006) suits young readers and provides good, clean fun paired with a character possessing an active imagi-

nation. Color is used creatively in this graphic novel to highlight dreams.

### The Graphic Novel Debate

Arguments exist among librarians against establishing a graphic novel collection. Age-unsuitable content (violence, sexuality, nudity, and stereotypes) can be dealt with by locating graphic novel collections in what the library deems an appropriate section. Weak bindings and difficulty ordering replacement titles are not unique to the graphic novel format. The pros seem to outweigh the cons, as graphic novels appeal to many children including visual learners, reluctant and struggling readers, budding artists, fun seekers, and pleasure readers.

What trends will shape the future of graphic novels? Will librarians and publishers work together to set industry standards? Will more nonfiction subject matter be published in this format?

The graphic novel has the appeal, popularity, and literary value to spark the

imagination and motivate children to read. So the question the authors leave you with is this, “got graphic?” ☺

### Reference

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- Eisner, Will. *A Contract with God: And Other Tenement Stories*. New York: DC Comics, 1996.

### Graphic Novel Tip List

There are several factors librarians should consider when incorporating graphic novels into a children’s collection:

- include graphic novels in your library’s collection development policy or statement;
- become knowledgeable about the genre through professional resources on this topic (visit Westchester Library’s Web site for suggested resources at [www.westchesterlibraryassociation.org/GotGraphic.html](http://www.westchesterlibraryassociation.org/GotGraphic.html));
- read graphic novel reviews in library and education journals, and preview books to help in the selection process;
- budget wisely and set aside funds to start up and maintain a viable collection, keeping in mind replacement costs;
- consider cataloging options, a separate place to house the collection with a graphic novel suffix versus the Dewey number 741.5;
- have a solid reconsideration and intellectual freedom policy;
- choose a well-placed display area with face-out shelving; and
- be open to receiving suggestions from children.

Once you’ve established a collection, the possibilities are endless. The collection can encourage the exploration of other genres and library materials. Programming ideas are vast, including graphic novel workshops, book discussion groups, art displays, meet the author and artist events, and the formation of a graphic novel youth advisory board.



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Yang, Gene L. *American Born Chinese*. New York: First Second, 2006.

# Babysarten™



**read** to me.

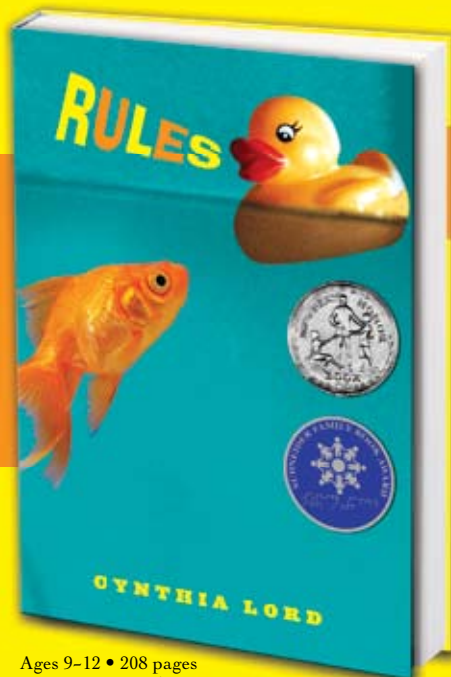


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## CONGRATULATIONS to Cynthia Lord, author of *Rules*



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# Getting Graphic

The Rise of Graphic Novels for Children

## The Trickle-up Effect

### An Interview with David Saylor

Jonathan Hunt

**D**avid Saylor is in charge of Scholastic Graphix, which publishes the popular Bone series. He recently spoke with *Children and Libraries*.

**By way of introduction, can you briefly highlight your career in children's books, and how you came to be the editorial director of Scholastic Graphix?**

**David Saylor:** After college, I came to New York City and got a job with a typesetter, where I fell in love with typography and type design. Later, I worked at Random House for many years, but I didn't start in children's publishing until 1987, when I worked at Farrar, Straus and Giroux in the production department. The following year, after taking classes at Parsons, I switched to design and became the assistant to Harriett Barton, the creative director for what was then Harper & Row. Harriett was a great mentor, and I left HarperCollins four years later having become an art director for both hardcover books and paperbacks. I went on to Houghton Mifflin for three years as art director then came to Scholastic as creative director in 1996.

As creative director, I give guidance about art and design for Scholastic's various book lists, working closely with some very talented editors, art directors, and designers. My job covers a lot of territory, from baby books to young adult novels. I formed Graphix in 2004 with the help of two editors, Janna Morishima and Sheila Keenan, and with the support of our then-publisher, Jean Feiwel. I think because graphic novels are such a visual



David Saylor (Photo courtesy of David Saylor and Scholastic).

form, and because I felt so strongly about them, I became the de facto leader of the group.

**How would you describe yourself as a reader? Any favorite comic books as a kid? More recent graphic novel favorites as an adult?**

**DS:** I love reading novels and short stories, though recently I've been reading more nonfiction. Some recent books I've loved:

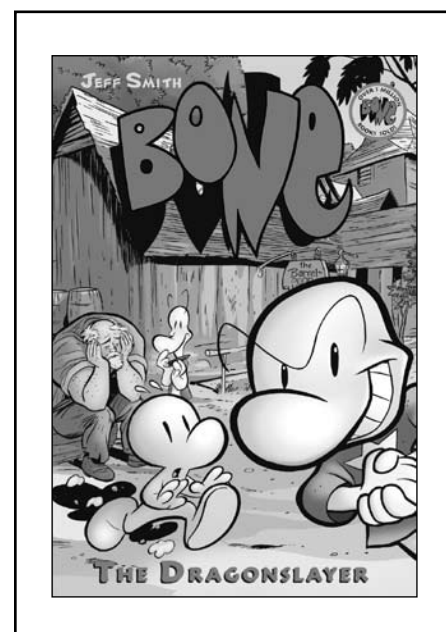
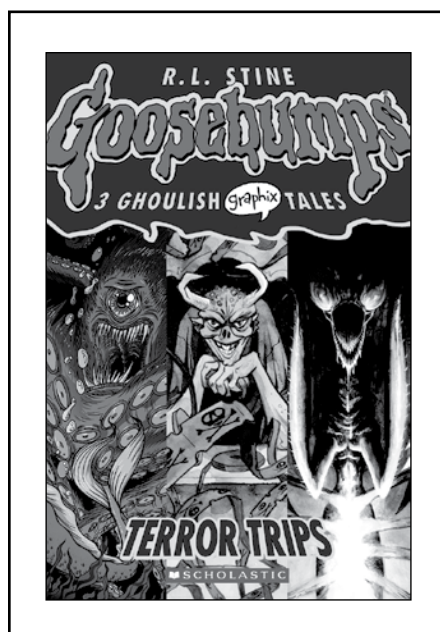
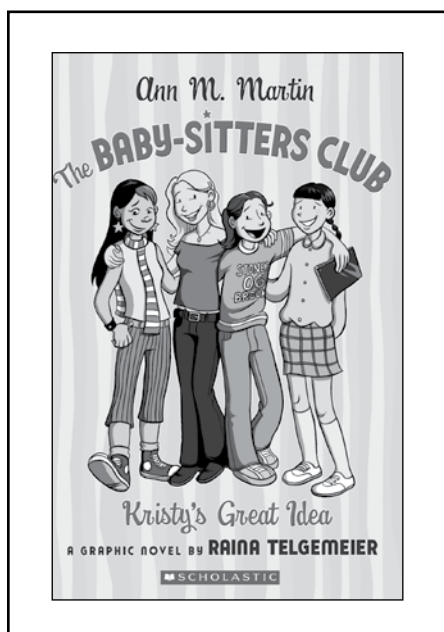
*Jonathan Hunt* is a library media teacher at three elementary schools in Modesto, California.

*The Secret Life of Oscar Wilde* by Neil McKenna, *My Life in France* by Julia Child and Alex Prud'homme, and *Twilight of the Superheroes* by Deborah Eisenberg. As a kid, I read just about anything that came my way, including *Alice in Wonderland*, which I thought was hilarious, and the backs of cereal boxes, which kept me rapt while eating Wheaties and Cap'n Crunch. I wasn't drawn to superhero comics as much as character-based comics, so I preferred Richie Rich, Little Lotta, and the Disney collections with Scrooge and Donald Duck. Some of my

Much later, I connected with graphic novels again and found the same enjoyment, but now there were things to read that really spoke to me on many levels. And suddenly it just struck me that none of the major children's book publishers was creating comics for kids. In fact, no one was really creating comics specifically for kids that had much range or variety. So when I hired Janna Morishima, who also had a big interest in comics, we came up with a proposal to create a children's imprint at Scholastic that would change that. We wanted to

City. We both loved it and then passed it to Jean with an enthusiastic recommendation to acquire the publishing rights.

Jean realized that having *Bone* as a centerpiece of the imprint would give us a great start. Not only would it telegraph to the comics world that we were serious about publishing great books, but *Bone* represented our ideal: a great story with great artwork. Whenever we acquire new books, we have *Bone* as our touchstone, representing the best of the genre.



All artwork courtesy of Scholastic.

favorite graphic novels have been *Fun Home* by Alison Bechdel, *Persepolis (1 and 2)* by Marjane Satrapi, *Blankets* by Craig Thompson, the Scott Pilgrim stories by Bryan Lee O'Malley, and most recently, *American Born Chinese* by Gene Yang. And, of course, I've read the *Bone* books many times and get the same pleasure each time I read them.

**What factors influenced Scholastic's decision to start an imprint devoted exclusively to graphic novels? What is your vision for this imprint?**

**DS:** After really loving comics when I was eight and nine years old, I sort of stopped reading them in my early teens because it seemed like the comics weren't growing along with me. So I stopped.

make comics that featured great stories and great artwork. It seemed obvious to us that this was one area of children's publishing that had been ignored and where we could make a difference by creating a new business.

To start Graphix, Janna and I did a lot of research and talked to a lot of people. We loved the form and we wanted to make sure we knew what we were doing. And I think we came up with a very persuasive argument: graphic novels for kids were a natural fit with our business. Kids love comics, we publish books for kids: Presto! Luckily our publisher at the time, Jean Feiwel, agreed with us and made it happen. While this was taking shape, Janna found a copy of *Bone* at Forbidden Planet, a comic book store in New York

**How have various segments of your market—librarians, teachers, booksellers, young readers—responded to your titles so far? Do you find yourself confronting many stereotypes or misconceptions about graphic novels?**

**DS:** So far the response to our lists from everyone has been great, especially when it comes to *Bone*, which is such an incredible book that it wins over anyone who might doubt the power, fun, and artistry of graphic novels. And it has sold more than a million copies, which is astounding.

But it does keep surprising me that there are still misconceptions about graphic novels. Some people don't think of comics as proper reading material. A sur-

prising number of adults haven't read comics since they were kids so they only think of comics as Sunday funny pages or as superhero stories. What's encouraging is that once you clear away misconceptions, there's an incredible body of wonderful books out there waiting to be discovered. Whenever I've given a kid a graphic novel, they've always enjoyed it and wanted more.

I wish more adults would introduce their children to this joyful reading experience. Graphic novels are simply another reading experience, the best of which manifest the depth, resonance, and excitement of any prose book.

**Picture books require a successful integration of words and pictures, but while graphic novels require the same thing, I imagine that they might be an entirely different animal. Can you talk about the differences and similarities between these art forms?**

**DS:** I actually believe that picture books are very akin to comics, with perhaps the only difference being the presence or absence of speech bubbles, though even that "boundary" has been broken by Mo Willems in *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!*, among other recent picture books.

In both, the story and artwork depend on each other to propel the narrative, and the reader is learning things from the artwork and from the words at the same time. Perhaps because I've worked on both picture books and graphic novels, the two feel more similar than not. Some comics rely on a more sophisticated visual language, but it's really a matter of degree; a comic can be the most direct and simple form of communication and also the most sophisticated. Great visual leaps are made in some comics that you might need a larger visual vocabulary to understand quickly.

**Just as Harry Potter has become a gateway book for many young readers to enter the fantasy genre, *Bone* is similarly poised to introduce young readers to graphic novels. In wake of the phenomenal success of this series, is there any chance that Jeff Smith might do some more graphic novels for children with Graphix?**

**DS:** I've had lots of conversations with Jeff about what he might do next for Graphix, and I know he's eager to find the right project. We'll publish the last volume of our full-color *Bone* editions in 2009, so I'm hoping to have something new from him by then.

Jeff is happily working on Captain Marvel right now, and I know he has another original book in mind that he's been working on, too. He has a lot of fans out there.

**You have reworked two of Scholastic's most successful series, the *Baby-Sitters Club* and *Goosebumps*, into graphic novel editions. I'll admit to having a bit of a snobby attitude about the earlier incarnations of these books, but I found the graphic novels delightful.**

**DS:** I think that our graphic novel adaptations of these enormously successful series surprised a few people by their quality and heart. One of the biggest reasons that we wanted to translate these series into graphic novels, besides betting they would be commercially viable, was to use their notoriety to make graphic novels for kids not quite so strange and unfamiliar. What could be more fun than seeing all the gruesome details of *Goosebumps* or experiencing the BSC girls as characters just like Archie and Veronica?

We felt that we could not only make books that honored the originals, but that we could make wonderful graphic novels on their own terms. Of the two, the *Baby-Sitters Club* was more of a leap and it might not have happened if we hadn't met Raina Telgemeier. She grew up reading the BSC, and it's almost like she's channeling Ann M. Martin. She's the main reason they work so well; she pours her heart and soul into these books.

**Traditionally, girls have not been as enthusiastic about graphic novels as boys have, but Chynna Clugston's *Queen Bee* should change that. It perfectly captures the dynamics of middle school girl cliques and should be a big hit with that audience.**

**DS:** The girls who read *Queen Bee* love it and that kind of says it all about girls and comics. My feeling is that if you create comics that speak to their audience, they will be embraced. Girls love comics as much as anyone, as long as they find books that interest them. And continuing success of manga certainly proves that girls love visual storytelling and will buy comics in great numbers.

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School Library Journal  
March 2007

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One really exciting thing that happened [in 2006] at Comic-Con in San Diego is that Graphix won the Lulu of the Year award for promoting and creating comics for girls. I think we're working with some of the best women's comics creators in the industry right now: Chynna Clugston, Christine Norrie, Raina Telgemeier, Jill Thompson, and Amy Kim Ganter.

**I have to admit that the color in *Bone* spoiled me a bit, and I initially wanted to see it in your other graphic novels as well. How do you decide whether to color a particular graphic novel?**

**DS:** Color is certainly very seductive but it is more expensive to produce and is more time-consuming to create, both of which can be a deciding factor. But those considerations haven't influenced our decision-making too much.

First off, we talk with the creators to understand what they are envisioning. If it makes sense artistically and financially, then we go with it. For me, what's great about black-and-white is that most kids draw their first comics in black-and-white, as do most creators. It's just easier to take a pen and start drawing. So I don't think that kids are as reluctant to read things in black-and-white as we think. Personally, I love the directness of black-and-white (or black-and-white with the limited use of a second color). It has a power and beauty all its own and allows you to imagine the palette.

**Most of your titles have been aimed at an upper elementary audience and middle school audience, and I notice that graphic novels by young adult stars, such as Holly Black and Chris Wooding, are in the works. Is there anything on the horizon for younger readers?**

**DS:** We have lots of exciting things coming up for younger kids. Coming in fall 2007 will be *Amulet* by Kazu Kibuishi, an exciting adventure with brilliant artwork about two kids in a quest to find their missing parent. In 2008, we have several

*If you create comics that speak to their audience, they will be embraced.*

*Girls love comics as much as anyone, as long as they find books that interest them.*

debut: *Walker Bean* by Aaron Renier, a two-book series about a boy who stows away with pirates to save his beloved grandfather from an evil curse, and *The Magic Pickle* by Scott Morse, a superhero spoof that features Jo-Jo, a plucky nine-year-old who becomes the sidekick to a crime-fighting Super Pickle, who is battling the League of Evil Produce. Further down the road is *Knights of the*

*Lunch Table* by Frank Cammuso, about a group of middle school kids who form a Camelot-like group to fend off the school bullies.

**What can we expect from Graphix in the long term?**

**DS:** I want Graphix to keep publishing the kind of comics that transport, engage, excite, challenge, and simply entertain. In a nutshell, I guess I'm hoping to publish books that I longed to read as a child but couldn't find or wasn't exposed to. Because when I did connect with a book at that great age of eight and nine, the experience was so powerful and joyful that I want other children to know what that's like.

What's also exciting is that I believe we're in the midst of another golden age of comics: The talent, energy, and passion of comics creators are dovetailing with a burgeoning new audience. In the next ten years, I think we're going to see a tremendous growth in graphic novels for adults and children. They'll be read, discussed, and will have the same popularity as other forms of literature. And partly it's because Scholastic's Graphix imprint—along with many other publishers—is creating an audience of kids who will grow up to love the graphic novel form and will continue reading them lifelong. It's like a trickle-up effect. Kids today are changing the future of publishing. ☺

## Letters Guidelines

*Children and Libraries* welcomes readers to submit letters to the editor on topics of general interest to the profession or as comments on topics covered in our pages.

Letters should be no longer than 350 words and must be signed. The editor reserves the right to edit letters for clarity and space. Send letters to Editor Sharon Verbeten at [CALeditor@yahoo.com](mailto:CALeditor@yahoo.com) or via mail to 820 Spooner Ct., De Pere, WI 54115.



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# Getting Graphic

The Rise of Graphic Novels for Children

## Taking Comics from Junk Food to Gourmet Meals

### An Interview with Mark Siegel

Jonathan Hunt

**M**ark Siegel, editorial director of First Second, recently won a Sibert Honor for his graphic novel *To Dance*, written by Siena Cherson Siegel. He recently spoke with *Children and Libraries*.

**Describe some of your formative childhood reading in the graphic novel format. Did you have any comics that were particular favorites?**

**Mark Siegel:** Growing up in France, I was pickled with Tintin and Asterix along with classic picture books and novels. Growing up, I was entranced with some of the later talents in graphic novels, legendary creators like Moebius, Carl Barks, and many others. I was never a big reader of superhero comics.

**Did your childhood interest in comics launch your professional career? Can you briefly trace your path from avid comic reader to the helm of First Second?**

**MS:** My childhood tastes certainly informed my approach as an illustrator. My first picture book was *Seadogs: An Epic Ocean Operetta* for Richard Jackson/Atheneum (Simon & Schuster), which I drew in a comic book format. While working on it, I was also art directing for Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers and slipped into the editorial side when I acquired Joann Sfar's *Little Vampire Goes to School*, which briefly appeared on the *New York Times* Bestseller list. I think *Seadogs* and *Little Vampire* were my resumé!



Mark Siegel (Photo courtesy of Sonya Sones).

This happened just as many major U.S. publishers were turning to graphic novels—the hype was becoming unavoidable. So I met with several publishers, but it was a breakfast with John Sterling (head of Henry Holt) and Simon Boughton (head of Roaring Brook Press) that proved to be a turning point. We clicked. And they responded immediately to the vision I had for what is just begging to happen in America: a highly international list, high production values and editorial care, and a really bold approach to taking on an exciting new market.

*Jonathan Hunt is a library media teacher at three elementary schools in Modesto, California.*

What's more, Holtzbrinck Publishers are giving me real editorial freedom, and I continue to develop my own projects. Right now I'm finishing a couple of books for S&S—including *To Dance: A Ballerina's Graphic Novel*, which just came out in stores this past September. My wife, Siena, wrote it, and it's aimed at girls eight to fourteen. It's partly a slice of ballet history (the New York City Ballet under George Balanchine) and partly the memoir of a girl growing up in Manhattan. I'm curious to see how it will be received.

**First Second is unique in that you have one foot in graphic novel publishing and the other in children's publishing, but how else would you describe your niche in the publishing industry? What qualities set you apart from other publishers?**

**MS:** First Second is unique on many fronts. We have a standard format, mostly full-color books, and titles for every age category. We span nearly every genre, from fiction to nonfiction. And it's an author-driven imprint. We also aim to give our authors a real home for their growing body of work. The art direction sets out to be on par with the best of picture book publishing, while the editorial process aspires to match what the best authors expect in novel publishing. Care is the operative word. First Second isn't about jumping on the graphic novel bandwagon for me, but about contributing to shape the market and its readers with an eye to raising the bar in every way.

**In general, what kind of reaction have you received from librarians, teachers, booksellers, parents, and young readers? Have the various audiences responded differently?**

**MS:** Yes, various audiences are responding differently. Librarians have been ahead of the curve and have given us an astonishing welcome. Booksellers take to our literary sensibility and the friendly price point; the chains have been especially responsive. As for readers, they're the theme of our spring 2007 catalog. We're filling it with photos of readers. They come in all ages, backgrounds, of every stripe and taste. Parents too,

and the way they welcome our younger titles—we've been told that we offer a fine alternative to manga—"That's like junk food and First Second is cooking up gourmet meals."

Teachers and educators also welcome the extra nourishing nature of our books, with lesson plans sprouting up everywhere for our titles, both fiction and nonfiction.



Artwork courtesy of Simon and Schuster.

**Many children's librarians are already good judges of picture book illustration, but as graphic novels increasingly come into mainstream children's publishing, they will need to be able to judge the merits of this art form, too. Can you compare and contrast the challenges and aesthetics of picture book illustration with graphic novel illustration?**

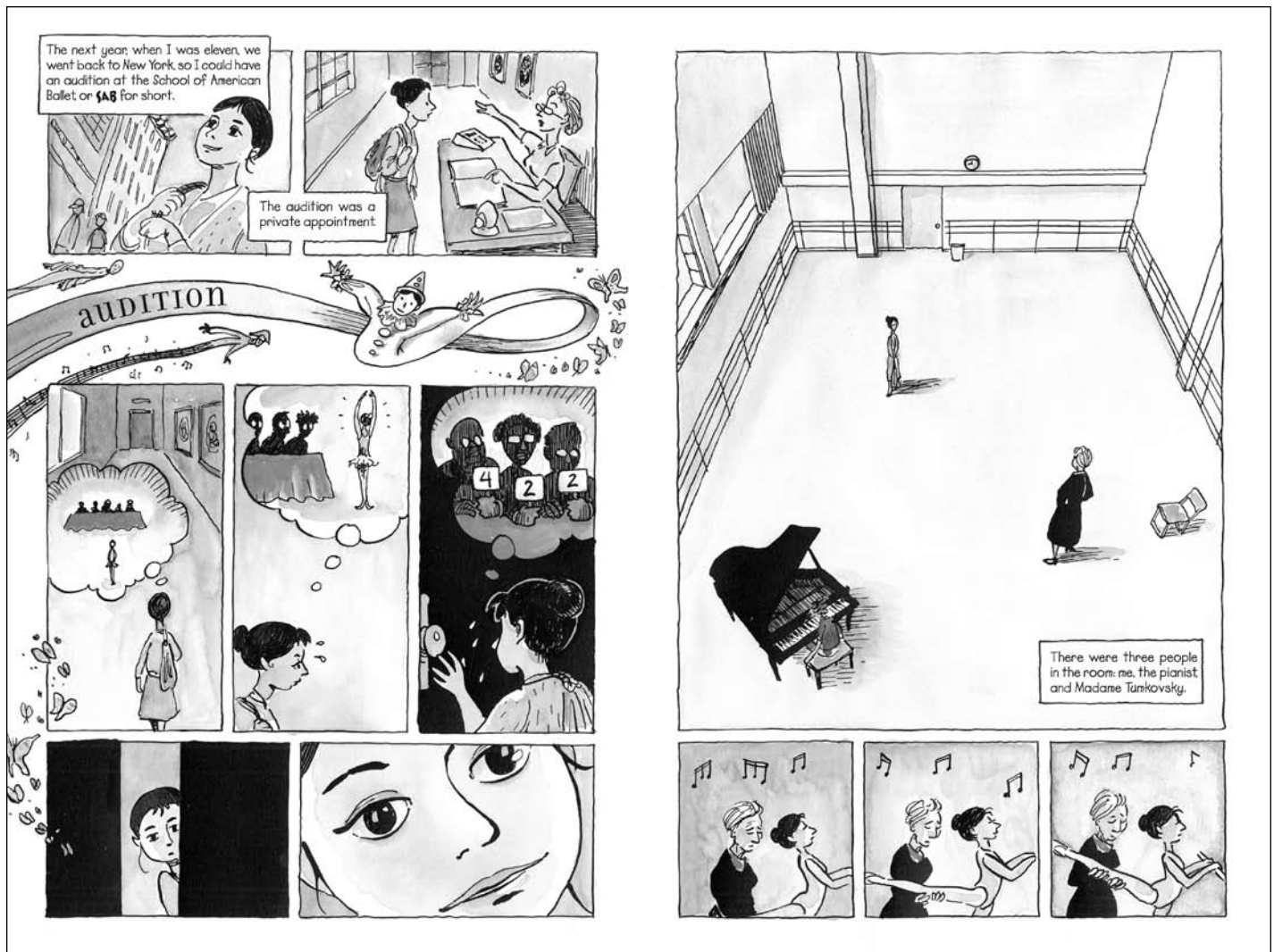
**MS:** Evaluating graphic novels is a crucial issue for booksellers, librarians, and of course, buyers. This plagued them all with manga, and still does, because in the flood of titles, how do you distinguish the trash from the gems? In that case, it's been especially confusing, because criteria for quality often differ in the Japanese culture; moralities aren't the same as in the West sometimes, and so on. With the graphic novel that isn't manga, it's less complicated, but yes, there is a learning curve.

A number of editors are learning the hard way that strong writing can't compensate for weak art or that appealing graphics can't cover up a lame script. So on the publishing side, it's vital that editorial process go hand in hand with art direction, since both end up handling the heart of a graphic novel—which I believe is storytelling. And there's the first yardstick: Is it a great story? Do the characters (visually and verbally) touch you, move you, connect with you in some way?

First Second is particularly interested in promoting graphic novels that reach both avid comics readers, and every other kind of reader. For that to happen, there needs to be a genuine author's voice, and something universally human driving the creation of the project. Then there is the fact that the comics format is a unique and distinct reading experience: it even makes different use of a reader's brain than straight up prose. So yes, buyers everywhere need to learn *how* to read them, to some degree, and how to assess their worth. Knowledgeable reviewers help greatly with this, and there are lots of Web sites dedicated to sifting through the enormous quantity of titles, to single out the ones with most merit, in various age categories.

***Sardine in Outer Space* seems to be your youngest title so far. We've seen some picture books in graphic novel format for this young audience, but it's nice to see something along the lines of a beginning reader or transitional book. Can we expect more titles aimed at this very young audience?**

**MS:** *Sardine in Outer Space*, at this point in time, is leading our sales. We're hearing from eight-, nine-, and ten-year-old girls for the most part, and that's a very thrilling thing, in a market so long dominated by boys. In every season, I make sure to include one or two titles for the younger set. They are the future discerning readers, and it's vital to build a great collection of high-quality material for them, with real authors behind the works and not some lesser merchandising-driven thing. So yes, you can expect a lot more for young readers, including *Tiny Tyrant* by Lewis Trondheim and *Fabrice Parme*, which is sheer pleasure by its wit and classy drawings in a style



Artwork from *To Dance*, courtesy of Simon and Schuster.

that reminds me of Mister Magoo and The Pink Panther. First Second is looking to build its young collection, which is often shelved separately from our older titles, and cross-catalogued in Roaring Brook Press, our parent company.

**I would imagine that some of your titles such as *A.L.I.E.E.E.N.* and *The Lost Colony: The Snodgrass Conspiracy* might leave some adults a little bit bewildered, but I'm willing to bet that young readers are responding differently.**

*A.L.I.E.E.E.N.* is meant to bewilder all Earth-dwelling humans. It is, after all, the first extraterrestrial comic ever published on earth—and in an alien language, to boot, since I couldn't afford the translation services. But somewhere, some twelve-year-old is probably busy deciphering it as we speak. But as you know if you've read it, it's not quite for

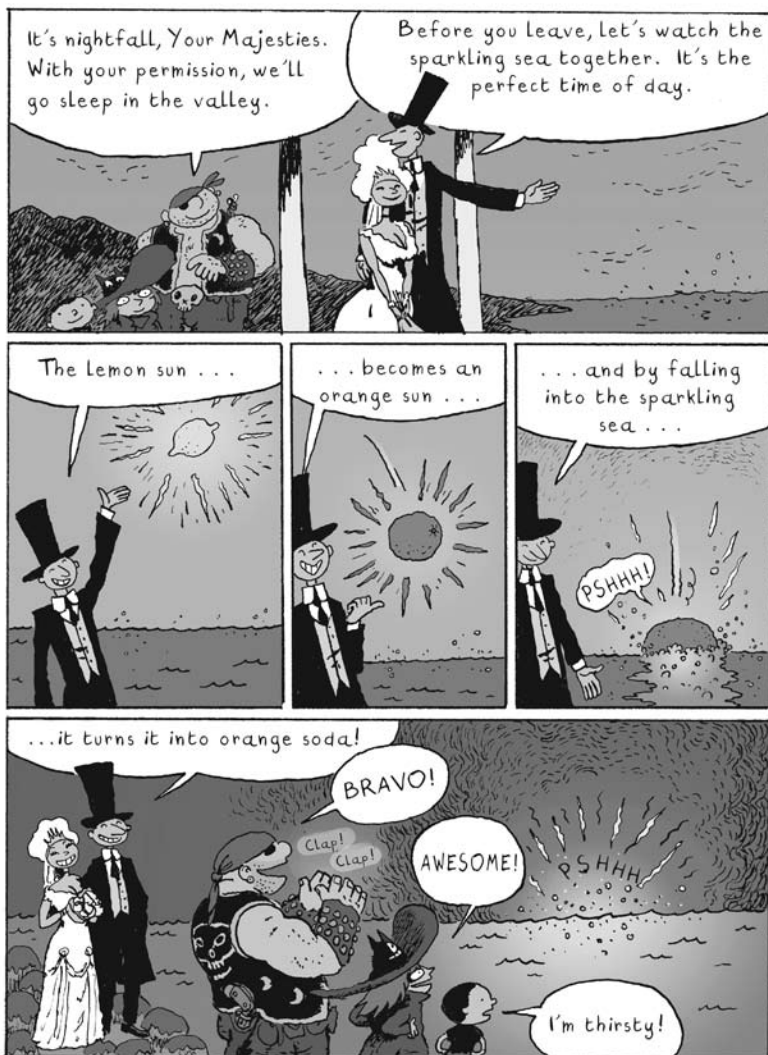
the very young; it's dark, and a little disturbing, and hints of being a meditation on human nature (with extra eyes and limbs in some cases). It's interesting to note that France's star creator Lewis Trondheim was pleasantly surprised to discover his most intelligent and thoughtful reviews of *A.L.I.E.E.E.N.* came from the United States.

*The Lost Colony* is the beginning of a remarkable series; much of the fan mail Grady Klein has been receiving isn't at all from children, but from people with Ph.D.s, and quite a number of African American readers. Not unlike *Asterix* did for the French, Klein's idiosyncratic take on American history is partly a candy-colored adventure, and partly searing social commentary. Through humor (albeit grim humor at times) he is tackling the demons of America's past, and I'm very proud First Second is launch-

ing his career in graphic novels. I feel he speaks volumes for what we are about: a personal voice, a sincere, artful pioneer of the form, and a personal world many are already fond of visiting and revisiting.

But I agree with you, *The Lost Colony* too can be bewildering because it breaks a lot of new ground. Grady just turned in his second installment (ten of them planned so far) and it's superb. It's mostly in pastel shades, in wintertime, and splashed with patriotic red, white, and blue. Especially red. It's called *The Red Menace*, and deals in part with the Indian Wars, and with war profiteers. The subtext hints of Haliburton and other current affairs, and his storytelling just gets clearer and stronger, and the characters reveal themselves further, in their (sometimes endearing, sometimes not) contradiction and hypocrisy. I believe this series will find a huge audience.





Artwork from *Sardine 3* courtesy of First Second.

You have a pair of interesting nonfiction titles that can serve double duty as curriculum support and pleasure reading: *Journey into Mohawk Country*, a primary source document, which records the adventures of an early American explorer, and *Kampung Boy*, the memoir of a young Muslim boy growing up in Malaysia.

MS: Yes, absolutely. George O'Connor's *Journey Into Mohawk Country* is one of our first titles in a line of nonfiction graphic novels. It's the diary of a Dutch explorer's journal from 1635 in what would later become New York. At the time, the great military power in the region was the Mohawk nation, and these are the Dutchman's words, verbatim. So it's a historical document and a remarkable episode of our history, but it's also O'Connor's inspired vision as he breathes new life into it, graphically. On one hand,

every weapon, every tattoo, every longhouse is meticulously researched, but on the other, it's a brilliant comic book read and a journey of transformation for its characters. Quite a feat. And yes, a treasure for the classroom.

*Kampung Boy* is very different, but also gives a window into another culture and another time. It's the memoir of Lat's childhood in rural Malaysia, growing up Muslim. Lat is a superstar in Southeast Asia but virtually unknown in the United States. I'm very proud and excited to be presenting him here, and the book is already getting rave reviews. We got a lovely quote for it from Matt Groening, who is one of Lat's greatest fans. Again, a terrifically fun read, but also a precious tool in a teacher's hands. I intend to bring lots more of this caliber.

Briefly highlight some of the titles on your current list.

MS: With spring 2007, we keep upping the ante. Two of the most beautifully crafted graphic novels in the world feature on this next season. *Garage Band* by Gipi showcases one of the greatest living talents in Italy in a story of adolescence and uncertainty. *The Professor's Daughter* reveals Guibert's masterful watercolor on a script by Joann Sfar—perhaps one of the most romantic stories in graphic novels today.

For the younger crowd, *Tiny Tyrant* asks the absurd question: What if the most powerful person in the nation was a spoiled brat? And *Sardine in Outer Space* continues to offer the zany space shenanigans of its redheaded heroine.

*The Lost Colony* also unfolds in its second episode, *The Red Menace*, which I mentioned earlier. And last but not least, Eddie Campbell's next opus, *The Black Diamond Detective Agency* is a powerhouse drama set in 1877, when a train bombing strikes terror in the heartland. It's gripping and topical and even Eddie Campbell's longstanding fans will be dazzled, I suspect. Look for the trailer online and elsewhere, in the near future—we're launching this one like a movie.

What can we expect from First Second in the future?

MS: It's safe to bet First Second will keep surprising with its range and scope. More titles for all ages, and other genres and categories, such as comics journalism, new kinds of nonfiction, and some major talents from other fields—playwrights such as Adam Rapp, screenwriters such as J. T. Petty, novelists such as Jane Yolen, historians such as Catherine Clinton—and many more contributing to the collection. I have somewhere near sixty more contracts lined up ahead, which also include some discoveries, very talented newcomers, as well as some stars from the world of comics with a real following: Paul Pope, Derek Kirk Kim, Christophe Blain, Jessica Abel, to name only a few.

Can you tell I'm excited? ☺

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# Getting Graphic

The Rise of Graphic Novels for Children

## A Mouse in Their House

### The Holm Siblings Banter about Babymouse

Elizabeth Bird

**C**omic books in the libraries? The mere idea has the potential to strike terror in the hearts of traditional librarians everywhere. Yet with the rise in quality graphic novels on library and bookstore shelves, the time has never been better to get acquainted with some of the best written works of fiction available to kids today.

By and large, it is still sometimes difficult to find great graphic novels for younger children. One of the few outstanding series for kids is *Babymouse*, written by Jennifer L. Holm and illustrated by her brother, Matthew Holm. Jennifer is perhaps best known for her 2000 Newbery Honor-winning *Our Only May Amelia* and the 2006 Newbery Honor *Penny From Heaven*. Matthew was an associate editor at *Country Living* magazine from 1996 to 2004. He is now a partner in and creative director of the Hot Knife Design firm.

**How did your collaboration come about?**

**Jennifer Holm:** Well, I have four brothers. (I'm the only girl.) So there were a lot of comic books around our house when I was growing up, not to mention a lot of stinky socks.

**Matthew Holm:** Hey!

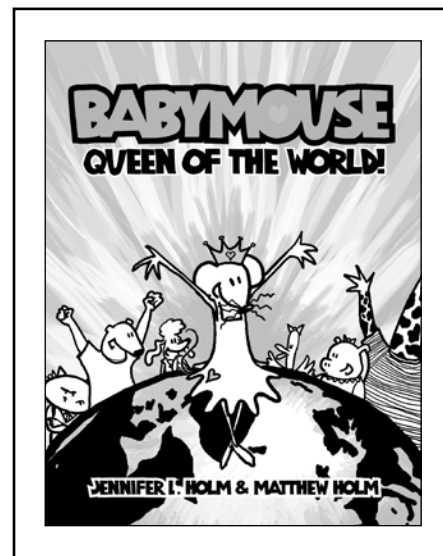
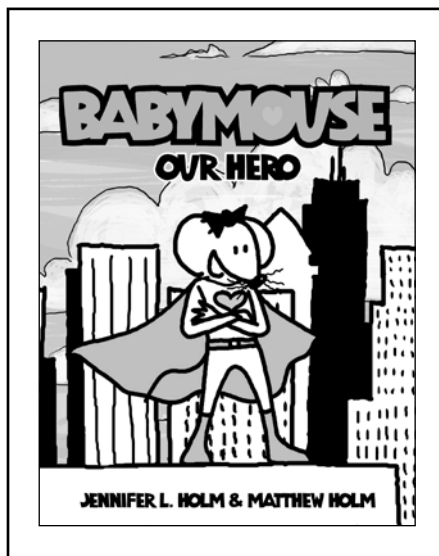
**JH:** I read comics all the time because my brothers did. Our parents really encouraged our comic habit, too. I was pretty much weaned on *Prince Valiant* because our dad is a huge fan, and we had the bound versions in the house. Our mom was famous for giving us comic books at the beginning of long car trips to keep us quiet (it worked for maybe five minutes).

**MH:** I liked regular comic books, but I was an even bigger fan of newspaper comic strips. I probably spent more time reading



Matthew Holm and Jennifer L. Holm (Photo courtesy of Matthew Holm and Random House Children's Books).

*Elizabeth Bird* is a librarian with the New York Public Library's Central Children's Room. She recently served on the Newbery committee and has a children's literary blog at <http://fusenumber8.blogspot.com>.



Artwork courtesy of Random House.

and rereading books of *Peanuts* strips (our eldest brother had been buying them since the 1960s!) than I did reading Dr. Seuss. And later I got addicted to *Garfield*, *Bloom County*, and *Calvin and Hobbes*.

**JH:** One thing I noticed as a kid was that there weren't a lot of female characters. I ranted for years about the lack of cool girls and the only one who listened to me was Matt. Matt was a budding cartoonist himself, and we probably shared the greatest passion for comic books.

Then, I guess what happened was . . . we were both living in New York and I came home after a bad day at work. (I was working in advertising at the time; not a happy industry like children's literature.) This image of an irritable little mouse popped into my head, and I scribbled her down on a napkin and gave it to Matt. The rest is history. (And, yes, for the record, we have lost the napkin with the first Babymouse drawing. Typical.)

**As a children's librarian, I've had a great deal of difficulty finding graphic novels for younger children. In this light, *Babymouse* has been a boon. In your own opinion, do you see this as a trend that's going to continue or just a passing fad?**

**JH:** I truly hope it's a trend. Graphic novels are just ideal for this audience. They're a nice bridge between picture books and chapter books and help foster a love of reading. (At least they did with us.)

**MH:** I think graphic novels for younger kids are here to stay. Publishers are just beginning to get up to speed on them, and when they do, you'll see them filling the market like any other genre. It's important to remember how new all of this is. Even though comics and graphic novels have been around for years and years, the fact is that, as of even two years ago, no traditional publisher (i.e., no one outside of the superhero or manga world) had any experience with producing them or marketing them. Even today, the majority of what we're seeing on the market are either reprints (like Jeff Smith's *Bone*), translations (all the Japanese manga), or adaptations of existing works (as with the *Baby-Sitters Club* series and the adaptations of classic literature). The publishing machine is just getting rolling, and as it does, we should see more and more original works for all ages—especially for younger kids, who are a huge market.

**What's it like working with your brother? How does it differ from a working relationship you might have with someone you didn't grow up with?**

**JH:** When Matt first moved to New York City, he, ahem, "crashed" in my tiny one-room studio apartment in the West Village for several months. If we could survive that, we can survive just about anything. Matt's probably the most chill brother in the world. Pretty much our rule is if somebody feels strongly about something during the creative process, they get their way. This doesn't happen

all that much, though. Also, it helps that we live six hours away from each other now, so our collaboration is done almost entirely virtually.

**MH:** Working in magazine publishing as I did, or in advertising as Jenni did, you figure out very quickly how to leave your ego out of the working and editing process. (Or else you have a nervous breakdown.) So really, I haven't found working with Jenni to be terribly different from working with anyone else that has a professional background and outlook. Except that, you know, she hands me work at Thanksgiving dinner or birthday parties, instead of waiting until I'm back at the office on Monday.

**Let's talk color. The Babymouse books are an extraordinary vibrant pink with some white and black. Why just those colors? Ever consider expanding your palette?**

**MH:** Actually, that *was* an expansion for me! Before *Babymouse*, I had worked mostly in black and white. But one of the first things Jenni insisted on—all the way back at that first napkin sketch, I believe—was that Babymouse always have a pink heart on all her outfits. So we started out the book thinking we'd do it all black and white, plus the pink hearts on her dress. And maybe some pink hearts for the page folios.

We quickly added more and more pink. The first two books open on shots of

Babymouse's bedroom, in which the wallpaper, bedspread, and so forth, are covered in hearts. By the time I had colored in all of those hearts, the book had a lot of pink in it. But that actually helped us solve an even bigger prob-

lem we were wrestling with—how to show that Babymouse was slipping into a daydream. The solution (so obvious now) was to make Babymouse's fantasy world pink, leaving her drab, everyday life black and white.

I haven't felt the need to expand the Babymouse palette yet. For one thing, drawing around one hundred pages of black and white and pink for every book is workload enough—I shudder to think how long it would take me to do

## An Editor's View

Editor Shana Corey has been integral in the creation of the Babymouse books. She's an avid reader, sometimes writer, and currently an editor-at-large at Random House, where she began working straight out of college. In the years since, she's had the pleasure of working on just about every format—board books, picture books, early readers, and chapter books, including Junie B. Jones and the Magic Tree House Research Guides. She is now primarily acquiring and editing middle grade and young adult novels, as well as series such as Junie B. Jones and Babymouse.

### How did the Babymouse enterprise come to your attention? Did you develop any parts together?

**Shana Corey:** I wish I could take more credit, but it was all Matt and Jenni. I was visiting Jenni after her son was born, and she started telling me about this spunky girl mouse she'd been working on with her brother Matt. I was intrigued because it was so different than anything that was out there at the time—this was in 2003—before the graphic novel renaissance had really hit kids books.

There were graphic novels and manga already of course, but most of them were geared to a much older audience and the content wasn't always appropriate for younger kids; seeing *Babymouse*, I realized there really was a hole in the market and it was high time someone published a graphic novel specifically for those kids. Babymouse was also very different from what I knew of Jenni's other writing, which is always interesting. She showed me some pages on her laptop that she and Matt and been emailing back and forth, and I told her I thought it would be perfect for Random House.

Matt and Jenni developed the character and the stories, and we really worked together with our art director Cathy Goldsmith and our production department on the format—how long it should be, what we could do to make it stand out, and so on. None of us had ever worked on a graphic novel, so we ended up developing a work process as we went along.

### What's your opinion of the future of graphic novels for children?

**SC:** I hope (they're) here to stay. There's a lot of excitement about graphic novels now. As with all "new"

things, I imagine it will calm down or find a natural level at some point, but I do think there's been a need for original graphic novels (especially for younger readers) for some time and now that publishers, writers, librarians, and booksellers have seen that the audience is there, I don't think they'll go away.

### What inspired you to back a graphic novel? Will we be seeing more?

**SC:** I wasn't a graphic novel fan before *Babymouse*, but *Babymouse* is so accessible you don't have to have a graphic novel background to get her, and that's what got me excited about the books. I think graphic novels can seem scary to readers (like myself) who aren't familiar with them, and the hardest part is getting someone to pick one up and try it.

I think we're already seeing more traditional publishers trying them, there are a lot of original graphic novels out there and in the works now, and a lot of publishers are also repackaging backlist titles into graphic novels.

### Do you think more novelists are getting interested in graphic novels?

**SC:** Yes and no. It's in the air, and I think authors do get inspired by that. But I think a lot of authors have probably always been interested—like Matt and Jenni, who've been devouring comics since they were kids—and perhaps they're just now showing them to us because mainstream publishers are still relatively new to the graphic novel game and are just now becoming open to them.

It's also tricky for authors though because it really helps to either be an artist yourself or to work very closely with an artist to make a graphic novel work—that's why you see so many writer-illustrator teams, whereas with traditional publishing, an author submits a manuscript and it's the publisher who finds an artist. In a graphic novel, the text and art are just too closely intertwined for that to always work.

### Have the Babymouse books lived up to your expectations?

**SC:** Nope, they've exceeded them every step of the way.

a full-color *Babymouse* book. But, more importantly, I'm of the opinion that any good art, design, or writing project needs well-defined style limits. [Or] else, things start going all willy-nilly.

**Recently I've noticed that a lot of children's authors (Shannon Hale, Jane Yolen) have followed your lead and have started creating graphic novels. Do you see this as something that more and more authors are turning to? If so, why?**

**JH:** I do think that more children's authors are going to be chiming in with graphic novels, and I say, the more, the merrier! Jane Yolen and Shannon Hale are fantastic authors, and I know whatever they do will be great. I think certain genres, such as fantasy, especially lend themselves to graphic novels because of the opportunity for striking visuals. You can show an entirely new and fantastic world in a single panel.

**MH:** As an illustrator, I'll be interested to see what sort of working process develops in this new crop of graphic novels. Aside from being one of the few brother-sister teams out there, Jenni and I are also unusual in that both of us were involved with the writing and illustrating of *Babymouse* from the start. As a rule in children's literature, authors and illustrators almost never communicate, but it's pretty tough to keep that kind of a wall up with a graphic novel. You need a lot of back-and-forth.

So I'm curious whether the publishers will continue to assemble teams of authors and illustrators and try to mediate the workflow (as they do with picture books now), if they'll team people up and let the author and illustrator figure out the process on their own, or if you'll see more authors and illustrators coming to the table together with a joint book proposal, the way Jenni and I did.

**If you meet someone who feels graphic novels haven't any literary value, how do you convince them that *Babymouse* is worth having on their shelves?**

**MH:** Wow. Tough customers. Well, I think that if there's room on their shelves for books about Sneetches and Loraxes, books about boys under Gypsy curses

who have to dig holes all day, books about babysitting, books about eating fried worms, and books about a pig whose best friend is a spider, there's room for books about a mouse who likes cupcakes and has a big imagination—especially when that mouse has to deal with things such as bullies, figuring out who her friends are, and learning to appreciate her often-annoying little brother. And that's not even getting into

*“If there's room on their shelves for books about Sneetches and Loraxes . . . there's room for books about a mouse who likes cupcakes.”*

—Matthew Holm

the fact that Babymouse reads constantly and daydreams about scenes from great literature.

**Were you encouraged by your publisher to create Babymouse even before you came up with the idea, or was this entirely concocted out of your brains?**

**MH:** No, we came up with it on our own and shopped it around for about two-and-a-half to three years before anyone saw the potential in this kind of graphic novel series for kids.

**JH:** It came out of our own manic, cupcake-obsessed brains. I have to say, though, that Random House took a huge leap of faith in publishing *Babymouse*, and they brought a lot of creative ideas to the table. Our editor, Shana Corey, and our art director, Cathy Goldsmith, both helped design the Babymouse layout (trim size, gatefold, paperstock, silver foil on cover). Shana also came up with the idea to have something, literally, on every page. So even on the credits page, there is a little Babymouse joke. It's one of my favorite parts of the book.

**How has working on this series been different from some of your other works?**

**MH:** This is my first big-time children's book. Before *Babymouse*, all of my other published work was either serious, grown-up stuff or funny but completely under the radar (I drew a Web comic back in the 1990s about an alien who got stranded on Earth). So it's been nice to see something as silly and lighthearted as *Babymouse* receive such thoughtful, professional handling and execution from our publishers at Random House.

**What are your influences? Any graphic novelists or comic book artists come to mind?**

**MH:** I programmed myself over a number of years by reading so much Charles Schulz (*Peanuts*), Berkeley Breathed (*Bloom County*), and Bill Watterson (*Calvin and Hobbes*). Every now and then I'll take a second look at a character I've drawn and I'll see an expression that reminds me of Opus or Calvin or Charlie Brown.

I also love the old masters of the late-eighties graphic-novel boom, such as Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns* and Alan Moore's *Watchmen* and *V for Vendetta*. I was really into the indie black-and-white comics scene of the early 1990s, especially Eastman and Laird's original *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* and comics such as Dave Sim's *Cerebus*. I can't say that any of those not-for-kids comics had a major impact on *Babymouse*, but modern comics do. Jenni's pretty addicted to a host of comic book writers—Brian Michael Bendis (*Powers*, *Ultimate Spider-Man*) and Grant Morrison (*WE3*, *All Star Superman*)—so she's always sending me her favorites.

**Any future Babymouse books in the works?**

**JH:** Luckily, I had a great elementary school experience, so there's plenty of material. *Babymouse: Rock Star* came out [last] September 26, and *Babymouse: Heartbreaker* [came out] in January 2007. Basically, we're trying to bring out a new book every four months or until Matt's hand falls off.

**MH:** Sigh. ☹

# The Influence of Pat Mora

## How—and Why—Literacy Becomes Political

Kathleen Dudden Rowlands

Poet and children's book author Pat Mora stands quietly behind the lectern as her audience takes their seats. Dressed in a long suede skirt and a bright orange sweater accented by a tangerine silk scarf richly threaded with gold, Mora is a desert flower, a luminous surprise in the dim light of the university meeting room. She is speaking about writing—her memoir, essays, books of poetry, and more than twenty children's picture books. But she also shares her commitment to children's literacy and to spark interest in her literacy initiative *El día de los niños/El día de los libros* (Día), also known as Children's Day/Book Day.



Pat Mora

Grafted onto an original Mexican tradition of celebrating the child (*El día de los niños*), Mora's Día is now celebrated throughout the United States on April 30 by participating universities, libraries, schools, museums, and community organizations. Her hometown of El Paso supported the first celebration of *El día de los niños/El día de los libros*, held on April 30, 1997. The El Paso Public Library, with assistance from the National Association to Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish-Speaking (REFORMA) led the effort and were joined by Tucson, Arizona, Austin, Texas, and Mora's current residence of Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Since then, Día has expanded and is now celebrated across the country. The Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) became the national home for Día in 2005, a step that ensures further expansion.

The biggest Día celebration to date was held in 2005 in Mora's hometown. Thirty thousand people—many of them low income—participated. The city of El Paso provided free bus service, and police donated their time to the event. Thousands of books in both English and Spanish were given to children during the celebration.

Austin also supported a successful celebration of Día in 2005. Thirty literacy and child advocacy organizations participated; each had a booth and an activity focused on bilingual arts, crafts, games, and songs promoting literacy. Children made book posters, bookmarks, and character masks. They enjoyed storytelling in both Spanish and English. Activity sheets invited



An assistant professor in the Michael D. Eisner College of Education at California State University, Northridge, **Kathleen Dudden Rowlands** is the author of *Opening Texts: Using Writing to Teach Literature* (Heinemann, 1990) as well as a number of professional articles, essays, and poems. A high school teacher in Honolulu for twenty years (and a member of the ethnic minority there), Rowlands has a keen interest in multicultural literacies and the complexities of lives lived in borderlands.



A Native American dance group performs in Tulsa, Oklahoma (Photo courtesy of Keba Ballard).

them to write or illustrate stories. The day engaged and enthralled children of all ages and of many cultures with the wonders offered by books.

For Mora, community outreach and cooperation are important side benefits of Día. She is pleased that the event offers communities opportunities to promote issues such as health services or Head Start programs to families who might not otherwise have access to that information. However, no matter what else is included, children and the development of bilingual literacies remain the main focus of every Día celebration. From its earliest inception, Día has been a celebration of childhood and bilingual literacy. As a result, its goals have included commitments to:

1. honoring children and childhood;
2. promoting literacy and the importance of linking all children to books, languages, and cultures;
3. honoring home languages and cultures, and thus promoting bilingual and multilingual literacy in this multicultural nation, and global understanding through reading;
4. involving parents as valued members of the literacy team; and

5. promoting library collection development that reflects our plurality.

These are not frivolous goals, and Mora's commitment to Día is about much more than getting a few pretty picture books into the hands of youngsters—even those who have no books available in their homes. Día is a critically important effort on behalf of children from disadvantaged and nonmainstream social and economic backgrounds.

First, Día reminds librarians to assess and increase their collections. They must expand the bilingual offerings available to children because Día typically escalates demand. One Oregon library, for example, found that the circulation of bilingual books increased by 300 percent in the month around Día.

Efforts such as these are central to developing literacy among all children. The importance of bilingual literacy is, of course, well established. Children who read in their primary language

acquire both an understanding of *reading* and the knowledge base needed for comprehension in a second language.

In addition, an event such as Día may offer one of the few opportunities bilingual children—particularly those from high poverty areas—have to experience books that reflect them and their cultures. Much research has established that children from poor communities have less access to books at home, at school, and from public libraries than children from more privileged backgrounds. Simple lack of access inhibits literacy development, because, as noted literacy scholar Stephen Krashen has argued many times, children with access to reading materials read more than those without access, and children who read more, read better. Access to books—such as that provided by events like Día—may be the single most effective weapon in the battle for literacy among the economically disadvantaged.

Promoting Día's important goals annually isn't enough, of course. Support of bilingual literacy means parents, teachers, and librarians remembering that every day should be thought of as *El día de los niños/ El día de los libros*. It means promoting what Mora calls "bookjoy" routinely, by finding habitual ways to link children to books, languages, and cultures.

### Día Award Winners

These libraries have been honored with the REFORMA Estela and Raúl Mora Award for their Día celebrations. Visit [www.patmora.com](http://www.patmora.com) for more information.

2000	Austin (Tex.) Public Library
2001	El Paso (Tex.) Public Library
2002	Multnomah County (Ore.) Library
2003	Corvallis-Benton County (Ore.) Public Library
2004	Providence (R.I.) Public Library
2005	REFORMA de Utah
2006	Kenton County (Ky.) Public Library



Dancers at Multnomah County (Ore.) Library.

That a successful and prolific author of many bilingual children's books would be a strong advocate of bilingual literacy efforts makes sense. But Mora's passion to expand children's literacy arises from a well far deeper than a mercenary desire to encourage potential readers. Of Mexican heritage, she grew up in a bilingual household in the border town of El Paso. Books were central to her childhood.

On her Web site she writes, "When the desert wind howled outside, I felt safe in my bed with a book."<sup>1</sup> Her mother was a prolific reader who actively supported her children in their literacy development by reading to them and encouraging frequent sojourns to the library. In addition, Mora's aunt taught the children the power of story, enthraling them at a young age with tales in English and Spanish about growing up in Mexico. For Mora, literacy—bilingual literacy—was a powerful foundation of her home culture.

Mora began writing in elementary school, although she claims she didn't really become a writer until she was in her late thirties. "As a child, I never thought of myself as a writer because I never saw a writer who looked like me," she explains. "I never knew a writer who was bilingual."<sup>2</sup>

In 1979, she finally began taking writing seriously. Still, because she was a university administrator and the mother of three teenagers, she couldn't write

*Mora's commitment to Día is about much more than getting a few pretty picture books into the hands of youngsters—even those who have no books available in their homes. Día is a critically important effort on behalf of children from disadvantaged and non-mainstream social and economic backgrounds.*

full time. "I was really only doing the writing from the edges," she admits. In spite of the difficulties finding time to write, Mora felt it especially important

for her voice—and others like hers—to be heard.

In her essay "Endangered Species" she writes, "Like many Chicana writers . . . I felt our voices were absent from what is labeled American literature but is U.S. Eurocentric literature seasoned sparingly with a bit of Color [sic]."<sup>3</sup> For Pat, writing was fundamentally about preserving culture while making it accessible—and understandable—to others.

Success came slowly. Mora sent in several manuscripts and received rapid rejections, frustrating her. "Writing for publication was discouraging," she explains, "and rejection was hard to deal with." Finally she had luck publishing adult poetry. And at last Knopf bought the manuscript for her first picture book—*Tomás and the Library Lady*. However, three illustrators worked with it before the book was finally published ten years later. As a result, in 1992, *A Birthday Basket for Tía* became Pat's first published picture book. *Tomás* was not published until 1997.

Mora credits a 1994 poetry fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts with pushing her to become a full-time writer. She explains, "After teaching all levels, working in university administration, briefly directing a natural history museum, and serving as a consultant on U.S.-Mexico exchanges, I now devote myself to a life of words." Throughout her life, Mora has inhabited what Mary Louise Pratt has called a "contact zone," a space "where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other."<sup>4</sup> Her first collection of essays, published in 1993, is titled *Nepantla*—a Nahuatl Indian word meaning "the land in the middle."

In it she writes, "I am a child of the border, that land corridor bordered by the two countries that have most influenced my perception of reality."<sup>5</sup> For Mora, the border is not a dividing line between two adjacent nations, but a physical and cultural space shaped by the ebb and flow of language and wisdom from each. Border living is living with dissonance. She writes, "There probably isn't a week of my life that I don't have at least one experience when I feel that discomfort,



the slight frown from someone that wordlessly asks, ‘What is someone like her doing here?’”<sup>6</sup>

As might be expected, cultural dissonance is a theme throughout Mora’s work. Her much-anthologized poem, “Sonrisas” (“Smiles”), begins “I live in a doorway/between two rooms. . . .”<sup>7</sup> Caught between the Anglo world of teacher and university administrator, and of Chicana culture, the speaker observes both worlds, but is unable to participate fully in either.

As Mora writes in “Two Worlds,” another, even more explicitly autobiographical poem from *My Own True Name*, she is “Bi-lingual, Bi-cultural,” and she is “American but hyphenated.” To Anglos, she is “perhaps exotic/perhaps inferior, definitely different.” To Mexicans, she is alien even though she speaks Spanish. To both cultures, she is “a handy token/sliding back and forth/between the fringes of both worlds.”<sup>8</sup> Border people with hyphenated cultures assimilate into the cultures they inhabit more rapidly, perhaps, than those cultures are able to assimilate border people.

Other poems recount the continuing humiliation of encountering Anglo prejudices—whether the speaker is a new arrival to the United States (as in the poem “1910,”) or a native-born citizen of the United States.<sup>9</sup> In “Sugar,” for example, a family stops at the local store on its way home from the fields to enjoy a payday treat of candy, ice cream, or soda. The speaker, a teenage girl born in the United States watches the Anglo customers “shrink from our brown skin” and agonizes, “Why do we come here?” She overhears a woman call her family “dirty wetbacks,” wondering aloud if “they ever/bathe.” The poem ends with the girl’s physical (and futile) attempt to wash away her pain, ironically becoming—literally—a “wetback” in the process:

I scrub her words away in the  
shower, scrub

My skin till it burns, let the water  
run

Down my back and my dark  
American legs.



Clowns spread the joy at Glendale (Ariz.) Public Library.

The girl is powerless in the face of humiliation. A shower cannot wash away her pain. Without adequate recourse, the experience is devastating.<sup>10</sup>

Oppression, survival, and often triumph commingle in Mora’s work. She recognizes the power provided by her heritage culture as she and others like her join the mainstream. In “University Avenue” she writes, “We are the first/of our people to walk this path.” Although the students “move cautiously,” they become “guides for those who follow.” They have been prepared by their people for success, given “gifts from the land.” They “do not travel alone” because their “people burn deep within.”<sup>11</sup> As for these students, heritage gifts empower Mora’s work, both as a writer and as a social activist.

When Mora speaks, her voice is a desert breeze, warm and powerful. “I have issues I feel passionately about,” she says.

My essays and public speaking allow me to be part of the kinds of societal change I want to see take place. A key issue is having the U.S. Latino and Latina voice heard and respected, whether we are talking about public policy, literacy, or American literature for children or adults. I have a desire to move away from the margin. I

want us to be perceived as active participants in creating a society we all want to live in. Yet I have learned that committing yourself to those who are often denigrated, ignored, and seen as inferior can be heartbreaking work.

It is heartbreaking, indeed, to face denigration, particularly when it arrives unexpectedly. Mora tells the painful story of a press known for publishing work for Latinos. The editor received a letter from a teacher in western Pennsylvania saying, “There is no need to send me your catalog. I teach gifted and talented; I am not the resource teacher.” Because that teacher had no Spanish-speaking children in her classes, she simply felt it unnecessary to expose her students to Latino cultures. Equally unsettling is the teacher’s assumption that only students in the resource classes would understand (or need) bilingual or bicultural texts.

Because we are products of our personal experiences, Mora believes all teachers can find places to connect with difference if only they know how to look. She tells of another teacher, also from western Pennsylvania, who became interested in her writing and her work with *Día*.

“The woman created an incredible experience for me when I was there,” Mora says.

The students were beautifully prepared, and she had a little song I had written for Día put to music so it could be performed. At the end of the visit I asked her, "Where did your passion for Latino children—any children who are not perceived as mainstream—come from?" She looked at me and answered, "I was raised Mennonite. I know what it's like to be perceived as different."

Mora wants publishers to commit to producing work produced by Latinos and Latinas. Experience has taught her that "publication [of Latino texts] is a really tough journey. There are some

books that can take ten years to reach the bookstores."

She explains, "There is a lot of resistance to Latino and Latina writers. Editors won't admit it. They believe they are open, but when you look at their catalogs, you can tell." All aspects of the industry have to change in order to make a real difference.

I want to see young Latinos thinking about going to New York and becoming editors or marketing directors. If we really want things to be different, we need to see diversity all the way through. When new

editors or assistant editors get hired, they often look just like the last ones. And they come from similar experiences. We need diversity in reviewers as well if we are going to broaden the kinds of books readily available. Getting diverse books into bookstores—especially the mega-bookstores—is another difficulty. We all need to be more aggressive in going to talk to the bookstores about what we want. We need to go to the manager and say, 'Where are the children's books by Latinos?' And we need to be prepared if they say, 'Do you have a list of what you are looking for?' We need to be ready to

## A Look at How Libraries Celebrate

Here's a look at what some libraries have done to celebrate Día.

### **My branch library celebrated Día with three storytimes.**

We read stories in Spanish (*Sueños* by Margarita Robledo or *Pinta Ratones* by Ellen Stoll Walsh) and Spanish-theme stories in English (*La Cucaracha Martin* by Daniel Moreton or *Gotta Go! Gotta Go!* by Sam Swope). We counted to ten in English and Spanish and sang "De Colores" by Raffi. Each program ended with a craft. Our branch doesn't usually have Spanish storytimes, so parents welcomed the change.—*Anne Robert, Jacksonville (Fla.) Public Library*

### **Providence (R.I.) Public Library won the 2004 Mora Award.**

Each year, the library sponsors an annual bilingual (English/Spanish) story writing competition. This contest, which has grown in popularity over the last four years, promotes the celebration of culture and bilingual literacy. In 2005, in addition to Pablo Alvarez's book-making workshop, we held classes in creative writing, family writing, and drawing. Eighty-seven children, ages two through twelve, from sixteen different schools and child care centers submitted books to the contest. Ten outstanding books were selected. All books were displayed at the R.I. School of Design Museum during the fifth annual *El día de los niños/El día de los libros* celebration, which featured award-winning author/illustrator Yuyi Morales. More than seven hundred participated.—*Tonia Mason, Marketing and Communications Director, Providence (R.I.) Public Library*

### **We held our first *El día de los niños/ El día de los libros* event in 2004**

on a Friday evening with a Spanish DJ playing Spanish pop hits, clowns leading games, and a live Spanish band. In between performances, children's librarians read Spanish stories and lead finger plays in Spanish. Craft programs offered children the opportunity

to make *papel picado* and cookie sombreros. The following year, we had a Spanish DJ who played Spanish pop songs and led games and karaoke. Crafts and storytimes rounded out the event. In 2006, we had a local musician perform songs from Latin America. Families were invited to come early and make maracas to use during the program. The musical tour through Latin America involved lots of singing, dancing, and maraca playing. Both the 2004 and 2005 events were supported by Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grant funds; we did not have extra funding in 2006 for our program.—*Katie Guzek, Brown County Library, Green Bay, Wisc.*

### **In 2006, we featured South American music and dancers.**

We decorated the library with paper flowers and piñatas and offered arts and crafts projects, including making necklaces, fuzzy caterpillars, and foldable books. The event drew about eight hundred kids to the branch, and we had about thirty volunteers.—*Stephen Ellis, Gresham (Ore.) Library*

### **In 2006, nearly two thousand children and adults enjoyed a week of bilingual literacy activities**

related to *El día de los niños/El día de los libros* (Children's Day/Book Day) sponsored by four public libraries and eight other literacy agencies in the area. A literacy fiesta including bilingual storytimes, crafts, music, dancing, piñatas, cascarnes, and free books for all children topped off the week. Día activities were supported by a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provisions of LSTA as administered by the Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives under the direction of the Kenton County Public Library. For their efforts, the libraries won the 2006 Estela and Raúl Mora Award.—*Sara P. Howrey, El Día Committee of Northern Kentucky and Cincinnati, Boone County (Ky.) Public Library, Campbell County (Ky.) Public Library, Kenton County (Ky.) Public Library, Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County (Ohio)*

help, not just complain. We need to be ready to help create change.

Mora's activism is not limited to literacy or causes affecting diverse peoples living in the United States. She is also a committed feminist.

Many people believe that the phrase . . . "intelligent Mexican woman" is an oxymoron. We live in a patriarchal world that changes very slowly. There were years where the word *feminist* has been contested because women from African American, or Chicano, or Native American traditions and cultures felt that it wasn't their word because white feminists had not included all of us.

I am committed to the word because I feel that for those of us who believe in the power of the word, part of our work in the world is to expand definitions of words to what they could be or should be, to develop their full wealth. Were I not as committed as I am to women's full development, I might not have chosen to do as many picture books that have spunky girls at their core.

Her picture book *Doña Flor* illustrates her commitment to portraying strong Mexican women.

"Children grow up with the image of Paul Bunyan and his strength. I wanted them to see Doña Flor, this amazing woman who is bigger than a mountain and bilingual. I wanted them to see how incredibly powerful she is," she said. "As you read the book, you learn that she speaks every language—even rattler! She is close to all the animals, and they are very much a part of her life because she understands their languages."

Because authors of children's books rarely have any influence over the illustrator a publisher will select for their words, Mora was anxious to see how Raúl Colón would portray her heroine. "I wondered, 'How would he see this woman who is taller than a mountain? How would he capture that?'"

She was delighted by Colón's interpretation. "From the beginning, I was crazy

about his images. Doña Flor looked so *Mexicana*, and I loved that about what Raúl captured. She is beautiful, and she is utterly immense. I mean, I knew she was big . . . I wrote the book! But to show how big she is, the illustrator used just her foot across two pages! And the people next to that foot look like leprechauns!"

Mora is skilled with the nuances and the power of language. Her influence is becoming "utterly immense" as well. As Henry Giroux asserts, "literacy becomes an enabling condition" because it affords people opportunities to choose and shape their societal roles, emancipating themselves from potentially "oppressive and colonizing practices."<sup>12</sup> Literacy empowers. And Mora is determined to empower all others living in borderlands—physical or cultural—even as language has empowered her. ☺

*Additional information about El día de los niños/El día de los libros can be found at [www.patmora.com](http://www.patmora.com) and [www.ala.org/dia](http://www.ala.org/dia).*

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Author Yuyi Morales reads at Providence (R.I.) Public Library (Photo courtesy of Tonia Mason).

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# Seattle Bound!

## ALA Midwinter Meeting, January 2007

All photos by Sharon Verbeten



The stunning architecture of the Seattle Public Library drew attention.



Carole Fiore, Hedra Packman, and Todd Morning, seated from left, discussed Projects and Research Priority Group business.



ALSC President Kathleen T. Horning addresses leaders at the Division Leadership Meeting.



Rita Smith, left, and Jan Watkins take a break during the All Committee Meeting.



From left, Jan Watkins of Skokie (Ill.) Public Library, Susan Stonesifer of Howard County (Md.) Library, and Stephanie Shauck of Maryland State Department of Education are part of the Partnerships Priority Group.



Former ALSC President Gretchen Wronka consults with a group during the All Committee Meeting.



ALSC's Oral History Committee met during the All Committee Meeting.



Author SAMI signs a board book at the Blue Apple Books booth in the exhibit hall.



Seattle's Pike Place Market was a highlight for many ALA attendees.

# Plants and Poetry

## Integrating Science, Fine Arts, and a Library's Special Collection

Elaine R. Radwanski and Marilyn J. Ward

**Q**uestion: What happens when a children's literature and theatre specialist and a plant scientist work together to create a college course linking the Carthage College Center for Children's Literature in the Hedberg Library to plant science, with the goals of:

- college students using children's books to introduce plant science to kindergarten through fourth graders in an enrichment program at local private primary schools;
- college students performing children's plant-themed poetry for the Hedberg Library's open-to-the-public Friday Family Fun Night in the Center for Children's Literature; and

***Elaine R. Radwanski Ph.D.** is a plant molecular biologist with years of experience in teaching elementary and middle school education majors about plants and basic biology. She also oversees senior projects created by biology majors with secondary education minors. Radwanski and Ward presented this work at the November 2005 National Council of Teachers of English Annual Conference in Pittsburgh, Pa.*

***Marilyn J. Ward Ph.D.** is a specialist in children's literature with interests in poetry and drama. For more than a decade, she has taught children's literature and creative arts methods at Carthage College in Kenosha, Wisconsin. She is the author of *Voices from the Margins: An Annotated Bibliography of Fiction on Disabilities and Differences for Young People* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Pr., 2002) and is co-director of the Carthage College Center for Children's Literature.*

- primary school students performing a vibrant plant poetry-theatre production with costumes and props in the library's media theatre?

**Answer:** It creates transforming educational experiences for all participants (primary school students, college students, and two professors) through the surprisingly powerful synergy of plant science and the library's special collection, botanical content, and creativity.

Carthage's Center for Children's Literature houses an extensive collection of more than 25,000 volumes accumulated by John Stewig. His areas of research and teaching are visual literacy and children's picture books, issues in children's literature, language arts curriculum, and drama in the curriculum. Stewig has published 104 articles in 47 periodicals and is the author or coauthor of 12 scholarly books, as well as 10 published picture books for children.

Highly respected in his field, he was elected the chairman of ALA's 1998 Caldecott Award Selection Committee, which awards the coveted Caldecott Medal. Stewig is the director of Carthage's Center for Children's Literature.

### The Hedberg Library

The library is named in honor of 1950 Carthage College graduate Don Hedberg, who has fond memories of spending Friday nights with his children in the local public library and who strongly supports activities involving the public at Hedberg Library. The weekly Friday Family Fun Night at the library proved to be a very successful venue for performances by

Carthage College students of children's plant-based poetry and prose, including *Road Trip to Florida*, a humorous original one-act play by a Carthage student, focused on the plants you would see on a drive from Wisconsin to Florida. The children in the audience also participated in activities that invited them to enjoy plants and poetry with a mix of reading, art, and music.

## Interdisciplinary College Program and Collaboration with Primary School

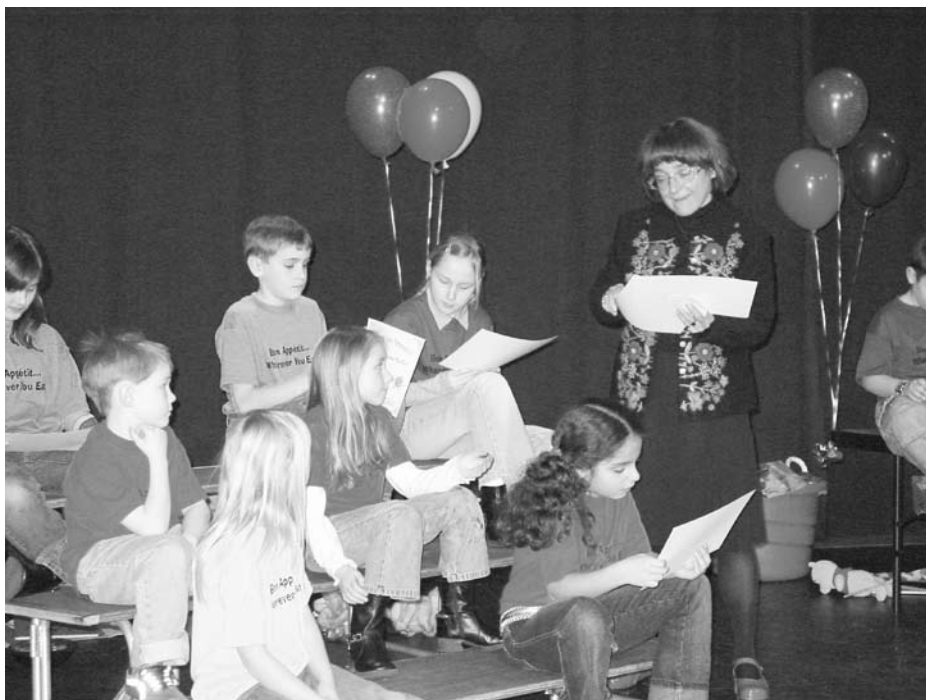
For the past decade, Carthage has had a signature collegewide requirement, Junior Symposium, whose goal is to foster interdisciplinary experiences for upper-level students to lead them to make connections to fields outside their majors. Recently the faculty has approved an experimental set of Junior Symposia (now called Carthage Symposia) that consist of a single team-taught course combining different academic disciplines.

Ward and Radwanski were interested in collaborating on using the special collection in the Center for Children's Literature and plants to teach younger children basic science and jumped at the opportunity to offer an experimental Carthage Symposium combining Elementary Education and Plant Science.

## Plants, Poetry, and Performance

The goal? To combine plant science with children's literature and theatre at the college level. In this interdisciplinary college course, students both investigated basic plant structure and function and discovered that children's books from the special collection were powerful tools for stimulating learning. Children's books with plant-related themes (gardening, agriculture, ecosystems, and the like) were explored in class through reading aloud, book talks, and the performance of poetry. The college students learned a variety of readers' theatre techniques, how to "score" a poetry performance, and how to use movement and props to enhance the performance.

By their own admission, the college students' own poetry performances were



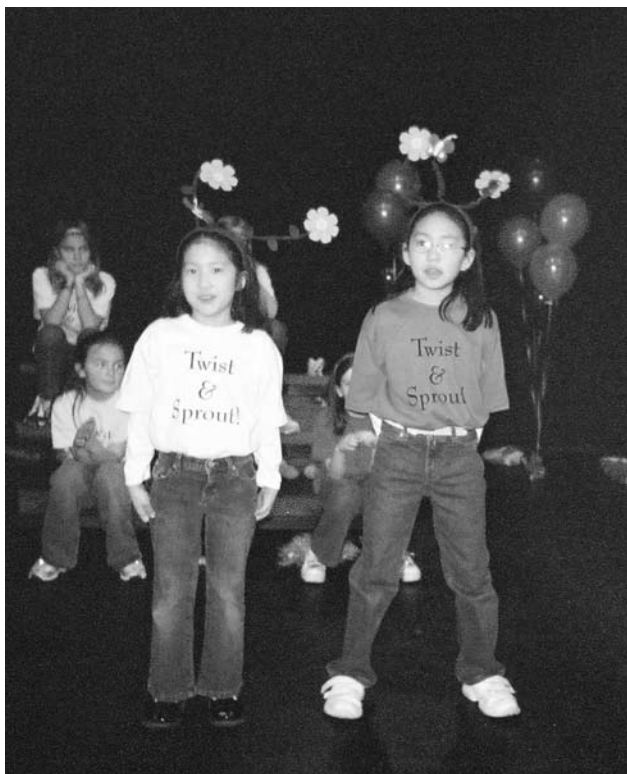
Young performers receive certificates of achievement from Dr. Ward after the performance.



From left, Anne, Christina, and Taylor perform "I'd Never Eat a Beet."

one of the highlights of the course and gave them a greater appreciation of the primary school students' (PoetKids) rehearsals and performance. College students were required to attend at least two rehearsals and to complete official classroom observation forms (used by education majors observing master teachers) recording the experience. The professors

were delighted that they had created an environment where the college students were able to open up to their creativity using children's literature and carry out assignments that produced thoughtful, beautiful, and unusual poems, hand-illustrated stories, and dynamic poetry performances.



Emily and Erika present their original poem "Our Beautiful Garden."

The basic content of the college students' plant laboratory experience came from the required "textbook" for the course, *Oh Say Can You Seed: All about Flowering Plants* from the Cat in the Hat series.<sup>1</sup> More detailed botanical information was contained in the laboratory workbook created by Radwanski. The college students learned a variety of basic lab techniques and conquered basic plant structure and function. The Carthage students also learned methods and strategies for teaching science in their own classroom at the primary school.

### Teaching Botany via Children's Literature

For the past two January terms, Plants, Poetry, and Performance has involved an average of twenty students from two different local private primary schools (PlantKids/PoetKids). They ranged from kindergartners to fourth graders and had been selected by their teachers as talented enough to flourish in both the science enrichment program and the theatre piece.

The challenge for the Carthage students was to develop engaging, informative lesson plans about plants for the daily

hour-long enrichment program. Ward taught them the "how-to" of creating effective lesson plans. The first year the PlantKids program started with a Carthage student reading aloud *The Tiny Seed* by Eric Carle; the children excitedly interacted with the reader by pointing to pictures in the book to answer questions.<sup>2</sup>

The children then learned basic seed structure from large, hand-drawn, labeled diagrams of beans. The part the children enjoyed the most on this first day was planting their very own seeds (Wisconsin "Fast Plants" and beans) that would be on a light shelf in the science classroom for the rest of the PlantKids sessions.

Another group of fledgling teachers covered germination by showing that seeds soaked overnight could be dissected to reveal the baby plant inside and its food source. Each group of four to five children had a copy of *Oh Say Can You Seed*, and they read the section on seeds and germination aloud to each other. Roots and shoots were explored in another session. Celery stalks soaked in food coloring showed the "pipes;" juice boxes with straws modeled how water is sucked up the "pipes" from the soil. A felt storyboard based on *The Great Big Enormous Turnip* by Aleksey Nikolayevich Tolstoy about a family's adventure in pulling up a really big turnip led to lively discussions of all the different roots that we eat, enhanced by actual edible roots for the children to identify and touch.<sup>3</sup>

Plant products and how humans use them were introduced by a dramatic reading of *Weslandia* by Paul Fleischman, the tale of a misfit boy who creates his own "land" by growing and using plants for everything he needs.<sup>4</sup> This was an excellent way to start a discussion exploring how important plants are to

humans. Mystery bags filled with bits of things made from rubber, wood, and cotton cloth were used to stimulate the children to think about the origins of such materials.

After teaching the PlantKids, the Carthage students evaluated their lessons and wrote a reflection on the experience. The reflections were a revelation to the professors:

"The little children still hold on to a sense of awe because everything is new, it isn't recycled. This is what I found to be the most rewarding while I observed and taught."—English major and secondary education minor

"The pictures and different ideas from the book were a good way to get into the lesson that we had planned for the day. . . . I think the kids were stunned to actually see how much of the everyday world came from plants."—Business major

"With the teaching being hands-on, the students were able to get more involved in the science of plants and make learning that much more pleasurable. This entire teaching experience was an honor to take part in, and I would jump at the chance to teach and hang out with the students again."—Accounting major

The primary school students wrote charming letters to the college professors about what they learned:

"Today I learned that you can eat some roots."—Kindergartner

"The most best part in Plants and Poetry is when we ate fruit and planted things. And I also like everything we did today (building ecosystems)."—Second grader

"The brassica seeds are not seeds anymore. They are growing very tall. They also look like clovers."—Third grader

"Today I learned the parts of the flower. I really enjoyed it. Brandon,



Kristi, Rachele, and Erin did a really good job. Thank you.”—Third grader

## Plant-based Poetry in the Hedberg Library

By using a variety of playwriting techniques to transform children’s stories and poems about plants (gardening, bugs, water and rain, fruits, vegetables, flowers, trees, saving forests) into exciting minidramas, Ward created the scripts *Twist and Sprout* (2005) and *Bon Appetit . . . Wherever You Eat* (2006).

Poems included originals by Ward (“Twist and Sprout”), plus many more well-known favorites. The long list included “No, I Won’t Turn Orange!” and “I’d Never Eat a Beet” by Jack Prelutsky, “Wild Strawberries” by Shel Silverstein, Langston Hughes’s “April Rain Song,” and the famous and funny “Celery” by Ogden Nash.<sup>5</sup>

One of the poems, “Our Beautiful Garden,” was written and performed by two sisters (kindergarten and third grade) in PoetKids 2005. Creative drama techniques—pantomime, movement, improvisation, oral interpretation, story dramatization, props, costumes, music, and more—were used in the final pub-

lic performances. More than one hundred family members, friends, and fans attended each show, both of which were held in the Neimann Media Theater in the Hedberg Library.

The combination of Carthage College students, bright and motivated primary school students (Kindergarten through

*The professors were delighted that they had created an environment where the college students were able to open up to their creativity using children’s literature.*

fourth grade) with supportive administrators, staff, teachers, and parents, plus two college professors committed to improving basic science and creative arts education proved to be dramatically synergistic. The college students were surprised by the transformative power of teaching and theatre. Both private pri-

mary schools are eager to participate in Plants, Poetry, and Performance again, as are the professors. ☺

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## Find Out What You’re Missing!

Have you visited the Kids! @ your library® Public Awareness Campaign Web site yet? The campaign tool kit available at [www.ala.org/kids](http://www.ala.org/kids) (click on “Tool Kit”) offers a great selection of materials to help you promote your library to children and their families. And, it’s all free!

The latest additions to the tool kit include the following resources in Spanish: So Much to See. So Much to Do. @ your library® logos; print-ready public service advertisements in PDF; audio public service announcement scripts; and a list of Top Ten Things for Kids to Do @ your library®.

Looking for proven ways to use these materials? Visit the Kids! @ your library® Best Practices Wiki at <http://wikis.ala.org/alsc/index.php/Advocacy> and find out: 1) how Bill Harley’s “At Your Library” song was used at a parade, during a family night play, and on a library promotion video; 2) how the Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County (N.C.) used the So Much to See. So Much to Do. @ your library®



theme to engage and energize the Charlotte-Mecklenburg community, striving to make sure every child in the county in grades K through 5 had a library card by January 2007; and 3) how Maricopa County (Ariz.) Library District sponsored a month-long Family Festival to promote the idea that there is So Much to See. So Much to Do. @ your library®. We especially welcome libraries already using campaign materials to post their success stories to the wiki.

Don’t miss out. Visit [www.ala.org/kids](http://www.ala.org/kids) and take advantage of all the free artwork; downloadable games, activities, and contests for kids; audio PSA recorded by Bill Harley; and much more. All created by children’s librarians for children’s librarians.

## Partnering for Reading Readiness A Case Study of Maryland Public Librarians

Gilda Martinez

*Working from Epstein's Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence, twenty-six Maryland public librarians from urban, suburban, and rural counties were studied to investigate their storytime and outreach practices intended to help children with school reading readiness. Primary data collection for this multiple-case study took place in the course of eight months and involved semistructured interviews and observations made by the researcher, as well as the review of library outreach documents. Interviews were transcribed, along with observation data; both were coded to identify similarities and differences among librarians' practices.*

*The study found that librarians were implementing information obtained during an emergent literacy training session into their storytime and outreach practices, thereby incorporating current standards for kindergarten readiness. The findings suggest that funding for additional library staff and professional development, as well as increased volunteer support are needed. These resources would assist librarians in providing more frequent library-based activities, and more targeted outreach to support children's early literacy development.*

Children, especially those from low socioeconomic areas, do not have the necessary skills to begin school ready to learn to read.<sup>1</sup> Despite No Child Left Behind providing federal funding to schools in low-socioeconomic areas to improve student achievement, if schools do not make adequate yearly progress (AYP), shown through standardized assessment scores, their schools could be at risk of losing funding.

Sandra Feldman, then-president of the American Federation of Teachers, talked about this issue in her keynote address at the Quest Conference in Washington, D.C., on July 10, 2003. She explained:

This means that schools whose students are way behind from the start have to make far, far more annual progress—both

on average and with each of their subgroups—than schools already at or beyond the state's starting point. Indeed, the experts told us—and we and they tried to tell Congress—that this AYP formula is not only statistically stacked against diverse schools; it also calls on most high-poverty schools—with their well-documented lack of resources—to achieve a rate of academic progress that has never before been seen, not in our most advantaged schools and not even in so-called world-class school systems.<sup>2</sup>

### Maryland Kindergarten Assessment Results

In Maryland, school readiness baseline information has been gathered statewide from the Work Sampling System assessment since the 2001–2002 school year. This assessment is based on teacher observations of classroom activities in the areas of social and personal development, language and literacy, mathematical thinking, scientific thinking, social studies, the arts, and physical and health development. Information from this assessment is used to provide meaningful instruction, to group students based on ability levels, and to provide additional support based on student needs. Performance data reveal that disparities in student performance are related to race and ethnicity, gender, prior care, special education, limited English proficiency, and socioeconomic status.

Overall, in the 2001–2002 school year, 49 percent of all children entering kindergarten in Maryland were ready to start school. Table 1 shows the differences between various groups. More specifically, in terms of language and literacy, only 36 percent of all students were ready to learn to read. With these data, we have evidence that there are significant disparities among children entering kindergarten in Maryland.<sup>3</sup>

### Community Organizations

For almost twenty years, experts have recognized that “the problems of educational achievement and academic success demand resources beyond the scope of the schools and of most families.”<sup>4</sup> While families and schools have the greatest role to

*Gilda Martinez is an assistant professor in the Graduate Reading Program at Towson University in Maryland.*

play in children's academic preparation and success, studies suggest that community-based organizations also have a role to play.

For families in which both parents work, for single-parent families, and even for seemingly storybook-perfect nuclear families, community institutions and volunteer agencies can give their children access to adults with a wide range of talents and perspectives not likely to be found within a single family.<sup>5</sup>

Community-based organizations, such as Even Start, Head Start, or public libraries, can assist parents in learning how to help prepare their children for school in a variety of ways, such as providing hands-on workshops and practical tips on children's cognitive and social development. Parents who learn how to prepare their children for school can observe and support their children's language development and the development of other skills on a daily basis. Knowing how to help their children is a step toward ensuring school readiness, because many parents want their children to succeed in school but do not know how to prepare them.<sup>6</sup>

There are many reasons for developing school, family, and community partnerships. They can improve school programs and school climate, provide family services and support, increase parents' skills and leadership, connect families with others in the school and in the community, and help teachers with their work. However, the main reason to create such partnerships is to help all youngsters succeed in school and in later

life. When parents, teachers, students, and others view one another as partners in education, a caring community forms around students and begins its work.<sup>7</sup>

Community organizations across the United States are becoming more involved in supporting children's learning. In 2002, for example, Maryland public libraries launched a campaign to promote early literacy development. Public librarians in Maryland have been working with children, parents, communities, and schools to help achieve this goal by:

- providing storytimes to children of various ages;
- assisting patrons (parents, children, and community members) in finding books of interest;
- providing helpful tips on how to choose age-appropriate books; and
- making an effort to connect with communities and schools to share what their libraries have to offer and bring community members into the library.<sup>8</sup>

However, librarians are not trained in the developmental process of reading or in how schools assess reading skills in young children. Their training focuses on the areas of cataloging, classification, references, collection development, programming, records management, storytelling materials, literature for children and young adults, and computer databases.<sup>9</sup> To further their skills to

help children begin school with reading readiness, Maryland public librarians attended a professional development session to learn what state education leaders expect of children entering public kindergartens.

## Training Maryland Librarians

Reading specialists employed at Johns Hopkins University developed a one-day training session for librarians from Maryland public libraries, which was funded by the division of library development and services at the Maryland State Department of Education. The goals were to familiarize participants with the most current research on how to help young children start school ready to learn to read, familiarize participants with the way readiness is assessed in Maryland's schools, and demonstrate how public libraries can become a vital partner in the goal of achieving school readiness for all children. Content included information on the Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR), the Work Sampling System (WSS), and current research on best practices for early literacy instruction.

During the session, issues of how and why to develop language and literacy skills in young children were addressed, along with the importance of developing reading motivation. Librarians received an overview of current research for preparing children to learn to read, which involved information from a partnership of the National Institutes of Health, the Public Library Association (PLA), and the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC).<sup>10</sup> They also were informed about the language and literacy section of MMSR and WSS.

MMSR is a set of guidelines kindergarten teachers use to observe their students and determine whether they are: (a) proficient, (b) in process, or (c) need development in (1) personal and social development, (2) language and literacy, (3) mathematical thinking, (4) scientific thinking, (5) social studies, (6) arts, and (7) physical development and health. WSS is an observational tool used by teachers to indicate the level of student readiness in the seven areas. The train-

Table 1. Maryland Kindergarten Assessment Results

Group	% Fully Ready to Start School
African American	37.0
Hispanic	39.4
American Native	44.6
Asian	55.4
Caucasian	57.6
Special education	30.8
Children in poverty	34.9
Limited English proficient	36.7
Males	43.8
Females	55.2
Cared for at home or in informal setting	39.9
Cared for in nonpublic nursery	68.0

ing session provided to Maryland public librarians focused on the language and literacy sections of MMSR and WSS. In addition, workshop trainers used books to model how to develop reading readiness skills in young children to prepare them for kindergarten.

Outreach programs also were discussed. Librarians completed a think-pair-share activity to describe how outreach was provided at different branches. (A think-pair-share consists of the speaker posing a question to the audience. The audience members are asked to think about the question individually. Then, the people in the audience are asked to pair up with their neighbor to discuss their ideas. Last, the pairs contribute their ideas with the entire group or audience.) Responses ranged from how libraries provided outreach to parents and community members to how they provided outreach to schools, childcare facilities, and many other agencies and institutions.

Storytime planning sheets, developed by Elaine Czarnecki, a reading specialist from Johns Hopkins University, were distributed and provided an outline for librarians to remember the types of activities that are developmentally appropriate for the following age ranges: birth to two-year-olds, two- to three-year-olds, and four- to five-year-olds. The sheets covered skills that kindergarten teachers expect children to be familiar with when they enter school.

A discussion emphasized that not all areas of the planning sheets needed to be covered in one storytime, but they served as a reminder to librarians to cover areas they might not normally cover. The proper use of the planning sheets required librarians to highlight skills they would address in a storytime and then circle one skill they would make an effort to communicate to parents. For example, if a librarian circled "Did I call attention to the pictures in the story?" this would mean that they would tell parents attending storytime why they pointed out pictures in the story and the importance of doing it at home as well (see figures 1, 2, and 3).

After lunch, librarians put theory into practice. They were divided into three

**Working Toward School Readiness**  
 Age Group: Birth to two-year-olds  
 Directions: Highlight the questions addressed in your storytime session. Circle the question that you called attention to for parents. Use the notes section to list materials and other information you want to share about your storytime activities.

**Print Motivation:**  
 Did I develop the idea that reading is fun?

**Language and Vocabulary:**  
 Did I make connections to concepts and vocabulary when reading?  
 Did I call attention to the pictures in the story?  
 Did I encourage the children to respond through movement and music?

**Parent Connection:**  
 Which of the actions above did I call the parents' attention to during the storytime? (Choose one to explain quickly and simply during the flow of activities.)

**Notes:**

Figure 1. Storytime Planning Sheet: Birth to Two-Year-Olds

**Working Toward School Readiness**  
 Age Group: Two- to three-year-olds  
 Directions: Highlight the questions addressed in your storytime session. Circle the question that you called attention to for parents. Use the notes section to list materials and other information you want to share about your storytime activities.

**Print Motivation:**  
 Did I develop the idea that reading is fun?

**Language and Vocabulary:**  
 Did I make connections to concepts and vocabulary when reading?  
 Did I call attention to the pictures in the story?  
 Did I encourage the children to respond through movement and music?  
 Did I give the children the opportunity to respond orally by asking questions about the story and/or pictures?

**Concepts about Print:**  
 Did I call attention to the cover of the book and point to and read the title?  
 Did I point to the print and occasionally run my finger along it while reading?

**Narrative Skills and Comprehension:**  
 Did I use puppets or a flannel board to have children participate in retelling the story?  
 Did I talk about the events of the story?  
 Did I help the children link the events and characters to what they know about?

**Parent Connection:**  
 Which of the actions above did I call the parents' attention to during the storytime? (Choose one to explain quickly and simply during the flow of activities.)

**Notes:**

Figure 2. Storytime Planning Sheet: Two- to Three-Year-Olds

groups and asked to plan a reading activity for birth to two-year-olds, two- to three-year-olds, and four- to five-year-

olds. Each group received a large tub of books, a CD player and CDs, puppets, noisemakers, and other storytime mate-

**Working Toward School Readiness**

Age Group: Four- to five-year-olds

Directions: Highlight the questions addressed in your storytime session. Circle the question that you called attention to for parents. Use the notes section to list materials and other information you want to share about your storytime activities.

**Print Motivation:**

Did I develop the idea that reading is fun?

**Language and Vocabulary:**

Did I make connections to concepts and vocabulary when reading?

Did I call attention to the pictures in the story?

Did I give the children the opportunity to respond orally by asking questions about the story and/or pictures?

**Phonological Awareness or Sensitivity:**

Did I read aloud a rhyming story or poem?

Did I invite the children to chime in on the rhyming parts?

Did I include any type of language play, such as a song or a game?

**Concepts about Print:**

Did I call attention to the cover of the book and point to and read the title?

Did I model left to right progression with a big book or a poem on a chart?

Did I allow the children to draw a picture and "write" about the story after reading?

**Letter Recognition:**

Did I read aloud an enjoyable alphabet book?

Did I make connections between the first letters of the children's names and the letters in a title or an alphabet book?

Did I allow the children to play with magnetic or foam letters after the storytime read alouds?

**Narrative Skills and Comprehension:**

Did I have the children participate in retelling the story, or telling about the characters, the problem, and how the story ended?

Did I talk about the events of the story?

Did I help the children link the events and characters to what they know about?

Did I encourage the children to make predictions before and during reading?

**Parent Connection:**

Which of the actions above did I call the parents' attention to during the storytime? (Choose one to explain quickly and simply during the flow of activities.)

**Notes:**

## Participants and Setting

Purposive sampling was used to identify the libraries. The libraries selected were specifically chosen to represent diverse populations throughout the state of Maryland and to present balance, build variety, offer personal viewpoints, and provide a learning opportunity for readers. Maryland public libraries from low, middle, and high socioeconomic areas (determined by county supervising librarians) from each of the following counties participated in the study: three libraries from rural Carroll County; three libraries from suburban Howard County; three libraries from suburban and urban Prince George's County; and one library from rural Wicomico County, an eastern shore representative. (Wicomico County has only one library.) Twenty-six public librarians from these ten libraries participated.

Table 2 provides specific demographic information about these counties based on U.S. Census data from 2000. These data demonstrate differences among populations in Maryland based on county residence.

## Data Collection

Well-organized interviews provide insight about people's backgrounds, goals, thought processes, reasoning, and needs.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, interviews were a central method used in the study. Through interviews, the researcher sought to understand the participants and their perceptions.

The interview questions developed for this study sought to elicit information on the librarians' professional background, job satisfaction, storytime training, outreach, and other general areas of interest (see figure 4). The questions were developed prior to the start of data collection and emerged from the study's primary research question: Have Maryland public librarians utilized the information about language, literacy, motivation, and outreach acquired through the training session in their storytimes and outreach activities?

Figure 3. Storytime Planning Sheet: Four- to Five-Year-Olds

rials. They were asked to create a storytime outline using their planning sheets. Each group presented its outline and modeled parts of its storytime.

## Purpose of this Study

This study sought to answer the following questions.

1. How are librarians conducting storytimes?
2. Are librarians using the storytime planning sheets or other information from the training session?
3. What outreach are librarians providing to parents, schools, and community members?
4. How has the training session influenced librarians' outreach?
5. What further training sessions or resources would librarians benefit from?

Table 2. Participants and Setting Description

	Carroll (Rural)	Howard (Suburban)	Prince George's (Urban)	Wicomico (Rural/E. Shore)
Population	155,654	255,707	816,791	85,426
Caucasian	96%	74%	27%	73%
African American	2%	14%	63%	23%
Asian	1%	8%	4%	2%
Hispanic	1%	3%	7%	2%
HS graduates	85%	93%	85%	81%
Bachelor's +	25%	53%	27%	22%
ESL	4%	14%	16%	6%
Below Poverty	4%	4%	8%	13%
Children in Poverty	6%	5%	11%	19%

## Step One

The interview questions served as a guide and began with queries about the participants' educational backgrounds then eased into the more focused questions.<sup>12</sup>

The interviews were semistructured to allow participants to openly share information about their practice, while maintaining enough structure to collect pertinent information across cases. The length of the interviews was about forty-five minutes.

## Step Two

After initial interviews, librarians were observed. The researcher used the planning sheets from the training to structure the observations and to determine how much information, if any, they applied to their storytimes.

Observations were scheduled in advance to ensure minimum disruption. The observations primarily focused on how the librarians implemented what they discussed during their initial interviews. The researchers also observed the librarians to gain knowledge of the types of activities they implemented from the storytime planning sheets and the type of parent connections they made.

## Step Three

Following the observations, the researcher again interviewed the librarians. This second interview allowed the researcher to ask questions left unanswered by the initial interview and observation to achieve the goals of this research project.<sup>13</sup> The second interview also provided the librarians with an opportunity to discuss how they perceived the storytime's outcome. Questions posed varied for each librarian based on areas the researcher believed required further investigation.

## Step Four

Outreach documents collected consisted of flyers, brochures, newsletters, posters, Web site addresses, and local newspapers. These documents confirmed the interviewee information about outreach

### Background:

- What is your educational background?
- How long have you been a librarian?
- How long have you been at this branch?

### Job Satisfaction:

- What do you enjoy most about being a librarian?
- What do you find most rewarding?
- What do you find most challenging?

### Storytime Training:

- What did you learn in the training about storytime activities?
- Before having been trained, were there any activities or ideas for storytime that you had not thought of or had not done?
- Have you been able to implement anything from the training?
- Was it successful?

### Outreach:

- Do you engage in outreach to parents, community members, schools, etc? Please explain. (How? How often?)
- Have you done outreach differently since you received the training? Please explain.
- Do you have any flyers or information that you provided before/since receiving the training?

### Overall:

- Overall, did you find the training helpful as a child librarian?
- What was most useful?
- If you could change anything about the training's content, what would it be?
- What more would be helpful to improve your current practice?

Figure 4. Interview Protocol

The researcher organized a focus group to review the suitability and appropriateness of the interview protocol and questions. Focus group participants included three supervising librarians and three children's librarians from each of the following Maryland counties: Carroll, Howard, and Prince George's. These librarians provided feedback about the interview protocol questions but did not answer the questions.

To further comprehend librarians' practices, they were observed and asked to provide the researcher with newsletters, flyers, and other written outreach information. The following steps describe data collected, which included preliminary interviews, observations, follow-up interviews, artifacts, and follow-up written surveys.

activities, added to the description of outreach activities discussed during the initial interviews, and shed light on other types of outreach activities the participating libraries were providing, yet were not mentioned during the interviews.

## Data Analysis

The following describes the methods of data analysis used by the researcher for this project.

### Step One

To keep accurate records, all interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. Transcribing interviews is highly recommended to ensure that relevant information acquired through the interview process is captured.<sup>14</sup> Through a process of reading and rereading the transcribed interviews, which totaled 129 pages, the researcher coded key phrases that librarians used, which showed they incorporated information from the training and provided outreach. Coded phrases included words such as parents, outreach, motivation, and school readiness.

### Step Two

Key phrases were then compared to identify commonalities and differences among the librarians interviewed. These comparisons were not made to quantify differences in the occurrences of such phrases, but to identify similarities and differences in the context in which they were used.

### Step Three

Observation results were coded and compared to identify overriding themes to reveal merits and shortcomings among and between individual cases.<sup>15</sup> Categories contained in the storytime planning sheets were used to code the library observations.

### Step Four

The interviews, observations, and outreach documents were compared within each library, between libraries in each county, and between libraries in different counties. The central themes

that emerged through this process are described further in this article.

## Summary of Key Findings

### Storytimes

In general, librarians were found to be conducting storytimes that exhibited their ability to implement the objectives of the training session. They were also using the storytime planning sheets to aid in creating developmentally appropriate activities for children during their storytimes.

Librarians were implementing ideas and activities from the workshop and storytime planning sheets such as developing language, vocabulary, phonological awareness, concepts about print, letter recognition, narrative skills, and comprehension in young children. These objectives were achieved, for example, when librarians explained vocabulary, used name tags to point out children's names and letters in their names, helped children make personal connections to stories, and asked predicting questions while reading. Librarians also provided

audience sometimes when you use a real short story. However, most of this storytelling is geared for adult or high school kids. Since the training, I have put more emphasis on stopping and asking questions, having children predict, mentioning the author and illustrator, and just going into more depth than just reading the books.

A librarian from rural Wicomico County added,

I got some good ideas. For example, when we purchased materials for storytimes, we bought puppets and magnetic letters, which were ideas from the training. The training also gave me the vocabulary, educational terms to describe my work.

In general, librarians reported that the training session had validated their work, provided them with research-based activities that they could readily incorporate in their storytimes, and taught them about kindergarten expectations so they could understand the connection between their library services and young children's school readiness. In addition, librarians reported that they had not

*In general, librarians reported that the training session had validated their work, provided them with research-based activities that they could readily incorporate in their storytimes, and taught them about kindergarten expectations so they could understand the connection between their library services and young children's school readiness.*

information to parents and caregivers about the importance and purposes of the activities.

A librarian from rural Carroll County said,

You want to know the unbelievable truth? In library school you are not prepared for specifics of storytimes. You might take a storytelling course where you actually learn to tell stories, which works for the younger

received professional development on kindergarten expectations before. As a result of the training, they believed they were better able to select books and develop storytime activities specifically to promote early literacy skills that young children need to enter school ready to learn to read.

Differences noted among librarians were minimal, primarily stylistic, and did not affect the quality of information provided during the storytimes. The only storytime

observed that did not incorporate best practices throughout was provided by the least-experienced librarian, who introduced concepts that were not developmentally age-appropriate. However, this librarian was able to verbalize what was learned during the training session and did, in a follow-up observation, provide children with fitting activities.

Librarians also expressed the desire for other professional development workshops focused on student learning. Howard and Wicomico County librarians, for example, requested training and information on brain development during the early years. Prince George's County librarians sought additional workshops and information on how to reach and teach parents about school readiness skills.

## Outreach

This study found that librarians provided promising outreach practices to families and community partners. The training session reinforced the importance of outreach and gave librarians the time to describe to colleagues how, where, and why they were providing outreach. A librarian from suburban Howard County Library commented,

I found it useful to see how people from other libraries were providing outreach. Learning how they used materials, accessed materials, and put things together for outreach was a plus.

*A librarian from suburban Howard County Library commented, "I found it useful to see how people from other libraries were providing outreach. Learning how they used materials, accessed materials, and put things together for outreach was a plus."*

Librarians provided outreach to community organizations, schools, daycare centers, hospitals, and other sites where children and parents or childcare providers were present. While acknowledg-

ing the quality and importance of their outreach, librarians wanted to build their capacity to provide more services to their neediest populations. To accomplish this, they believed they needed more hours and needed to hire additional librarians.

Each county's outreach activities differed. Noteworthy activities were being conducted in each county. Librarians in rural Wicomico County created and disseminated a quarterly newsletter (*The Early Years*) to community organizations throughout the state. It included information on home activities to support language and literacy skills. Rural Carroll County provided pediatricians with reading kits to distribute to the parents of young children. Suburban Howard County's A+ Partnership was a collaboration that united libraries with all schools in the county. A librarian from this county said,

We have a partnership with every single school in the county. It's the first of its kind in the nation. Each library branch is assigned a certain number of schools to provide outreach services to. It guarantees that every school is connected to their local public library.

Lastly, urban Prince George's librarians provided professional development on a variety of topics, including school readiness, to librarians within their county as well as in neighboring counties. A librarian from this county said,

I include the activities from the storytime planning sheets in the outreach we do. The planning sheets were helpful for me because I can look at the list and make sure I

cover important areas in developing language and literacy.

While each county was working on reaching their community through different outreach practices, the effects of librarians outreach efforts were not being systematically evaluated. The ten libraries studied were not tracking school readiness outcomes for children participating in library programs because of the variables making it quite difficult. As a result, librarians could only provide anecdotal accounts of the impact of their storytimes and outreach. Supervising librarians acknowledged these limitations and showed an interest in incorporating an evaluation component in their outreach practices.

## Limitations of the Study

This research utilized a case study approach. This approach allowed the researcher to study librarians' storytime practices in their natural settings, conduct pre- and post-interviews with them to better contextualize the observations, and review documents related to their outreach efforts. These opportunities were essential to answer the questions posed by this study. However, limitations did exist.

First, this study could have evaluated in more depth what librarians' practices were before the training session. Through interviews, librarians discussed this issue after the training session had taken place. However, direct observation before the training session would have yielded a clearer picture of how the workshop influenced their practice. The timing of the study did not allow the researcher to collect pretraining data. However, future studies of similar focus would benefit from such data.

Second, librarians from urban, suburban, and rural counties from low, mid, and high socioeconomic areas were interviewed and observed. Due to the time required for intensive qualitative data collection, only four counties could be included in the study. For this reason, the counties and library locations were carefully selected to ensure a good representation of populations in Maryland.



However, a larger scale study could have included more counties. Such a study would generate even richer comparative data.

Third, librarians were asked specific questions about the training session in an attempt to measure specific outcomes that were directly related to it. This study, however, cannot and does not claim that librarians' practices were a result of one day of training. Nevertheless, data collected for this study indicate that librarians remembered the information provided in the training session and incorporated it into their practices. Perhaps this was because this type of information had never been provided to Maryland public librarians before, their high interest in the topic, or a combination of the two.

Lastly, some would argue that quantitative procedures could have been used, such as pre- and post-assessments of librarians' early literacy knowledge, in addition to this study's qualitative measures to make the study more robust. However, a variety of qualitative techniques, including interviews, surveys, observations, and the collection of outreach flyers and other documents provided to community members, were deemed most appropriate to answer the research questions. This study thus illustrates how a variety of data-gathering methods can be employed in researchers' efforts to understand a given topic.

This study captures the experiences and practices of twenty-six public librarians in four counties in Maryland who were assisting families, caregivers, teachers, and other community members in building children's literacy skills. Although the results of the study are limited to the participants, and generalizations to all Maryland public librarians need to be made with caution, the findings suggest that librarians are and can be involved in

children's reading readiness when provided with current information on educational research, policy, and practice. The study also identifies areas of need in librarians' outreach practice.

Finally, it broadens our understanding of the role of librarians in supporting community engagement in young children's learning and school readiness. This study thus contributes to our understanding of how libraries, as community organizations, can overlap with families and schools to improve children's academic success. ☺

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## First Day of Class The Public Library's Role in "School Readiness"

Betsy Diamant-Cohen

Children's librarians often tout the value of programs for children under age five by asserting that they help children develop preliteracy skills leading to "school readiness." What does this term mean in the education field and in the context of services we provide?

A gap exists between what we know and what we do as a society when it comes to early literacy skills, early care, and education. Jack P. Shonkoff, dean of the Heller School for Social Policy and Management at Brandeis University, blames this on mistaken impressions, misunderstandings, and misplaced priorities.<sup>1</sup> "First, many people think that infants, toddlers, and preschoolers are 'too young' to learn. Second, many people do not have a clear understanding of how a good early learning program works. Third, too often, political rhetoric about the critical importance of early education is not translated into reality when public officials are devising and voting on budgets."<sup>2</sup> Early childhood programs in the library can be essential to filling that gap by contributing to children's acquisition of skills needed for school readiness and inviting parents to join in that process.

### Defining "School Readiness"

"School readiness" may conjure up images of children who can identify letters of the alphabet and know their sounds, or count up to ten and recognize each number. These are not necessarily the most important skills for starting school. Kindergarten teachers can teach children their letters and numbers; before the advent of *Sesame Street* and similar television programs and video games, they expected that to be an important part of the job.

Instead of teaching concrete math and reading, early childhood



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educators now focus on skills that enable a child to enter into a classroom ready to learn. Simply put, the term "school readiness" refers to a combination of the different skills leading to success in school—positive early literacy language experiences combined with physical and mental health, social skills of self-regulating and, yes, playing well with others, basic cognitive skills, and curiosity and enthusiasm about learning.<sup>3</sup>

Current thinking on school readiness builds on several recent key insights. In 1983, Howard Gardner proposed his multiple intelligences theory in *Frames of Mind*, which asserted that people had different kinds of intelligences and that each should be addressed. This had a profound affect on the education community, leading to programs designed to promote more than just cognitive development.<sup>4</sup> Daniel Goleman's 1995 book *Emotional Intelligence* equated emotional intelligence with skills such as the ability to share, listen, be curious and enthusiastic, verbally communicate feelings, be sensitive to others' feelings, and be well-behaved in classroom and program settings.<sup>5</sup>

Australian educator Brian Cambourne developed a theory of interactive and dynamic literacy learning based on "an understanding that is created when the learners are engaged in using their cognitive processes in relation to their bodies and within the context of the physical world of materials, symbolic tools, and nuances of their culture."<sup>6</sup>

Scientific studies have shown that when a child's social, emotional, and cognitive competencies have a chance to evolve in a supportive environment, his or her multiple skills and abilities will merge, paving the way to succeed in school.<sup>7</sup> The National Education Goals Panel (NEGP), an intergovernmental body of state and federal officials created in order to "assess and report national progress toward achieving the National Education Goals" looked to research in child development and early education to argue "for a broader definition [of school readiness] that included physical, social, and emotional well-being as well as cognitive readiness."<sup>8</sup>

In 1991, NEGP established five commonly accepted dimensions of school readiness: social and emotional well-being, health and physical well-being, approaches to learning, language development, and general knowledge.<sup>9</sup>

As a result, while just “a generation ago, it was assumed that the process of becoming literate did not occur until a certain level of maturity was attained,” literacy has been redefined to include preliteracy skills that even very young children can learn.<sup>10</sup> These skills translate into school readiness, “the state of early development that enables an individual child to engage in and benefit from primary learning experiences. As a result of . . . interactions with others, a young child in this stage has reached certain levels of physical well-being and motor development, social and emotional development, language development, cognition, and general knowledge.”<sup>11</sup>

## Libraries and School Readiness

Thanks to technological innovations, brain researchers have proven that babies have a great capacity for learning.<sup>12</sup> Researchers in human development have found that “the process of becoming literate begins at birth and takes place in the context of family life and community settings.”<sup>13</sup>

Brains may be wired for learning, but impediments can slow down the learning process. Stressors, such as poverty, racism, dislocation, and violence can affect a child’s development.<sup>14</sup> When young children are exposed to excessive childhood stress, “chemicals are released in the brain that damage its developing architecture. . . .”<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, repeated positive experiences can serve to strengthen the ability of the brain to learn by contributing “to the formation of well-functioning neural circuits.”<sup>16</sup>

High-quality early childhood programming that provides stimulating activities in a safe, nurturing literacy environment can be one type of positive experience.<sup>17</sup> In a warm environment where joyful activities are shared with a caregiver and spontaneity is encouraged in a regulated way, students can learn how to interact in a socially acceptable way in a public space.

Although public libraries do not have the same day-to-day influence on young children as their daycare centers or homes, they offer positive literacy environments

and nurturing settings that prepare preschool children for more structured learning situations.<sup>18</sup> Repeated attendance at such programs can aid healthy brain development of babies and young children that may in turn set a path for easier learning and school achievement later in life.<sup>19</sup>

Libraries are an obvious destination for language development, due to their wealth of books and language-based programs for all ages. One British study maintained that public libraries help children develop prereading skills instilling the desire to read by inculcating a love of books and an enjoyment of reading.<sup>20</sup> By providing access to both print and nonprint resources, libraries can help children build their early literacy skills while enabling them to become familiar with the tools they will most likely be using in school. Early childhood computer game use at the library can also help develop school readiness skills by promoting social interaction, encouraging problem solving, stimulating imagination, and enhancing the development of an attention span.<sup>21</sup>

As children’s librarians, in addition to providing resources, we are in a unique position to run programs for parents or caregivers and children that help build the preliteracy skills underlying school readiness. To do so, we must understand exactly what those skills are and how we can help to strengthen them.

## Skills Necessary for School Readiness

A child is considered ready for school if he or she has developed school readiness knowledge and skills in the years before entering elementary school. If a child is not ready to enter kindergarten, it’s unlikely he or she will catch up with the other children as the school years progress.<sup>22</sup> The 1998 report *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* claimed that children entering first grade need motivation to learn to read as well as strong language and cognitive skills “to benefit from classroom instruction.”<sup>23</sup>

The view of school readiness as possession of cognitive, social, and emotional skills is supported by research

presented in Shonkoff and Phillips’ *From Neurons to Neighborhoods*, which stated that emotional and social development of young children is as critical to school readiness as language and cognitive development.<sup>24</sup>

Marsha Weinraub of Temple University, currently a principal investigator on the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) Study of Early Child Care, has observed that when a child does not have the ability to relate to the teacher, pay attention, or get along in a group, the teacher finds it difficult to teach and assess that child. For a child to gain school readiness skills, the whole child needs to be considered as an integrated developmental system well before the kindergarten years and needs to be exposed to stimulation in many different areas that will help him or her develop the social and emotional skills necessary for success in school.<sup>25</sup> “What happens during the first months and years of life matters a lot, not because this period of development provides an indelible blueprint for adult well-being, but because it sets either a sturdy or fragile stage for what follows.”<sup>26</sup>

In an often-cited survey administered by the National Center for Education Statistics, kindergarten teachers were asked which qualities they felt were essential for kindergarten readiness. The top three were “that a child be physically healthy, rested, and well-nourished; be able to communicate needs, wants, and thoughts verbally; and be enthusiastic and curious in approaching new activities.”<sup>27</sup>

Teachers were also asked to rate the importance of factors for a child to be ready for kindergarten. As the following demonstrates, technical skills, such as being able to use pencils and to identify primary colors were considered less important than enthusiasm, curiosity, and the ability to follow directions.

## Ability Factors for Kindergarten Readiness

1. Can verbally communicate thoughts (84 percent)
2. Is enthusiastic and curious (76 percent)

3. Can follow directions (60 percent)
4. Is not disruptive in class (60 percent)
5. Is sensitive to others' feelings (58 percent)
6. Takes turns and shares (56 percent)
7. Pays attention (42 percent)
8. Identifies primary colors and basic shapes (24 percent)
9. Uses pencils and paint brushes (21 percent)
10. Knows letters of the alphabet (10 percent)
11. Can count to 20 or more (7 percent)<sup>28</sup>

As factors three through seven indicate, pro-social skills—the combination of behavioral and social skills that result in self-regulation and social and emotional competence—are essential for school readiness. Per the survey, they are even more important than entering school with rudimentary math or reading skills. This is a combination of behavioral and social cognitive skills. Research shows that children need to be able to regulate themselves in order to engage in learning.<sup>29</sup> Examples include being able to sit in a chair and pay attention, learning to listen rather than focusing on something else, and controlling emotions and behavior. Other components are the ability to have positive interactions with adults, demonstrate social awareness, show concern for others, initiate positive interactions with peers, cooperate with others (sharing and turn taking), work toward group goals, and resolve conflicts without resorting to aggression.<sup>30</sup>

Children must be able to control their emotions and behavior to properly interact with peers in a school setting and build effective relationships with peers and adults, particularly teachers. Children who are not in control of themselves may exhibit problem behaviors, such as being overly aggressive. On the other side of the spectrum, children who feel too much in control can be socially withdrawn and unable to initiate interac-

tions with others. Thus, school readiness is strongly connected with self-regulation, how the individual child can regulate himself or herself.<sup>31</sup>

Being ready for school also means that a child is ready for academic learning by having a working memory. They must be able to gather information, connect it with something that is meaningful to them, store it in their brain, and recall

*Although public libraries do not have the same day-to-day influence on young children as their daycare centers or homes, they offer positive literacy environments and nurturing settings that prepare preschool children for more structured learning situations.*

tion when necessary. These skills, combined with the ability to pay attention, to plan and self-regulate, help provide the foundational skills for cognitive performance.<sup>32</sup>

### Programs for School Readiness Skills

By offering free, well-promoted programs that are easily accessible both time- and transportation-wise, we can offer parents and children a spectrum of school readiness-oriented activities.<sup>33</sup> Library-based and -run lap-sitting programs, toddler times, preschool story times, adult literacy programs, access to educational video games, and general family programs are all excellent strategies for contributing to school readiness development. Activities can target ages

birth to five, birth to two, or three to five, perhaps expanding to age six in communities where delayed school entry for six-year-olds, especially boys, is common.

### Putting Books in Their Hands

Books in the house tend to lead to books in the hand.<sup>34</sup> Typically, children start their lifelong bond with reading by being read to, looking at picture books, knocking them off shelves and chomping on pages—forging an almost synesthetic relationship to books.<sup>35</sup> But what about homes where literacy is absent or low priority, whether due to poor or absent parenting, income issues, or adult illiteracy?

“In a number of ways, good early care and education programs help children enter school ready to succeed and have a particularly strong impact on low-income children who are at greater risk for school failure.”<sup>36</sup> As libraries traditionally serve a wide spectrum of socioeconomic groups, they are an ideal place to take on deficiencies in school readiness connected to low income and cultural differences. Although it may be stated in many different ways, the main mission of the public library has been and continues to be to provide equal access to materials and services for all and to foster a literate society.<sup>37</sup>

Per a research summary from Every Child Ready to Read @ your library®, a project of the Public Library Association (PLA) and Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC), divisions of the American Library Association, parental economic level has a direct connection with the reading and writing ability of children.<sup>38</sup> Low family income has been shown to affect school readiness. Lower income groups “engaged in less shared picture book reading” than parents from middle-class groups, “47% of public-aid parents reported no alphabet books in the home in contrast with only 3% of professional parents,” and one estimate showed “the typical middle-class child enters first grade with 1,000 to 1,700 hours of one-on-one picture book reading, whereas a child from a low-income family averaged just 25 hours.”<sup>39</sup>

Public library programs offer wonder-

ful opportunities for promoting school-readiness skills in children and creating positive associations with books while showing parents how important these skills are and how to reinforce them at home. By offering adult literacy programs, they can also help parents strengthen their own reading skills.

### Parental Involvement and Modeling

Libraries are an excellent vehicle for promoting a key aspect of school readiness—parental involvement. Reading is not just acquiring a set of skills; it is a value, a family value wherein education is seen as something that is important. If books are read at home and ideas discussed, children will learn from their most important role models—parents and caregivers.<sup>40</sup>

Child and parent interaction and reading role models show a child that education is important. Family literacy behavior that sets the stage for school readiness starts when parents set an example and model behavior, such as reading books aloud to children, having books in the home, and reading themselves. If a child sees a parent reading and learning, the child will assimilate into his or her brain that it is a normal activity.<sup>41</sup> If the parent snuggles with the child while reading aloud, the child will connect books and reading with a positive, loving activity.<sup>42</sup>

Having older siblings enrolled in library reading programs, such as summer reading clubs, will further reinforce the importance of reading for both school and pleasure. This can reflect into an enthusiasm for learning later on in life, translating into the motivation to learn to read and continue reading beyond school requirements.

A 1998 report, *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*, conducted by the National Research Council, concluded that “preschool children need high-quality language and literacy environments in their homes and in out-of-home settings.”<sup>43</sup> The public library is one such out-of-home setting suited for both parent and child in which these early language and literacy environments exist.<sup>44</sup> Encouraging borrowing of library materials that can be brought

into the home and shared among parents and child (as well as siblings) is another way that public libraries can help to strengthen home literacy environments.

Baltimore City’s Enoch Pratt Free Library system runs a very successful weekly early childhood program, *Mother Goose on the Loose*, which I created while work-

*As libraries traditionally serve a wide spectrum of socioeconomic groups, they are an ideal place to take on deficiencies in school readiness connected to low income and cultural differences.*

ing abroad. It combines music, movement, visual literacy, and language development to help children get ready for school through learning how to focus and concentrate; coordinating action with music and rhythm; picking up social skills like taking turns; learning how to express emotions effectively; bonding with peers and parents through shared learning; and developing a love for learning that will greatly contribute to success throughout their school experience.

Parents work side by side with their children during activities. Once a month, parents are invited to stay after the session for a brief presentation on parenting skills. These informational sessions are usually accompanied by book and video recommendations, plus reading lists or handouts.

During programs for infants and toddlers, librarians can use what we call “tidbits,” a quick explanation of how the brain develops by performing specific activities. This can be something like telling parents that leaning from side-to-side helps develop mathematical ability as well as improving balance during a session of short learning rhymes.

Parents learn that the activities are not just fun, they are also helping to develop their child’s brain at the same time. By interacting with young children, calling them by name, asking them questions, or commenting on their actions, the librarian models good literacy behaviors for parents. If a parent speaks to his or her child in ways that reflect library learning programs, the child will learn more vocabulary and grammar skills.

In family programs at some public libraries, parents are given books to read aloud to their children during the actual sessions. Peer pressure and gentle librarian encouragement inspires them to share the book with their child, even if it is not something that they routinely do at home. However, the hope is that after doing it week after week at the public library, they will grow accustomed to book-sharing behavior and begin reading aloud to their child at home also. Some libraries allow the parents to keep the books, increasing the likelihood that they will continue reading aloud to their child at home.

The Preschool Literacy Initiative (now known as Every Child Ready to Read @ your library<sup>®</sup>), created in 2000 by NICHD and PLA, studied library programs for children to design model programs for libraries that could be evaluated to see how well libraries could put the lessons derived from research into productive action. In 2001, ALSC joined the task force.<sup>45</sup> Based on a report, *Teaching Children to Read: An Evidence-Based Assessment of the Scientific Research Literature on Reading and Its Implications for Reading Instruction*, research-based materials were used “to enlist parents and caregivers as partners in preparing their children for learning to read and to provide the most effective methods to achieve this end.”<sup>46</sup> Workshops for parents and caregivers were promoted as a vehicle for increasing early literacy based on research on infant brain development and early literacy.<sup>47</sup> Fourteen public libraries served as demonstration or evaluation sites for the model emergent literacy program, Every Child Ready to Read @ your library<sup>®</sup>.<sup>48</sup>

In the 2003 PLA/ALSC study of the effect of using research-based early lit-

eracy practices in public library programs, interviews were conducted with 886 parents and 434 caregivers before and after attending early literacy workshops given by the library test sites.<sup>49</sup> Results showed that “parents—of every age, educational background, income level, and ethnicity—who participated in the public library early literacy programs significantly increased their literacy behaviors.”<sup>50</sup> As of this writing, no longitudinal studies are in the works to assess how well these children have done in grade school. According to Saroj Ghoting, Early Literacy Consultant and Trainer for Every Child Ready to Read @ your library®, “That is because the [Every Child Ready to Read] workshops cannot be definitively isolated as the factor which makes the difference in school reading. Research does note the six early literacy skills needed and the evaluation indicates that the adults who are with the children daily are increasing their early literacy behaviors with their children, giving them a stronger foundation to be able to learn to read. For that reason the effects that have been studied are on the early literacy behaviors of the adults.”<sup>51</sup>

## Personal Relationships

Scientific studies stress the importance of positive personal relationships for school readiness.<sup>52</sup> In *Secure Relationships: Nurturing Infant/Toddler Attachment in Early Care Settings*, Alice Honig expressed the importance of early relationships, citing research that connects secure early attachments with children growing up to be “confident and independent learners with strong social skills.”<sup>53</sup> Her thesis that people tend to go through life feeling the way their attachment persons made them feel is a strong reminder to the librarian to be a good example of friendliness, warmth, and understanding.<sup>54</sup> Library program setup can include using name tags so each child can be addressed by name and keeping attendance records (informally) in order to connect name and child.

Shonkoff reiterates the importance of good human relationships in a young child’s environment: “The link between adult-child relationships and children’s later achievement is not based on intuition or wishful thinking. It is grounded

in hard science and reflected in evolving brain function.”<sup>55</sup> By having the same librarian run the program from week to week, children can develop a comfortable relationship with the librarian, paving the way for establishing positive relationships with teachers. Even if staffing issues prevent one person from always running the same program, having positive experiences with friendly adults sitting in front of the room and leading activities can help prepare children to enter the classroom setting with a sense of familiarity and delighted anticipation. This translates into the school readiness skill of “approach to learning.”

Peer social skills are also crucial to school readiness, as well as social and personal development.<sup>56</sup> Lack of this social competence during early childhood has been linked to mental health problems, suicide, dropping out of school, and delinquency.<sup>57</sup> When children acknowledge their peers’ accomplishments, this positive reinforcement is considered social acceptance.<sup>58</sup>

Jaipaul L. Roopnarine and Honig have identified these ways to improve children’s social skills:

- help families focus on positive discipline techniques;
- encourage children to participate in small groups and then larger ones;
- use puppets, reverse role playing, or books to show children other interaction styles;
- foster peer interactions for very young children;
- enhance children’s self-esteem, provide clear, rational rules, and demonstrate warm, nurturing attentiveness; [and]
- make pro-social development an integral part of the curriculum.<sup>59</sup>

Library programs such as *Mother Goose on the Loose* offer a noncompetitive environment for children to learn how

to play together, empathize with each other and respond to each other’s verbal and nonverbal cues, and applaud (sometimes literally) each other’s actions during structured play.

## Learning to Self-Regulate

The top three skills in the 1993 list previously mentioned were the ability to verbally communicate thoughts, to be enthusiastic and curious about the world around them, and to be able to follow directions. Age-appropriate library programs for children under the age of five can move beyond traditional read-aloud activities to feature elements that help to develop these skills.

By adding fun, achievable activities that require following directions, having patience, taking turns, paying attention to others, and receiving positive reinforcement, library programs can become a vehicle for helping children to develop self-regulation skills. When parents observe the process and its results in addition to hearing about the value of exposing children to these types of activities, they hopefully will decide to repeat the formula at home. This repeated positive reinforcement can cause children to continue practicing their self-regulation skills with such regularity that they become their normal modes of behavior.<sup>60</sup>

In the *Mother Goose on the Loose* program for children ages two and under, activities such as pulling a flannel Humpty Dumpty off a flannelboard wall require following instructions and coordinating actions. Telling young children to lean to the side when Mother and Father and Uncle John go to town one-by-one or asking preschoolers to vote on the books they like best by putting their hands in the air are activities that help children learn how to listen to directions or take directional cues from an adult and to respond accordingly. They internalize the fact that directions can sometimes be fun and will feel more comfortable responding to the requests of their kindergarten teachers. These program elements reward good performance with verbal and physical accolades.

Children learn the routine of taking turns and appreciating other children’s accom-

plishments. While hearing positive words about their own achievements, they gain a vocabulary that will allow them to show appreciation to others—another important social skill.<sup>61</sup> If a child attends library programs on a regular basis and participates in such programs, concepts like taking turns, following instructions, and voicing appreciation of others will become integrated into his or her consciousness by the time kindergarten starts.

## Vocabulary

By reading books, singing songs, and reciting rhymes, librarians expose children to vocabulary words (and encourage parents to do the same). Research has shown that the number of vocabulary words heard at home by children from birth to age five correlates with the number of words they know by the time they enter kindergarten. At the same time, studies indicate that the typical listening vocabulary of a low-income child entering kindergarten is much smaller than the vocabulary of a middle-income child.<sup>62</sup> Addressing this issue is critical since the number of vocabulary words known and used by children entering kindergarten affects their entire education.<sup>63</sup>

Librarians can help increase this language awareness by modeling for parents how to use books with very young children without actually reading them, explaining things, using words in a variety of ways, incorporating language with movement, music, and art, and exposing children and adults to voice inflection. They can also mention to parents the importance of speaking with their children, singing to them, and even describing everyday activities (such as meal preparation) as they are taking place.

## Mathematics

In addition to vocabulary growth, library programs can also boost reading and math preparatory skills, which for most children require the ability to maintain attention spans, use and share materials, and work closely with adults while taking instruction from them. Herbert Ginsburg, professor of psychology and education at Columbia University Teachers College, has spoken about school readiness skills in terms of early mathematics.<sup>64</sup>

He noted that research has shown that young children have remarkable mathematical skills such as being able to differentiate between more and less—especially when it comes to mommy handing out chocolate chip cookies. Other early mathematical skills are understanding counting principles; interest in counting to large numbers; ideas and strategies for adding and subtracting; and interest in shape, including three-dimensional symmetries. Ginsburg asserted that basic aspects of everyday math are widespread among virtually all preschool-age children. Building on children's innate curiosity about their world

*Researchers in human development have found that the process of becoming literate begins at birth and takes place in the context of family life and community settings.*

to introduce and express these instincts mathematically should be encouraged so they can develop further through formal education later on.

## Visual Literacy

“Young children use art to communicate their understandings and interpretations of the world before they acquire means of conveying their thoughts and feelings with words.”<sup>65</sup> The combination of art through flannelboard pieces or book illustrations with music, movement, and language helps children to grow intellectually, creatively, and psychologically while laying down neural pathways for future learning. Programs like Mother Goose on the Loose give very young children a broad exposure to creative expressions, including pictures, music, dance, literature, drawing and other crafts, and drama.

Library programs can include craft projects, even for the very young. Putting

a scoop of fingerprint in a Ziploc bag allows even a very young child to create art without having to worry about safety or messiness. As my experience (and no doubt that of many of this publication's readers) has shown, during preschool story times, children are quite capable of creating works of art using crayons, glue sticks, and other art materials.

Although their pictures may not have obvious meaning for the viewer, children are happy to explain what is happening in their picture and have the librarian write down the explanation. Through this exercise, children learn to express themselves through art, articulate their thoughts, and learn how adult guidance can help them do more than they could on their own.

## Library Programs and Best Practices

Libraries can, and should, play an essential part in preparing both children and parents for school readiness—and later on, for school success. Our informal, comforting, and unstructured to semi-structured settings are ideal havens for nurturing nascent skills in very young children, and awakening and refining modeling behavior in their parents.

Libraries are already significant resources for school readiness. But librarians can create and expand programs to make libraries a powerful and valuable vehicle for actively targeting and promoting school readiness across many socioeconomic groups.

Lapsit programs can be a good vehicle for this. In designing such programs for very young children, elements can include: vocabulary building; parent-child bonding while reading and listening; positive reinforcement; turn taking for physical activities; following instructions; arts and crafts; music and dance; making reading and learning joyful; stressing parent participation in the program rather than dropping the child off; offering post-session meetings for parents to compare notes, ask questions, and learn more about school readiness resources; providing age-appropriate books for parents to borrow and asking them for feedback when books are returned to create

a book-borrowing habit; and offering a nonjudgmental opportunity for parents to explore library adult education options if appropriate.

Another approach to planning and evaluating programs for very young children is starting by asking some of the questions posed by Roberta Golinkoff and Kathy Hirsh-Pasek at the 2004 ALSC pre-conference:

- Does your program plug into children's social and emotional development?
- Are there opportunities for children to work and play together?
- Is the program joyful and do the children laugh during it?
- Do you welcome everyone warmly and put them at ease throughout the program?
- Is the activity you are planning geared for the parents rather than for the children?
- Is the activity you are planning a rehearsal for adulthood or good for encouraging childhood?
- Are you modeling the use of books in a positive way for parents and encouraging families to come back to the library on a regular basis?
- Do you provide a place with age-appropriate toys, games, activities, furniture, and books?
- Do you recommend books that parents can borrow for their children, and activities outside of the library that they can have fun doing together?<sup>66</sup>

Shonkoff declared that parents are the most important people in their child's life, but answered the question "Can parents raise children by themselves?" with "[A]bsolutely not."<sup>67</sup> That is where the public library can step in and become a place to aid parents in helping their preschoolers achieve school readiness skills.

By attending library programs geared for preschool children, parents can experi-

ence a positive interaction of play and dialogue with their children. When they leave our programs, we want them to take that attitude with them, so that they will continue to patronize the library themselves or bring their children in to take advantage of school-age programs and general book and media borrowing. We can also bring parents into the picture by encouraging discourse at home, providing developmental tips in small doses to let the parents know the importance of seemingly easy activities for helping in their child's brain development, and talking with parents about being a role model.

Learning for a lifetime starts before school, before daycare, even before speech. Libraries must continue and expand their role in preliteracy school readiness preparation, literally starting small, if they are to fulfill their historic mission of forging a literate, socially mobile population. We can do no less for our littlest patrons and their big dreams. ☺

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## Audiobooks for Children

### Is This Really Reading?

Ruth Cox Clark

Children of all ages can be seen walking, riding their bikes, or sitting on the bus with earphones clearly visible—from the Fisher-Price Kid-Tough FP3 player for the youngest listeners to the colorful iPod Shuffle for tweens.

“Today, twenty percent of Americans over the age of twelve own at least one iPod or other MP3 player, compared to only eight percent in 2002.”<sup>1</sup> We don’t know if these audio technology-savvy children are listening to music or an audiobook, but with the steady increase in audiobook sales, some may very well be interacting with Harry Potter or Junie B. Jones.

A consumer survey conducted in May 2006 on trends in audiobook listening indicates that “approximately half of audiobook listeners with children between the ages of four and seventeen indicated their children have listened to an audiobook in the last twelve months.”<sup>2</sup> And, it isn’t just sales. A *Library Journal* survey indicates that circulation of children’s audiobooks in libraries has increased by 10.7 percent and library budgets for children’s audiobooks have risen 4.8 percent during 2004.<sup>3</sup>

### Value of Audiobooks

Some librarians and teachers have suggested that listening to books is cheating—real reading can only take place with a print book. Yet, reading can be broadly defined as the ability to intellectually process the text while understanding the literary or informational content, or from a narrower perspective, a reader’s ability to decode letter sequences, along with understanding the grammar, punctuation, and vocabulary employed in the text.<sup>4</sup>

Reading has also been referred to as the mechanical prelude to engaging the content; what really matters is what the reader’s mind and imagination does with that content.<sup>5</sup> If the goal for children is to become readers who can understand the message, think critically about the content, use their imagination, and make connections with the book, then listening to audiobooks can help them do all this while developing their listening skills.<sup>6</sup>

Children may choose to listen to a book they have previously read. Elements only found in the audiobook, including music, a skilled narrator’s use of voices and dialects, and supplemental materials such as an interview with the author add to their enjoyment of the book.

“It is fine to savor, even to prefer, the voice we hear in our own heads as we read, but confining ourselves to our own voices means a more narrow experience of literature.”<sup>7</sup> And, as Eileen Hutton reminds us, “the spoken word has been around a lot longer than Gutenberg’s offspring.”<sup>8</sup> According to a lengthy body of research, experiencing a book in both formats increases a child’s comprehension and vocabulary.

Audiobooks can also be considered a bridge to reading, a way for young readers to enjoy literature at their *listening* comprehension level, which is significantly above their *reading*

Prepared by the **ALSC Research and Development Committee**: Eliza Dresang, chair; Ruth Cox Clark, guest author; Gaye Hinchliff; Bowie Kotrla; Barbara Silverman; Rita Smith; Ya-Ling Lu; and Crystal Faris.

level.<sup>9</sup> Consider the English as a Second Language or dyslexic student who wants to join classmates in reading the class novel but finds an inability to read the book frustrating. Offering the audiobook allows the student to comprehend the story as well as join in the class interaction and discussion of the book. For those children who may skip over the print text, skimming rather than reading, audiobooks hold them to the text, not skipping a word.

## A Family Affair

Audiobooks can bring families together. We often hear of librarians and teachers who listen to audiobooks as they commute to work, but children are also commuters, spending many hours in the backseat of the family car while on vacation, on the way to soccer practice, and waiting in rush-hour traffic. Families can experience “communal listening,” choosing a book that will offer something of interest to all age ranges within the family. The littlest one in the car seat may not know what all the words mean, but just the experience of listening to a well-narrated story is beneficial.<sup>10</sup>

## What We Should Keep in Mind

Before assuming the audiobook experience is going to be welcomed with open ears by all children, understand that audiobooks are not an initial hit with every child, especially visual learners. These children are very comfortable in the multimedia world of television and surfing the Web but often have had very little practice in “pure listening” and may find their first audiobook experience challenging.<sup>11</sup> Although listening comprehension is not a skill that receives a great deal of attention in the classroom, it is, nevertheless, a much-needed skill throughout life.<sup>12</sup> The U.S. Department

of Education report *Becoming a Nation of Readers* states, “In a study involving a nationwide sample of thousands of students, listening comprehension in the fifth grade was the best predictor of performance on a range of aptitude and achievement tests in high school.”<sup>13</sup> Experiencing audiobooks allows children to hone their listening skills.

## What We Can Do About It

The increased availability of quality audiobooks for children, often released at the same time as the print version, allows young readers and listeners to reflect on how their listening and reading experiences with a book differ. A child may prefer a particular form of interaction based on the genre or subject of the book. Pamela Varley says, “Audiobooks will give some kids a fresh chance to find their way to books, and other kids, a new way to hold onto them.”<sup>14</sup>

Keep this in mind when a child or parent visits the library asking for a good book. Don't assume the book has to be in print format. Offer audiobook versions as well. Suggest to parents who say their child does not like to read that they check out both formats and let their child decide which format he or she wants to experience. And, join our technologically savvy children by experiencing audiobooks yourself so you can discuss and recommend them based on knowledge of both the content and the format. ☺

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13. U.S. Dept. of Education, *Becoming a Nation of Readers: The Report of the Commission on Reading* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, 1985): 30.
14. Varley, “As Good as Reading?” 261.

# New Books

Cerny, Rosanne, Penny Markey, and Amanda Williams. *Outstanding Library Service to Children: Putting the Core Competencies to Work*.  
Dresang, Eliza T., Melissa Gross, and Leslie Edmonds Holt. *Dynamic Youth Services through Outcome-based Planning and Evaluation*.  
Gerding, Stephanie K., and Pamela H. MacKellar. *Grants for Libraries: A How-To-Do-It Manual for Librarians, No. 144*.  
Hart, Thomas L. *The School Library Media Facilities Planner*.  
Maxwell, Nancy Kalikow. *Sacred Stacks: The Higher Purpose of Libraries and Librarianship*.  
Peck, Penny. *Crash Course in Children's Services*.  
Veldof, Jerilyn. *Creating the One-Shot Library Workshop: A Step-by-Step Guide*.

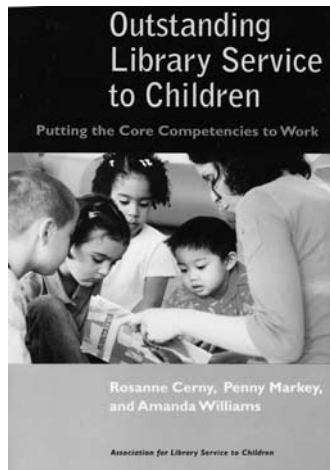
## Considering Our Roles in Library Service to Children

Kathryn Miller

Cerny, Rosanne, Penny Markey, and Amanda Williams. *Outstanding Library Service to Children: Putting the Core Competencies to Work*. Chicago: ALA, 2006. 112p. \$25 (ISBN: 0-8389-0922-1).

Children deserve excellent library service. But what does that mean, and what qualifies as only standard service? The Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) provides public librarians with seven core competencies that librarians should meet when working in children's services. This book puts these competencies to work and provides readers with working examples on how librarians can meet them.

Along with suggested reading lists, this practical guide offers questions that librarians can ask themselves when reviewing their libraries' services. The authors provide suggestions on how to fulfill the competencies. This valuable guide leads librarians through an exercise in critical reflection and encourages them to expand upon and better develop their own professional



practice and their service to children. It's an excellent professional development tool for all children's services librarians.

Dresang, Eliza T., Melissa Gross, and Leslie Edmonds Holt. *Dynamic Youth Services through Outcome-based Planning and Evaluation*. Chicago: ALA, 2006. 192p. \$42 (ISBN: 0-8389-0918-3).

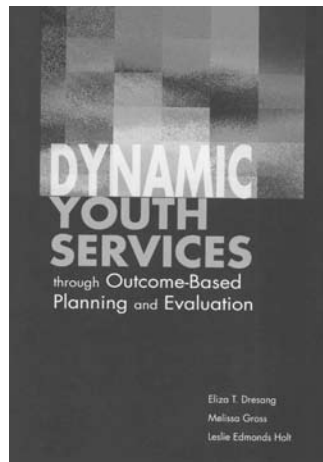
Do statistics drive your funding, staffing, and general library operations? Numbers, of course, are important, but so are learning outcomes. The authors introduce the reader to the CATE OBPE (outcome-based planning and evaluation) model, which aids youth librarians in determining what

young users want in library services as well as the results of their participation in library programs.

This how-to guide walks the reader through the four components, explains why libraries should use the model, and illustrates successful implementation. This guide offers librarians a way to look beyond numerical statistics and use outcomes to communicate,

justify, and enhance their services to youth.

Gerding, Stephanie K., and Pamela H. MacKellar. *Grants for Libraries: A How-To-Do-It Manual for Librarians, No. 144*. New York: Neal-Schuman, 2006. 251p. \$99.95 (ISBN: 1-55570-535-9).



As more libraries seek external funding, knowing how to properly plan for, write, and administer grants is crucial. While every grant has its own guidelines and rules, the authors present logical planning and implementation processes that libraries can easily follow.

Librarians will find the worksheets, checklists, and templates excellent tools. The authors carefully take the reader through the full

grant process, including successful pre-grant planning, which includes the creation of a strategic plan and community involvement.

**Kathryn Miller** is an Associate Professor in the University Library at National-Louis University. She teaches online courses in the school library media endorsement program. She holds her MLS from Kent State University and is a licensed library media specialist in Illinois.

The manual also includes success stories full of ideas. The final section of this manual can be used as a grant proposal workbook. All forms and checklists are included in the book's accompanying CD-ROM.

**Hart, Thomas L.** *The School Library Media Facilities Planner*. New York: Neal-Schuman, 2006. 253p. \$95 (ISBN: 1-55570-503-0).

Building a new school library media center must be done with proper planning, an awareness of trends, and the ability to eloquently navigate construction procedures. It's not a project to undertake without consultation. Hart, a professor and a library consultant, provides in this guidebook comprehensive plans for planning, building, and moving into a new or newly improved facility.

*The School Library Media Facilities Planner* offers library media staff assistance in the terminology, on how to request bids, and on how to interpret (and what to look for in) contractual language. Hart also covers sample storage options and furniture trends.

An accompanying CD-ROM features video tours of school library media centers with before-and-after pictures of remodeled facilities. It also includes planning documents, PowerPoint presentations featuring technological developments planners should consider, and examples of library décor. A comprehensive index makes it easy to locate and get expert advice on even the most miniscule planning detail.

**Maxwell, Nancy Kalikow.** *Sacred Stacks: The Higher Purpose of Libraries and Librarianship*. Chicago: ALA, 2006. 218p. \$32 (ISBN: 0-8389-0917-5).

What is the future of libraries? Are libraries challenged by Google? The author

passionately presents the purpose and need for libraries and librarians in her 2006 book. She makes the argument that the library and its workers have a deeper meaning and purpose than just access to information.

With a thread of spirituality, Maxwell organizes the higher purpose of libraries into chapters that include the importance of access to the individual and library space. This book reminds many why they may have chosen librarianship as a profession and of the social justice base that is part of U.S. libraries. This book does not answer philosophical questions that challenge today's libraries, but it is full of great quotes that support the purpose of the library as an institution.

**Peck, Penny.** *Crash Course in Children's Services*. Westport, Conn.: Libraries Unlimited, 2006. 136p. \$25 (ISBN: 1-59158-352-7).

If you are starting a new children's services job or looking for renewed energy in your current position, this book is a must-have. Geared toward those working in small public libraries, it broadly covers traditional library services for children and current issues challenging library children's services.

Included is background information and ideas on best practice children's reference, readers' advisory, and book selection. Challenging children's services issues—ranging from how to handle latchkey children to library censorship—are also included. This is a fine resource to provide new employees with a quick broad-picture view of the expectations



and goals in library children's services.

*Crash Course in Children's Services* has relevance for new employees, volunteers, and those looking to refresh their basic understanding of children's services in libraries; a solid addition to a children's services reference area.

**Veldof, Jerilyn.** *Creating the One-Shot Library Workshop: A Step-by-Step Guide*. Chicago: ALA, 2006. 160p. \$42 (ISBN: 0-8389-0913-2).

If workshop design or teaching is part of your job, you have probably been challenged to present an information-packed library training workshop in fifty minutes or fewer. How can librarians best use the limited training time they are allotted, and how can this time be used to bring a library workshop from basic skills to information literacy training?

In this book, Veldof presents the reader with proven instruction design techniques and planning ideas to help librarians use their instructional time to provide high-quality, effective workshops. The Instructional Systems Design (ISD) model and the Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation (ADDIE) design process provide a big-picture look at instructional design for libraries.

The book includes principles to help librarians better assess what learners need, create consistent content for workshops that can be taught by multiple instructors, and evaluate training results. The guide's planning formula is presented as a modular template, allowing libraries to add necessary content to library workshops as needed. Librarians planning workshops will find this guide a valuable resource to help lead to high-quality workshops, bringing participants beyond basic library skills and into the exploration of advanced information skills. ☺

## Board Major Actions

### Electronic Actions

The following actions were voted on by the board on the ALSCBOARD electronic discussion list. The month and year of the vote is in parentheses after each action.

VOTED, to change the Children and Technology Committee's membership statement to make two of the nine committee members virtual participants, who are not required to attend conferences. (February 2007)

VOTED, to decrease the membership of the Budget Committee by one member, removing the "a Board representative (chosen by the Board)" section. The new membership statement reads: "Four members plus chair. The chair is appointed for two years, with the option to be reappointed, from among members with Board or Budget & Finance Committee experience and familiarity and interest in fiscal management.

The committee will consist of the chair, two members-at-large, the fiscal officer, and the past president. The executive director and vice president are ex-officio members." (February 2007)

VOTED, a) to change the name of the Notable Computer Software for Children Committee to Great Interactive Software for Kids; and b) to change the committee's function statement to: "To select, annotate, and present for publication, within the criteria and procedures established for selection, a biannual list of exemplary computer software and multi-platform media currently available. To define and develop guidelines and criteria for the evaluation of interactive software and electronic media." (February 2007)

VOTED, to accept the final draft of the Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality policy. (February 2007)

VOTED, to eliminate the following phrase from the function statement of the Notable Children's Video Committee: "to

implement the Video Recommendation Policy and Procedures." (November 2006)

VOTED, to eliminate the following phrase from the charge of the Odyssey Award: "during the preceding year." (November 2006)

### Midwinter Meeting 2007 Actions

VOTED, to approve the Midwinter 2007 Board agenda.

VOTED, to approve the Midwinter 2007 consent agenda.

VOTED, to accept the Popular Books for School-Age Readers Task Force report.

VOTED, to accept the draft conflict of interest policy in spirit.

VOTED, to accept the suggested ALSC-L policies and procedures based on RUSA-L policies and procedures with alterations.

VOTED, to establish the Kids! @ your library® Task Force as a standing committee and also change the name of the committee. The Kids! @ your library® Task Force will be established as a standing committee at the close of Annual Conference 2007, and will be renamed the Public Awareness Committee.

Function Statement: To promote awareness of the value of excellent library service for all children. To plan, execute, coordinate, and disseminate public awareness campaigns about the importance of library service for youth. To provide public awareness learning opportunities for library staff and other stakeholders.

## Salt Lake to Host Institute

Salt Lake City (SLC) is the site of ALSC's next National Institute in September 2008. Centrally located within the western half of the country, SLC is easily accessible by air with direct flights daily from 104 cities. The city is home to one of the world's largest family history libraries and the SLC Public Library was named Thompson Gale/*Library Journal's* Library of the Year for 2006. SLC provides a nice blend of urban life and the beautiful outdoors and we look forward to hosting the institute in this tourist-friendly town! We hope you will make plans to join us there. More information about the 2008 National Institute will come out this fall.

Membership: Chair, plus eight members.

Term: Spring, two-year. One member to be liaison from current ALSC Board. One member to serve as liaison to ALA's Advocacy Coordinating Group.

VOTED, to discontinue the Social Issues Discussion Group. The Social Issues Discussion Group is discontinued effective at the end of Midwinter Meeting 2007. Anitra Steele, convener of Social Issues Discussion Group, proposed this sunsetting based on two major factors: 1) the need for the group is superseded by existing technology through electronic discussion lists and chat rooms; and 2) attendance has been nil for the last three years.

VOTED, to accept the Notable Software Committee Report.

VOTED, to accept the recommendations of the Morris Endowment Task Force.

VOTED, to accept the FY 2008 Proposed Preliminary Budget.

VOTED, to establish a five-member task force to coordinate ALSC participation in the Legislation Outreach to Congress display activity to take place at Annual 2007. TF to be sunsetted at the conclusion of Annual 2007.

VOTED, to accept the Early Literacy Task Force recommendation that ALSC will initiate discussion with the PLA Board regarding the "reactivation" of the Every Child Ready to Read project.

VOTED, to cosponsor in name only the 2007 PLA Preconference: "The Fun and Facts of Early Literacy: Communicating with Parents & Caregivers through Story time."

VOTED, to cosponsor in name only the PLA program "It's Logical! Evaluating Your Summer Reading Program in Context of Your Library's Strategic Plan" to be held at 2007 Annual Conference.

VOTED, to cosponsor in name only the ALCTS program "Cataloging Correctly for Kids: AV, E-Books and More!" to be held at 2007 ALA Annual Conference.

## Patron, Wiesner Win Newbery, Caldecott

Susan Patron, author of *The Higher Power of Lucky* (Simon & Schuster/Richard Jackson), and David Wiesner, illustrator of *Flotsam* (Clarion), are the 2007 winners of the Newbery and Caldecott medals, respectively.

In *The Higher Power of Lucky*, Patron takes readers to the California desert community of Hard Pan (population 43). Ten-year-old Lucky Trimble eavesdrops on 12-step program meetings from her hiding place behind Hard Pan's Found Object Wind Chime Museum & Visitor Center. Eccentric characters and quirky details spice up Lucky's life just as parsley embellishes her guardian Brigitte's French cuisine.

*Flotsam* is a cinematic unfolding of discovery. A vintage camera washed up on the beach provides a young boy with a surprising view of fantastical images from the bottom of the sea. From fish eye to lens eye, readers see a frame-by-frame narrative of lush marinescapes ebbing and flowing from the real to the surreal.

Three Newbery Honor Books were named: *Penny from Heaven* (Random House) by Jennifer L. Holm; *Hattie Big Sky* (Delacorte Press) by Kirby Larson; and *Rules* (Scholastic) by Cynthia Lord.

Two Caldecott Honor Books were named: *Gone Wild: An Endangered Animal Alphabet* (Walker) written and illustrated by David McLimans, and *Moses: When Harriet Tubman Led Her People to Freedom* (Hyperion/Jump at the Sun), illustrated by Kadir Nelson, and written by Carole Boston Weatherford.

Members of the 2007 Newbery Medal Committee are: Jeri Kladder, chair, Columbus, Ohio; Elizabeth Bird, New York Public Library; Timothy Capehart, Dayton (Ohio) Metro Library; Edith Ching, St. Albans School for Boys, Washington, D.C.; Marian Creamer, Children's Literature Alive!, Portland, Ore.; Kirsten Gail Cutler, Sonoma County Library, Rohnert Park, Calif.; Jean Hatfield, Wichita (Kans.) Public Library; Marilyn Hollinshead, West Tisbury, Mass.;

Sandra Imdieke, Northern Michigan University, Marquette; Claudette S. McLinn, Los Angeles Unified School District; Elizabeth Orsburn, The Free Library of Philadelphia; Carolyn Phelan, Northbrook (Ill.) Public Library; Jennifer Ralston, Harford County Public Library, Belcamp, Md.; Gwen Taylor, Lewis-Clark State College, Lewiston, Idaho; and Margaret Tice, New York Public Library.

Members of the 2007 Caldecott Medal Committee are: Janice M. Del Negro, chair, Dominican University, River Forest, Ill.; Carolyn S. Brodie, Kent State University, Ohio; Shawn Brommer, South Central Library System, Madison, Wis.; Julie Cummins, Canandaigua, N.Y.; Linda L. Ernst, King County Library System, Bellevue, Wash.; Dorothy Evans, Chicago Public Library; Mary Fellows, Upper Hudson Library System, Albany, N.Y.; Saroj Ghoting, Riner, Va.; Patricia A. Gonzales, Los Angeles Public Library; Richard M. Kerper, Millersville University, Pa.; Sharron L. McElmeel, McBookWords, Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Caroline S. Parr, Central Rappahannock Regional Library, Fredericksburg, Va.; Elizabeth Poe, Morgantown, W. Va.; Ann K. Symons, The Anglo-American School of Moscow, Russia; and Mary Jane Wiseman, Madison, Wis.

## Wilder Medal Honors Marshall

Author-illustrator James Marshall was awarded the 2007 Laura Ingalls Wilder Medal, which acknowledges an author or illustrator, published in the United States, whose books have made a substantial and lasting contribution to literature for children. Marshall was the author and illustrator of the George and Martha books, the Fox easy reader series, *The Cut-Ups*, and *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*—a Caldecott honor winner in 1989. He also illustrated the Miss Nelson books and The Stupids series, written by Harry Allard. Marshall died in 1992.

Born in San Antonio in 1942, Marshall was a self-taught artist. After an injury cut short his pursuit of a career in music playing the viola, he found his life's work in children's books. His first book was *Plink, Plink, Plink* (Houghton, 1971),



written by Byrd Baylor. Drawing from a career that spanned just more than twenty years, dozens of Marshall's books remain favorites with audiences ranging from young children to college students and adults. The enduring friendship of George and Martha, the wily grace of Fox, the irrepressible resilience of the Stanley Q. Stupid family, and the benevolent dictatorship of Miss Nelson (aka Viola Swamp) are testimonies to human nature in all its complexity.

Members of the 2007 Wilder Committee are: Roger Sutton, chair, *The Horn Book*, Boston; Ann Carlson, Oak Park and River Forest (Ill.) High School; Yapha Mason, Brentwood School, Los Angeles; Bernadette Nowakowski, Chicago Public Library; and Tish Wilson, Dayton (Ohio) Metro Library.

## Thimmesh Wins Sibert

Catherine Thimmesh, author of *Team Moon: How 400,000 People Landed Apollo 11 on the Moon* (Houghton) is the winner of the 2007 Robert F. Sibert Informational Book Award for the most distinguished informational book for children published in 2006.

With heart-stopping prose and stunning NASA photographs, Thimmesh celebrates the men and women who solved a series of unfolding crises that threatened the mission of Apollo 11. The animated text lets the reader experience the tension of the mission from multiple vantage points and takes the reader along as an active participant. Personal interviews and oral histories help recreate the immediacy of the event for a new generation.

Three Sibert Honor Books were named: *Freedom Riders: John Lewis and Jim Zwerg on the Front Lines of the Civil Rights Movement* (National Geographic), written by Ann Bausum; *Quest for the Tree Kangaroo: An Expedition to the Cloud Forest of New Guinea* (Houghton), written by Sy Montgomery and photographs by Nic Bishop; and *To Dance: A Ballerina's Graphic Novel*, written by Siena Cherson Siegel and artwork by Mark Siegel and published by Simon & Schuster/Richard Jackson (hardcover) and Simon & Schuster/Aladdin.

Members of the 2007 Sibert Informational Book Award Committee are: Kate Houston Mitchoff, chair, Multnomah County Library, Portland, Ore.; Melody

Allen, Rhode Island Office of Library and Information Services, Providence, R.I.; Elizabeth Bush, St. Damian School, Oak Forest, Ill.; Sarah English, Omaha (Neb.) Public Library; Wendy Lukehart, Washington, D.C. Public Library; Penny Peck, San Leandro (Calif.) Public Library; Linda Plevak, Bulverde/Spring Branch (Texas) Library; Rebecca Purdy, Central Rappahannock Regional Library, Fredericksburg, Va.; and Jewell Stoddard, Politics & Prose Book Store, Washington, D.C.

## 2007 Batchelder Award

Delacorte Press is the winner of the 2007 Mildred L. Batchelder Award for the most outstanding children's book originally published in a foreign language and subsequently translated into English for publication in the United States for *The Pull of the Ocean*.

Originally published in France in 1999 as *Lenfant Océan*, the book was written by Jean-Claude Mourlevat and translated by Y. Maudet. This contemporary version of the Tom Thumb story follows charismatic Yann, youngest and smallest of seven brothers, as he silently leads his siblings across the rain-soaked French countryside. Their harrowing flight from abusive parents is described through the recollections of the boys themselves and through the distinctive voices of those who witness or abet their journey.

Two Batchelder Honor Books also were selected: *The Killer's Tears* (Delacorte Press), written by Anne-Laure Bondoux and translated into English by Y. Maudet, and *The Last Dragon* (Hyperion/Miramax), written by Silvana De Mari and translated by Shaun Whiteside.

Members of the 2007 Batchelder Award Committee are: Carol Ann Wilson, chair, Westfield, N.J.; Roslyn Beitler, Washington, D.C.; Margaret Chang, Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, North Adams, Mass.; Andy Howe, Albuquerque (N.M.) Academy; Gabi Kupitz, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

## Kvasnosky Wins Geisel Medal

Author-illustrator Laura McGee Kvasnosky is the 2007 winner of the Theodor Seuss Geisel Beginning Reader award for her book *Zelda and Ivy: The Runaways* (Candlewick).

The popular fox sisters return in this book, which includes three adventures precipitated by the foxes' need to avoid the dreaded cucumber sandwiches Dad is preparing. Strong character development and a superb book design that showcases framed gouache paintings combine to encourage young readers to reach the trio of hilarious outcomes.

Three Geisel Honor Books were named: *Mercy Watson Goes for a Ride* (Candlewick), written by Kate DiCamillo and illustrated by Chris Van Dusen; *Move Over, Rover!* (Harcourt), written by Karen Beaumont and illustrated by Jane Dyer; and *Not a Box* (HarperCollins), written and illustrated by Antoinette Portis.

The members of the 2007 Geisel Award Committee are: Ginny Moore Kruse, chair, University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Education; Barbara Chatton, University of Wyoming, Laramie; Cyndi Giorgis, University of Nevada, Las Vegas; Chrystal Carr Jeter, Cleveland Public Library; Debra Nelson, Prince George's County Memorial Library, Largo, Md.; Susan Roman, Dominican University, River Forest, Ill., and Tim Wadham, Maricopa County Library District, Phoenix.

## 2007 Carnegie Medal

Author-illustrator Mo Willems and Weston Woods Studios, producers of *Knuffle Bunny*, are the 2007 recipients of the Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Children's Video.

The DVD is based on Willems' book *Knuffle Bunny: A Cautionary Tale* and is performed by Willems, his wife Cheryl, and their daughter Trixie. It is directed and animated by MaGiK Studio, with music by Scotty Huff and Robert Reynolds.

Too young to talk, little Trixie still manages to put her father through the wringer when they return from a trip to the local Laundromat without her beloved toy bunny. Intimate father/daughter reminiscences bookend this lively presentation of the Caldecott Honor-winning tale. Deft animation against photographic backgrounds adds to the humor of this realistic family experience.

Members of the 2007 Carnegie Medal Committee are: Kathie Meizner, chair, Montgomery County Public Libraries, Rockville, Md.; Patricia Clingman, Dayton (Ohio) Metro Library; Carole De Jardin, Appleton (Wis.) Public Library; Jonathan Hunt, Modesto (Calif.) City Schools; John Peters, The New York Public Library; Susan Pine, The New York Public Library; Wendy Baker Torrence,

Union, Ohio; Tanya Tullos, Spring Branch Independent School District, Houston; and Snow Wildsmith, Mooresville (N.C.) Public Library.

## Ward Honored with DSA

Caroline Ward, youth services coordinator, Ferguson Library, Stamford, Connecticut, is the 2007 recipient of ALSC's Distinguished Service Award.

Ward's career has taken her from Vermont, where she helped rural libraries foster the very best in children's services, to Nassau County, New York, where she set high standards for library services, programs, and cooperative activities, to the Ferguson Library, where she currently serves as youth services coordinator. Ward has made a significant difference in each library community she has served.

Ward's work with ALSC has been exemplary as well: No task is too large or too small for her, and she undertakes them all with an unparalleled cheerfulness. She has served with distinction on countless ALSC committees and task forces, on the board of directors, and as president. In addition, she launched the School-Age Programs and Service Committee and served as chair of the first (Theodor Seuss) Geisel Award Committee, as well as chair of the (John) Newbery Award

Committee. She has worked passionately to heighten visibility of the Pura Belpré Award, in collaboration with REFORMA, and spearheaded and chaired the Belpré Endowment Task Force. Ward is also a winner of ALA's Grolier Foundation Award.

Members of the 2007 Distinguished Service Award Committee are: Jean B. Gaffney, chair, Dayton (Ohio) Metro Library; Nell Colburn, Multnomah County Library, Portland, Ore.; Sue McCleaf Nespeca, KidLitPlus Consulting, Youngstown, Ohio; Linda A. Perkins, Berkeley (Calif.) Public Library; and Ellen M. Riordan, Enoch Pratt Free Library, Baltimore.

## Bechtel Winner Named

Children's librarian Charmette Kuhn-Kendrick has been selected as the 2007 recipient of the Louise Seaman Bechtel Fellowship, which allows a children's librarian to spend a month or more reading and studying at the Baldwin Library of Historical Children's Literature, part of the George A. Smathers Libraries at the University of Florida, Gainesville.

Kuhn-Kendrick will study "The Goblins Will Get Ya: A Survey of Horror in Children's Literature from the 19th and Early 20th Centuries." She will read and study scary stories in juvenile fiction, nonfiction, and folk tales to evaluate the lessons being taught to young readers through horror and to illuminate how horror has evolved in children's literature.

Members of the 2007 Louise Seaman Bechtel Fellowship Committee are: Denise Agosto, chair, Drexel University, Philadelphia; Ernie J. Cox, St. Timothy's School, Raleigh, N.C.; Floyd C. Dickman, Columbus, Ohio; Sandra Lane Fouts, Hayward (Calif.) Public Library; Nancy Gifford, Schenectady County (N.Y.) Public Library; and Cecily Pilzer, Georgetown Day School, Washington, D.C.

## Santa Clara Receives BWI Grant

Santa Clara (Calif.) City Library is the 2007 recipient of the ALSC/BWI Summer Reading Program Grant. The \$3,000

## Macaulay Named for 2008 Arbutnot

David Macaulay, Caldecott Award Medalist and renowned author and illustrator, will deliver the 2008 May Hill Arbutnot Honor Lecture. Each year, an individual of distinction in the field of children's literature is chosen to write and deliver a lecture that will make a significant contribution to the world of children's literature.

Macaulay's work celebrates human endeavor and ingenuity. His books encourage readers to consider the construction of everything from buildings to stories and to constantly look at the world around us. His detailed artwork, succinct use of language, and ever-present sense of humor ensure that his books appeal to many ages on many different levels.

Members of the Arbutnot Committee are: Deborah Stevenson, chair, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; Kate Carter, Multnomah County (Ore.) Library, Portland; Eva Mitnick, Los Angeles Public Library; Susan Moore, Louisville (Ky.) Free Public Library; and Gene Nelson, Provo (Utah) City Library.

grant, donated by BWI, provides financial assistance for public libraries to develop outstanding summer reading programs for children. The grant also recognizes ALSC members for outstanding program development.

Santa Clara City Library's summer reading club theme this year is Get a Clue @ your library® and the library plans to make specific efforts to promote the club to children who are part of Santa Clara County's Vision Impaired Program. The library will provide the necessary materials and technology that will allow for these children to participate fully in the program. Programs will highlight the Get a Clue theme and will include such events as a visit from an organization like Guide Dogs for the Blind. This type of opportunity will help teach children in the community about visual impairment as well as show them how they can make a difference by helping this or a similar, organization. Sighted children also will gain an understanding and appreciation of those with visual disabilities. Children in the Vision Impaired Program will feel encouraged to participate and be represented in their community's events.

Members of the 2007 ALSC/BWI Summer Reading Program Grant Selection Committee are: Mary Voors, chair, Allen County Public Library, Fort Wayne, Ind.; Jerene D. Battisti, Renton (Wash.) Public Library; Alison Grant, Ruby S. Thomas Elementary School, Las Vegas; Jean Hatfield, Wichita (Kans.) Public Library; Anne Elisabeth Robert, Jacksonville (Fla.) Public Library; Victor Lynn Schill, Fairbanks Branch, Harris County Public Library, Houston; Margie Stern, Delaware County Library System, Media, Pa.; Ruth Toor, Basking Ridge, N.J.; and Marilyn L. Zielinski, Toledo-Lucas County (Ohio) Public Library.

## Tandem Grant Winner Announced

Diane Williamson, Abbotts Hill (Ga.) Elementary School, was named the winner of the 2007 ALSC/Tandem Library Books (formerly Sagebrush Education Resources) Literature Program Grant for her program, Kindergarten Overnights' Club. Sponsored by Tandem Library Books, the grant acknowledges a mem-

ber's development and implementation of a unique and outstanding reading or literature program for children, and provides \$1,000 to support the winner's attendance at the ALA Annual Conference.

The Kindergarten Overnights' Club encourages incoming kindergarten students to use the school's media center to increase the number of books checked out and read by kindergarteners and their parents. Williamson's motivation was to encourage reading at an early age to influence later school achievement. She enlisted the willing participation of seven kindergarten teachers and parents. The program was successful: The number of books checked out in the program's inaugural year quadrupled from the previous year.

Members of the selection committee are: Susan Knipe, chair, Everett (Wash.) Public Library; Natalie Arthur, Johnson County (Ind.) Public Library; April Roy, Kansas City (Mo.) Public Library; and Susan Veltfort, King County (Wash.) Library System.

## Ohio Library Wins Hayes Award

Betty Ranck and Lauren Miller, Athens County (Ohio) Public Libraries, have been selected to receive the 2007 Maureen Hayes Award. The award is designed to provide up to \$4,000 to an ALSC member library to fund a visit from an author or illustrator who will speak to children who have not had the opportunity to hear a nationally known author or illustrator.

Athens County Public Libraries, in cooperation with Appalachian Community Hospice, West Elementary School, West Elementary Parent/Teacher Organization, the Plains Public Library, Friends of the Athens Library, and the Little Professor Book Center, will bring artists Jeanette and Christopher Canyon to Plains Public Library and Athens Public Library, located in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains in Ohio.

"The library wishes to host a special event to honor one of our librarians, Debby Sullivan, who passed away in

2006," said Ranck, children's librarian at Athens. "Debby enjoyed her work at the library, was an avid reader, and loved sharing books with her children. Through this visit our intention is to reach out to children and families in the community to offer them entertainment and to inspire their creative expression."

Members of the Maureen Hayes Award Committee are: Floyd C. Dickman, chair, Columbus, Ohio; Crystal Faris, Waldo Community Library, Kansas City, Mo.; Judith Rovenger, Westchester Library System, Ardsley, N.Y.; and Deborah Wright, Newport News (Va.) Public Library System.

## 2007 Penguin Awards

Four children's librarians have been named winners of the 2007 Penguin Young Readers Group Award. The recipients are: Rachel Martin Gould, Perkins Braille & Talking Book Library, Watertown, Mass.; Cheryl "Kay" Gooch, Gullett Elementary School, Austin, Texas; Sally L. Miculek, Austin (Tex.) Public Library; and Suzanne Myers Harold, Multnomah County (Ore.) Library, Portland.

Each winner will receive a \$600 grant, donated by Penguin Young Readers Group, to attend ALA's Annual Conference in Washington, DC. Recipients of the annual award must have one to ten years of experience as a children's librarian, work directly with children, and have never before attended an ALA Annual Conference.

Members of the selection committee are: Alison O'Reilly, chair, Austin (Texas) Public Library; Rita Auerbach, New York; Carolyn Blankley, Alvin Sherman Library, Nova Southeastern University, Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.; and Tracy-Lyn Van Dyne, Connetquot Public Library, Bohemia, N.Y.

## Harley Receives Grammy

Bill Harley, who wrote ALSC's Kids! @ your library® Campaign theme song "At Your Library," won a Grammy Award on February 11. His CD titled *Blah, Blah, Blah: Stories about Clams, Swamp*

*Monsters, Pirates & Dogs* (Empyrean Records, 2005) won in the category of "Children's Spoken Word Album." ALSC congratulates Harley on the occasion of this distinctive honor. He not only wrote "At Your Library" especially for ALSC's campaign, but he also taped a media-

ready, audio PSA featuring the song that is available for free download and use at [www.ala.org/kids](http://www.ala.org/kids), click on "Campaign Theme Song." "At Your Library" appears on Harley's latest CD *I Wanna Play*. For more information about Harley, visit [www.billharley.com](http://www.billharley.com). To find campaign

resources that help promote your library service to children and families, visit [www.ala.org/kids](http://www.ala.org/kids). Our tool kit is filled with exciting, colorful, fun, and free materials!

## 2007 Notable Children's Books

### Younger Readers

Armstrong, Jennifer. *Once upon a Banana*. Illus. by David Small. Simon & Schuster/Paula Wiseman.

Bachelet, Gilles. *My Cat, the Silliest Cat in the World*. illus. Abrams.

Bateman, Teresa. *Keeper of Soles*. Illus. by Yayo. Holiday House.

Beaumont, Karen. *Move Over, Rover!* Illus. by Jane Dyer. Harcourt.

Chaconas, Dori. *Cork & Fuzz: Short and Tall*. Illus. by Lisa McCue. Viking.

Chodos-Irvine, Margaret. *Best Best Friends*. illus. Harcourt.

Crews, Nina. *Below*. illus. Holt.

Diakit , Penda. *I Lost My Tooth in Africa*. Illus. by Baba Wagu  Diakit . Scholastic.

DiCamillo, Kate. *Mercy Watson Goes for a Ride*. Illus. by Chris Van Dusen. Candlewick.

Gravett, Emily. *Wolves*. illus. Simon & Schuster.

Grey, Mini. *The Adventures of the Dish and the Spoon*. illus. Knopf.

Henkes, Kevin. *Lilly's Big Day*. illus. Greenwillow.

Hills, Tad. *Duck & Goose*. illus. Random/Schwartz & Wade.

Hopkinson, Deborah. *Sky Boys: How They Built the Empire State Building*. Illus. by James E. Ransome. Random/Schwartz & Wade.

Howe, James. *Houndsley and Catina*. Illus. by Marie-Louise Gay. Candlewick.

Kvasnosky, Laura McGee. *Zelda and Ivy: The Runaways*. illus. Candlewick.

Look, Lenore. *Uncle Peter's Amazing Chinese Wedding*. Illus. by Yumi Heo. Simon & Schuster/Anne Schwartz.

MacDonald, Margaret Read. *Tunjur! Tunjur! Tunjur! A Palestinian Folktale*. Illus. by Alik Arzoumanian. Marshall Cavendish.

MacLachlan, Patricia and Charest, Emily MacLachlan. *Once I Ate a Pie*. Illus. by Katy Schneider. HarperCollins/Joanna Cotler.

McClintock, Barbara. *Ad le & Simon*. illus. Farrar/Frances Foster.

McLimans, David. *Gone Wild: An Endangered Animal Alphabet*. illus. Walker.

Montes, Marisa. *Los Gatos Black on Halloween*. Illus. by Yuyi Morales. Holt.

### 2007 Notable Children's Computer Software and Online Subscription Services

*Bookworm Adventures*. PopCap Games. All ages.

*Bookworm Deluxe*. PopCap Games. All ages.

*Dr. Peggy Healy Stearns' Stationery Studio*. FableVision. Ages 5 and up.

*Dragon NaturallySpeaking Professional 9*. Nuance Communications. Elementary and up.

*Gary Gadget: Building Cars*. Viva Media. All ages.

*Giggles Computer Funtime for Baby—My Animal Friends*. Leveractive. 6-24 months.

*Grolier Online*. Scholastic Library Publishing. All ages.

*I Spy Mystery*. Scholastic, Inc. Elementary.

*Instant Immersion American Sign Language v.2.0*. Topics Entertainment. Elementary–Adult.

*Key Skills Phonics Mastery K-1*. Sunburst Technology. Elementary.

*LEGO Star Wars II: The Original Trilogy*. LucasArts. Ages 10 and up.

*Letter Olympics*. Tool Factory, Inc./SEMERC. Elementary.

*Microsoft Student with Encarta Premium 2007*. Microsoft. Middle/High School.

*Music Ace Maestro: Music Educator's Professional Edition 4.0*. Harmonic Vision. Elementary/Middle.

*Pirate Poppers*. Brighter Minds Media. Elementary.

*The Secrets of Da Vinci: The Forbidden Manuscript*. Tri Synergy/Nobilis. Ages 10 and up.

*Tool Factory Keyboarding Adventure*. Tool Factory, Inc. Elementary.

For the annotated list including Web addresses for producers, visit [www.ala.org/alsc](http://www.ala.org/alsc), click on "Awards & Scholarships" and "Children's Notable Lists."

Members of the 2007 Notable Software for Children Committee are: Diana M. Berry, chair, Oakview Elementary, Decatur, Ga.; Rebecca B. Bishop, Campbell Court Elementary, Bassett, Va.; Ann Crewdson, Valley View Library, Seattle; Cheri Dobbs, Detroit Country Day Middle School, Beverly Hills, Mich.; Anna R. Healy, Rochelle Lee Fund, Chicago; and Jane S. Ritter, Mill Valley (Calif.) School District.

Newman, Jeff. *Hippo! No, Rhino!* illus. Little, Brown.

Pinkney, Jerry. *The Little Red Hen.* illus. Dial.

Portis, Antoinette. *Not a Box.* illus. HarperCollins.

Seeger, Laura Vaccaro. *Black? White! Day? Night! A Book of Opposites.* illus. Roaring Brook/Neal Porter.

Shannon, David. *Good Boy, Fergus!* illus. Scholastic/Blue Sky.

Sierra, Judy. *Thelonus Monster's Sky-High Fly Pie.* Illus. by Edward Koren. Knopf.

Watt, Mélanie. *Scaredy Squirrel.* illus. Kids Can.

Wheeler, Lisa. *Mammoths on the Move.* Illus. by Kurt Cyrus. Harcourt.

Winter, Jonah. *Dizzy.* Illus. by Sean Qualls. Scholastic/Arthur A. Levine.

### Middle Readers

Bardoe, Cheryl. *Gregor Mendel: The Friar Who Grew Peas.* Illus. by Jos. A. Smith. Abrams.

Barrows, Annie. *Ivy and Bean.* Illus. by Sophie Blackall. Chronicle.

Brown, Susan Taylor. *Hugging the Rock.* Tricycle.

Demi. *Su Dongpo: Chinese Genius.* illus. Lee & Low.

DiCamillo, Kate. *The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane.* Illus. by Bagram Ibatoulline. Candlewick.

Faller, Régis. *The Adventures of Polo.* illus. Roaring Brook/Neal Porter.

Goodman, Susan E. *All in Just One Cookie.* Illus. by Timothy Bush. Greenwillow.

Hatkoff, Isabella and others. *Owen & Mzee: The True Story of a Remarkable Friendship.* Illus. by Peter Greste. Scholastic

Henderson, Kathy. *Lugalbanda: The Boy Who Got Caught Up in a War.* Illus. by Jane Ray. Candlewick.

Jenkins, Emily. *Toys Go Out: Being the Adventures of a Knowledgeable Stingray, a Toughy Little Buffalo, and Someone Called Plastic.* Illus. by Paul O. Zelinsky. Random/Schwartz & Wade.

Kuklin, Susan. *Families.* illus. Hyperion.

Kurlansky, Mark. *The Story of Salt.* Illus. by S. D. Schindler. Putnam.

Lin, Grace. *The Year of the Dog.* Little, Brown.

Look, Lenore. *Ruby Lu, Empress of Everything.* Illus. by Anne Wilsdorf. Simon & Schuster/Atheneum

Lord, Cynthia. *Rules.* Scholastic.

Marrin, Albert. *Oh, Rats! The Story of Rats and People.* Illus. by C. B. Mordan. Dutton.

McCarthy, Meghan. *Aliens Are Coming! The True Account of the 1938 War of the Worlds Radio Broadcast.* illus. Knopf.

Montgomery, Sy. *Quest for the Tree Kangaroo: An Expedition to the Cloud Forest of New Guinea.* Photos by Nic Bishop. Houghton.

Myers, Walter Dean. *Jazz.* Illus. by Christopher Myers. Holiday.

Patron, Susan. *The Higher Power of Lucky.* Illus. by Matt Phelan. Simon & Schuster/Atheneum.

Pennypacker, Sara. *Clementine.* Illus. by Marla Frazee. Hyperion.

Raczka, Bob. *Here's Looking at Me: How Artists See Themselves.* illus. Lerner/Millbrook.

Rubin, Susan Goldman and Weissberger, Ela. *The Cat with the Yellow Star: Coming of Age in Terezin.* illus. Holiday.

*She's All That! Poems about Girls.* Ed. by Belinda Hollyer. Illus. by Susan Hellard. Kingfisher.

Sidman, Joyce. *Butterfly Eyes and Other Secrets of the Meadow.* Illus. by Beth Krommes. Houghton.

Siegel, Siena Cherson. *To Dance: A Ballerina's Graphic Novel.* Illus. by Mark Siegel. Simon & Schuster/Richard Jackson.

## 2007 Notable Children's Recordings

*Airborn.* Full Cast Audio.

*Baby Loves Jazz: Go Baby Go!* Verve Records.

*The Book Thief.* Listening Library.

*Carolinda Clatter!* Live Oak Media.

*Day of Tears.* Recorded Books.

*Gossamer.* Listening Library.

*Half-Moon Investigations.* Listening Library.

*Hondo and Fabian.* Weston Woods.

*I, Coriander.* Listening Library.

*Inch by Inch.* Weston Woods.

*Jim Gill Sings Moving Rhymes for Modern Times.* Jim Gill Music.

*Lon Po Po.* Weston Woods.

*Mao's Last Dancer: Young Reader's Edition.* Bolinda Audio.

*Midnight over Sanctaphrax.* Listening Library.

*The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane.* Listening Library.

*My Haunted House.* Recorded Books.

*Peter and the Shadow Thieves.* Brilliance Audio.

*Ptolemy's Gate.* Listening Library.

*Rotten Ralph Helps Out.* Live Oak Media.

*The Silver Spoon of Solomon Snow.* Recorded Books.

*SilverFin: A James Bond Adventure. Young Bond, Book One.* Listening Library.

*Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There.* Naxos Audio Books.

*The Truth about Magic.* Bolinda Audio.

*Wickety Whack: Brer Rabbit Is Back.* Diane Ferlatte.

For the annotated list of recordings, including recommended age levels, visit [www.ala.org/alsc](http://www.ala.org/alsc), click on "Awards & Scholarships" and "Children's Notable Lists."

Members of the 2007 Notable Children's Recordings Committee are: Mary Burkey, chair, Olentangy Local Schools, Columbus, Ohio; Jane Claes, University of Houston Clear Lake, Texas; Carrie Harding, Heart of Texas Literature Center, Brownwood; Heather R. McNeil, Deschutes Public Library, Bend, Ore.; Martha V. Parravano, *The Horn Book*, Boston; Mary Puleo, Everett (Mass.) Public Libraries; Angela J. Reynolds, Annapolis Valley Regional Library, Bridgetown, Nova Scotia; Elisabeth Simmons, Kirkwood Highway Library, Wilmington, Del.; Ellen Spring, Rockland District Middle School, Thomaston, Mass.

- Singh, Vandana. *Younguncle Comes to Town*. Illus. by B. M. Kamath. Viking.
- Thimmesh, Catherine. *Team Moon: How 400,000 People Landed Apollo 11 on the Moon*. illus. Houghton.
- Tingle, Tim. *Crossing Bok Chitto: A Choctaw Tale of Friendship and Freedom*. Illus. by Jeanne Rorex Bridges. Cinco Puntos.
- Weatherford, Carole Boston. *Moses: When Harriet Tubman Led Her People to Freedom*. Illus. by Kadir Nelson. Hyperion/Jump at the Sun.
- Budhos, Marina. *Ask Me No Questions*. Simon & Schuster/Ginee Seo.
- Coombs, Kate. *The Runaway Princess*. Farrar.
- Cottrell Boyce, Frank. *Framed*. HarperCollins.
- DeMari, Silvana. *The Last Dragon*. Tr. by Shaun Whiteside. Hyperion/Miramax.
- Ellis, Sarah. *Odd Man Out*. Greenwood.
- Fleischman, Sid. *Escape! The Story of the Great Houdini*. illus. Greenwillow.
- Fradin, Judith Bloom and Fradin, Dennis Brindell. *Jane Addams: Champion of Democracy*. illus. Clarion.
- Freedman, Russell. *The Adventures of Marco Polo*. Illus. by Bagram Ibatoulline. Scholastic/Arthur A. Levine.
- Freedman, Russell. *Freedom Walkers: The Story of the Montgomery Bus Boycott*. illus. Holiday.
- Holm, Jennifer L. *Penny from Heaven*. Random.
- Hopkinson, Deborah. *Up Before Daybreak: Cotton and People in America*. illus. Scholastic Nonfiction.
- Krull, Kathleen. *Isaac Newton*. Illus. by Boris Kulikov. Viking
- . *Sigmund Freud*. Illus. by Boris Kulikov. Viking.
- Larson, Kirby. *Hattie Big Sky*. Delacorte.
- Lowry, Lois. *Gossamer*. Houghton/Walter Lorraine.
- Lupica, Mike. *Heat*. Philomel.
- Mourlevat, Jean-Claude. *The Pull of the Ocean*. Trans. by Y. Maudet. Delacorte.
- Paulsen, Gary. *The Legend of Bass Reeves: Being the True and Fictional Account of the Most Famous Marshal in the West*. Random/Wendy Lamb.
- Pearsall, Shelley. *All of the Above: A Novel*. Illus. by Javaka Steptoe. Little, Brown.
- Pratchett, Terry. *Wintersmith*. HarperTempest.
- Reeve, Philip. *Larklight: A Rousing Tale of Dauntless Pluck in the Farthest Reaches of Space*. Illus. by David Wyatt. Bloomsbury.
- Roy, Jennifer. *Yellow Star*. Marshall Cavendish.
- Rubin, Susan Goldman. *Andy Warhol: Pop Art Painter*. illus. Abrams.
- Salisbury, Graham. *House of the Red Fish*. Random/Wendy Lamb.
- Todd, Mark and Watson, Esther Pearl. *Whatcha Mean, What's a Zine? The Art of Making Zines and Mini-Comics*. illus. Houghton/Graphia.
- Walker, Paul Robert. *Remember Little Bighorn: Indians, Soldiers, and Scouts Tell Their Stories*. illus. National Geographic.
- Winthrop, Elizabeth. *Counting on Grace*. Random/Wendy Lamb.

## Older Readers

- Avi. *Crispin: At the Edge of the World*. Hyperion.
- Bausum, Ann. *Freedom Riders: John Lewis and Jim Zwerg on the Front Lines of the Civil Rights Movement*. illus. National Geographic.
- Bondoux, Anne-Laure. *The Killer's Tears*. Tr. by Y. Maudet. Delacorte.

## 2007 Notable Children's Videos

- Because Your Daddy Loves You*, Nutmeg Media.
- Carrie's War*, WGBH Boston.
- Choking Game*, Human Relations Media.
- Diary of a Spider*, Weston Woods.
- Dinosaur Bones*, Weston Woods.
- The Emperor's Egg*, Nutmeg Media.
- The Girl Who Hated Books*, National Film Board of Canada.
- The Great Robot Race*, WGBH Boston.
- Hondo and Fabian*, Weston Woods.
- James Marshall's Cinderella*, Weston Woods.
- Knuffle Bunny*, Weston Woods.
- Lon Po Po*, Weston Woods.
- Mabela the Clever*, Nutmeg Media.
- My Lucky Day*, Spoken Arts.
- Open Wide: Tooth School Inside*, Weston Woods.
- Pearl Harbor Warriors*, Woodson House.
- Song of the Salish Sea*, Earthwise Media.
- That New Animal*, Weston Woods.

For the annotated list of videos, including recommended age levels, visit [www.ala.org/alsc](http://www.ala.org/alsc), click on "Awards & Scholarships" and "Children's Notable Lists."

Members of the 2007 Notable Children's Videos Committee are: Susan Wray, chair, Joplin (Mo.) Public Library; Patricia (Pabby) Arnold, East Baton Rouge (La.) Parish Library; Corinne Camarata, Port Washington (N.Y.) Public Library; Molly Collins, Rochester (N.Y.) Public Library; Jennifer Knoerzer, Suffern (N.Y.) Free Library; Kathy Krasniewicz, Perrot Memorial Library, Old Greenwich, Conn.; Cindy Lombardo, Tuscarawas County Public Library, New Philadelphia, Ohio; Jan Sarrat, Gaffney, S.C.; Linda Zeilstra Sawyer, Skokie (Ill.) Public Library; Danielle Shapiro, Brooklyn (N.Y.) Public Library; and Lisa Marie Smith, Vernon Area Public Library, Lincolnshire, Ill.

## All Ages

- Campoy, F. Isabel and Ada, Alma Flor. *Tales Our Abuelitas Told: A Hispanic Folktale Collection*. Illus. by Felipe Dávalos and others. Simon & Schuster/Atheneum.
- Harris, Robie H. *It's Not the Stork!: A Book about Girls, Boys, Babies, Bodies, Families, and Friends*. Illus. by Michael Emberley. Candlewick.
- McKissack, Patricia C. *Porch Lies: Tales of Slicksters, Tricksters, and Other Wily Characters*. Illus. by André Carrilho. Random/Schwartz & Wade.

Oberman, Sheldon. *Solomon and the Ant and Other Jewish Folktales*. Boyd's Mills.

Wiesner, David. *Flotsam*. illus. Clarion.

For the annotated 2007 list and past Notable Children's Book lists, visit [www.ala.org/alsc](http://www.ala.org/alsc), click on "Awards & Scholarships" and "Children's Notable Lists."

Members of the 2007 Notable Children's Books Committee are: Rita Auerbach, chair, New York; Meaghan M. Battle, Troy (Mich.) Public Library; Kay Bowes, Brandywine Hundred Library, Wilmington, Del.; Sharon Deeds, DeKalb County Public Library, Decatur, Ga.; Caitlin E. Dixon, Schoenbar Middle School, Ketchikan, Alaska; Christina H. Dorr, Alton Darby Elementary School,

Hilliard, Ohio; Carol Goldman, Queens Borough (N.Y.) Public Library; Katie O'Dell, Multnomah County Library, Portland, Ore.; Carol K. Phillips, East Brunswick (N.J.) Public Library; Vicky Smith, McArthur Public Library, Biddeford, Me.; and Lisa Von Drasek, Bank Street College of Education, New York. ☺

## 2007 ALSC Annual Conference Schedule

(as of April 13)

See [www.ala.org/alsc](http://www.ala.org/alsc), "Events & Conferences," for the complete list, including room locations and speakers.

\*Denotes closed meeting.

### Thursday, June 21

2-4 P.M.

Executive Committee

4:30-6 P.M.

AASL/ALSC/YALSA Joint Executive Committees

### Friday, June 22

8 A.M.-4:30 P.M.

**ALSC-ASCLA Joint Preconference: The Underserved 20 Percent: Children, Teens, and Adults with Disabilities.** This joint ALSC/ASCLA preconference will feature keynote speaker Harriet McBryde Johnson, an attorney, disability rights activist, and author of various kinds of fiction including "Too Late to Die Young: Nearly True Tales From A Life" and "Accidents of Nature." Other events will include a resource fair, panel discussions on the desires and needs of patrons with disabilities, successful programs and projects that have made a difference to library patrons, and breakout sessions addressing assistive and adaptive technology, patrons with Autism Spectrum Disorders, programming and outreach to people with disabilities, and much more. Closing remarks will be delivered by Katherine Schneider, a retired clinical psychologist and founder of

ALA's Schneider Family Book Award, which recognizes books for children and youth that deal well with disability issues.

### Saturday, June 23

8-9 A.M.

Priority Group Consultants

8-10 A.M.

**ALSC 101: Making Connections.** Are you a new member of ALSC? Or, is this your first national conference as a children's librarian? The ALSC Connections program is the place for you! We'll provide information that will help you get the most from your time at Annual Conference, and your membership in ALSC. Meet other new members, ALSC officers, and learn how to become involved in the division at this informal continental breakfast.

**Babies & Books Beyond the Library: Developing an Early Literacy Campaign.** Two innovative public libraries are partnering with local agencies to encourage families to read with young children: Brooklyn Public Library's "Brooklyn Reads to Babies" and the Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County's "Read to Me Charlotte." This presentation will take participants beyond the programmatic

model of Every Child Ready to Read to transform local initiatives into community campaigns. Speakers will present best practices and lessons learned in their community initiatives.

### **Collaborative Techniques between Authors & Artists: The Inside Story of How Picture Books Are Created.**

Eloise Greenfield and Jan Spivey Gilchrist have been creating books together for many years. Eric Kimmel and Leonard Everett Fisher are also long-term friends and collaborators. Patrick O'Brien and Kevin O'Malley are friends who have just recently begun working together on books. In this intimate look at the collaborative process, the authors and artists discuss how they work together, how their working relationships affect their friendships, and how their friendships affect their working relationships. Moderated by Catherine Balkin of Balkin Buddies.

9:30 A.M.-12:30 P.M.

Division Leadership

10:30 A.M.-NOON

2009 Wilder\*

**Bringing in the Boys: Using Multiple Intelligences to Plan Programs that**

**Appeal to Boys.** How can you attract boys to library programs? By using Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences, you can take topics you already love and create exciting programs that attract boys. We will show participants how to design programs using the eight intelligences by highlighting two successful programs attended by a large number of boys: Bookopoly (a life-sized board game) and BookTrek (a program that lets kids travel the globe through crafts, food, stories, and songs).

**Spreading the Word with a Children's Poetry Jam.** A panel of notable children's poets will perform their own works in a back-and-forth jam of poems, connecting poems spontaneously from poet to poet. The audience will be invited to "jam" along with their favorite poems from a selection provided. Finally, featured poets will also share tips for reading and writing poetry with children. With the goal of promoting and celebrating poetry, this session will provide a model for a fun and meaningful poetry program.

**11 A.M.–12:30 P.M.**  
Notable Children's Books

**1:30–3:30 P.M.**  
2008 Arbuthnot\*; 2009 Arbuthnot\*; 2008 Batchelder\*; 2008 Belpré\*; 2008 Caldecott\*; 2008 Carnegie\*; 2008 Geisel\*; 2008 Sibert\*; Early Literacy Task Force; Hayes\*; Organization & Bylaws

**Libraries + Lobbying = Success.** Lobbying = the ability to try to influence the thinking of legislators or other public officials in support of a specific cause. Learn how you can advocate for children's/youth services in your library. A panel of experts will share three different perspectives on the value of lobbying.

**Nurturing a Love of Books through Readers Theater.** Four prominent children's/young adult authors will give a Readers Theater performance

using scripts they have developed from each other's work. Children's/YA literature specialist Elizabeth Poe will share ways librarians can help children create their own Readers Theater performances. A panel discussion will address questions about this highly successful read-aloud experience that exposes children to good books and provides a means for becoming more deeply involved with and personally responsive to quality literature.

**1:30–5 P.M.**  
Notable Children's Recordings; 2008 Odyssey\*

**1:30–5:30 P.M.**  
2008 Newbery\*

**2–5:30 P.M.**  
Board of Directors I; Notable Children's Books

**4–5:30 P.M.**  
**Picture Books for Older Readers.** The picture book has seen an influx of innovation during the past few decades. Within a few short years traditional boundaries have not merely blurred but have exploded in multiple directions. The sophistication now evident in many picture books (in writing, illustration, and format) makes their use ideal for older readers. Sharon McQueen provides a brief historic overview of the picture books for older readers genre. From there she explores exciting new titles and takes a fresh look at those that have already become favorites. An extensive bibliography will be provided.

**Trit Trot to Washington: The Whys and Hows of Using Rhymes, Songs, Books, and Games in Early Literacy Programs for Babies and Toddlers.** This lively panel of children's librarians will share their creative strategies for serving babies, toddlers, and parents in diverse communities. Learn about different but equally excellent library programs that meet the developmental needs of babies and toddlers. Find something that fits your library and

sing along as we share the magic of rhymes, songs, books, and games for babies and toddlers!

**8–10 P.M.**

**Stories for a Saturday Evening.** Take a break from the hectic days and nights of programs, exhibits, and meetings. Kick off your shoes, settle back, and join us for an evening of storytelling that will amaze, amuse, and enchant you. This may just be the highlight of your trip to D.C.!

**Sunday, June 24**

**8–10 A.M.**  
2008 Caldecott\*; 2008 Sibert\*; 2008 Distinguished Service\*

**8–11:30 A.M.**  
All Committee I & II

**8 A.M.–NOON**  
2008 Odyssey\*

**10:30 A.M.–NOON**  
2008 Belpré\*; 2008 Geisel\*; Budget I; Nominating\*

**Communicating Up and Down: The Yo-Yo Effect.** Children's librarians and directors from large and small libraries will talk about their experiences communicating up and down the chain of command. A question and answer period will follow.

**1:30–3:30 P.M.**  
2008 Geisel\*; AASL/ALSC/YALSA Joint Legislation; All Discussion Group I & II; Bechtel\*; Great Interactive Software for Kids; 2008 Odyssey\*

**Engaging Your Community in Día Partnerships.** One way a library can work with its community to create a culture of reading is by implementing an *El día de los niños/El día de los libros* (Children's Day/Book Day) celebration annually on April 30. Program content will center on tips that include the benefits of promoting Día within the community by partnering with like-minded local and national organizations. Content will also focus on



practical ideas for conducting a Día celebration in your library.

**Search and Research: How Three Nonfiction Writers Navigate Information Overload.** Learn how nonfiction authors do their research and how librarians can use their methods to help guide patrons. Prominent children's nonfiction authors will speak alongside their editors about their research process. Sy Montgomery will speak along with editor Kate O'Sullivan; Sneed Collard will present with editor Judy O'Malley; Elizabeth Partridge will speak alongside publisher Regina Hayes. The second half of the program will be a panel with all of the authors, editors, and Julie Corsaro, past Sibert committee member. Librarian Edward T. Sullivan will moderate.

**1:30–5 P.M.**

Notable Children's Recordings

**1:30–5:30 P.M.**

2008 Belpré\*; 2008 Caldecott\*; 2008 Newbery\*; 2008 Sibert\*; Notable Children's Videos

**2–5:30 P.M.**

Notable Children's Books

**6–11 P.M.**

Newbery/Caldecott/Wilder Banquet

**Monday, June 25**

**7–10 A.M.**

Joint Youth Council Caucus

**8–9:30 A.M.**

**Auditorium Speaker Series. Charlemae Rollins President's Program.** Marian Wright Edelman, president of the Children's Defense Fund (CDF), will address the state of America's children. She has been an advocate for disadvantaged Americans for her entire professional life. Under her leadership, CDF has become the nation's strongest voice for children and families. The CDF's Leave No Child Behind® mission is to ensure every child a Healthy Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start, and a Moral Start in life and successful

passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities. Edelman founded the Washington Research Project, a public interest law firm and the parent body of the CDF. For two years she served as the Director of the Center for Law and Education at Harvard University and in 1973 began CDF. She received the Robert F. Kennedy Lifetime Achievement Award for her writings, which include: *Families in Peril: An Agenda for Social Change*; *Stand for Children*; *Lanterns: A Memoir of Mentors*; *Hold My Hand: Prayers for Building a Movement to Leave No Child Behind*; *I'm Your Child, God: Prayers for Our Children*; and *I Can Make a Difference: A Treasury to Inspire Our Children*.

**10:30 A.M.–1 P.M.**

**Awards Presentation and Membership Meeting.** Join your colleagues for the annual presentation of the Batchelder, Carnegie, Geisel, and Sibert Awards. The Membership Meeting will immediately follow, when President Kathleen T. Horning will recognize the 2007 professional award winners and share the past year's accomplishments and new initiatives.

**1:30–3:30 P.M.**

Great Interactive Software for Kids

**A Sticky Issue: Is Labeling a Form of Censorship?** Is there a fine line between providing enough information for our public and supplying too much information, as we label and sticker our youth collections? Come hear dynamic presentations from speakers who espouse diverse opinions about a topic near and dear to the hearts of youth librarians.

**What's the BIG Idea? Science & Math for Children in Public Libraries.** A hands-on, exciting, and transformative experience. Who knew science and math could be so much fun? "Informal science" or science outside the classroom is the focus of "What's the BIG

Idea?" Children ages four to seven and their families are the audience for the books, manipulatives, programs, and resources. Content centers on the four "BIG Ideas" of science and math for young children.

**2–4:30 P.M.**

Notable Children's Books

**5:30–7:30 P.M.**

**Poetry Blast 4.** Poetry should be heard and not just seen. Poetry Blast celebrates the wonder and excitement of this aural tradition, featuring contemporary North American poetry for children by poets both new and established. The audience will find this enlightening and energizing event a perfect way to end a conference day. Ten to twelve poets will read.

**Tuesday, June 26**

**8–10 A.M.**

Budget II

**10:30 A.M.–NOON**

Board Orientation

**2–5:30 P.M.**

Board of Directors II

ALSC is cosponsoring in name only the following divisional programs:

- **PLA Preconference: The Fun and Facts of Early Literacy: Communicating with Parents and Caregivers through Storytime** (Friday, June 22, 9 A.M.–5 P.M.)
- **Celebrating Excellence in Audio-books for Children and Young Adults.** (PLA, Saturday, June 23, 10:30 A.M.–NOON)
- **It's Logical! Evaluating Your Summer Reading Program in Context of Your Library's Strategic Plan.** (PLA, Saturday, June 23, 10:30 A.M.–NOON)
- **Cataloging Correctly for Kids: AV, E-books, and More!** (ALCTS/CCS, Sunday, June 24, 1:30–5:30 P.M.)

# THE LAST WORD

## The Secret Life of Fairy Tale Characters

Helen Kelly

Okay, I admit it. The picture book authors tried to warn me, but I wouldn't listen. There is more going on in folk tales and fairy tales than we were originally lead to believe.

As A. Wolf explains in Jon Scieszka's *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs*, there are two sides to every story. It was all a misunderstanding. That poor wolf was framed.

And what about the pigs? Who knew they were aeronautic engineers on the side until they exited the pages of David Wiesner's *The Three Pigs* via porcine-piloted paper airplanes. Well, now I know that these authors and others like them write the truth. Namely, that fairy tale characters have a secret life.

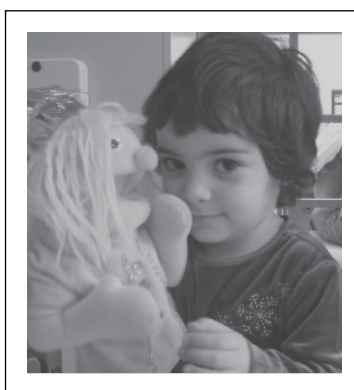
Don't believe me? Just try presenting a puppet show with them and see how things get out of hand, so to speak.

Of course, my colleagues and I are partly to blame for the flights of fancy. Never content to follow a script, we routinely embellish classic puppet plays. The troll, for example, grills the middle billy goat about the delicious possibilities of his larger brother.

"Is your bigger brother on Atkins?" asks the troll. (All the adults laugh). The follow-up question ("Does your brother work out at the gym?") also entertains parents in the audience.

Depending on our inclination that day, the biggest goat can be on the Atkins diet and working out at the gym (therefore a source of lean protein) or on the milkshake diet and playing video games all day (a tender treat). It works either way.

With all this poetic license in the performance, children can leave the script behind too. At a recent show, when the wolf couldn't blow the brick house down and asked the audience for suggestions on what to do, some boys in the front row yelled, "Use dynamite." Now there's a way to truly blow the house down.



The princess puppet whispers her secrets to Alia.

Although our puppet presentations of folk tales are somewhat silly and lighthearted, children can be seriously concerned for the puppets. They know about the secret lives the characters live outside the pages of the book or the confines of the puppet play.

Our three pigs puppet show ends with the pig brothers happily installed in their brick McMansion and the wolf running offstage to find a vet for his scalded tail. Believe me, no pig or wolf puppets are ever injured in the making of these productions. So I was completely caught off guard when a somber kindergartner approached me after a show

and asked, "Where are the pigs' mom and dad?"

"This is a story," I replied. "We could add pig parents, but we keep it simple with three pigs and a wolf."

Another student listened to this exchange and informed me that she had the story at home on CD. With great seriousness and solemnity, she stated that the pigs left home because their mother was too sick to take care of them. The two students exchanged a knowing glance.

Oh, my! These two little souls were so empathetic to the pigs. Guilt washed over me. What is the proper etiquette for extending sympathies to the ailing parent of fictional characters? I wonder what the illness is—swine flu perhaps?

No doubt, preschoolers know not only the malady, but the mother pig's entire curriculum vitae. She could be the same Mrs. Pig from Mary Rayner's *Garth Pig* picture books because these fairy tale characters have a secret life. Every child knows that. &

*Helen Kelly is a children's librarian at Hamilton Public Library in Canada. When she isn't selecting picture books or performing puppet shows, she spends her time designing McMansions for fairy tale characters. She can be reached at [helekelly@gmail.com](mailto:helekelly@gmail.com).*

Got a great, lighthearted essay? A funny story about children and libraries? Books and babies? Pets and picture books?  
A not-so-serious look at the world of children's librarianship? Send your Last Word to Sharon Verbeten at [CALeditor@yahoo.com](mailto:CALeditor@yahoo.com).



# HAPPY BIRTHDAY, CAT IN THE HAT!

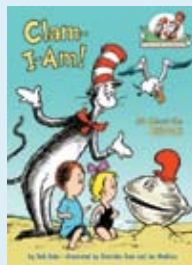
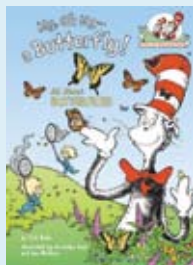
Celebrate  
Summer Reading  
by Asking

## What Can YOU Do for YOUR LIBRARY?



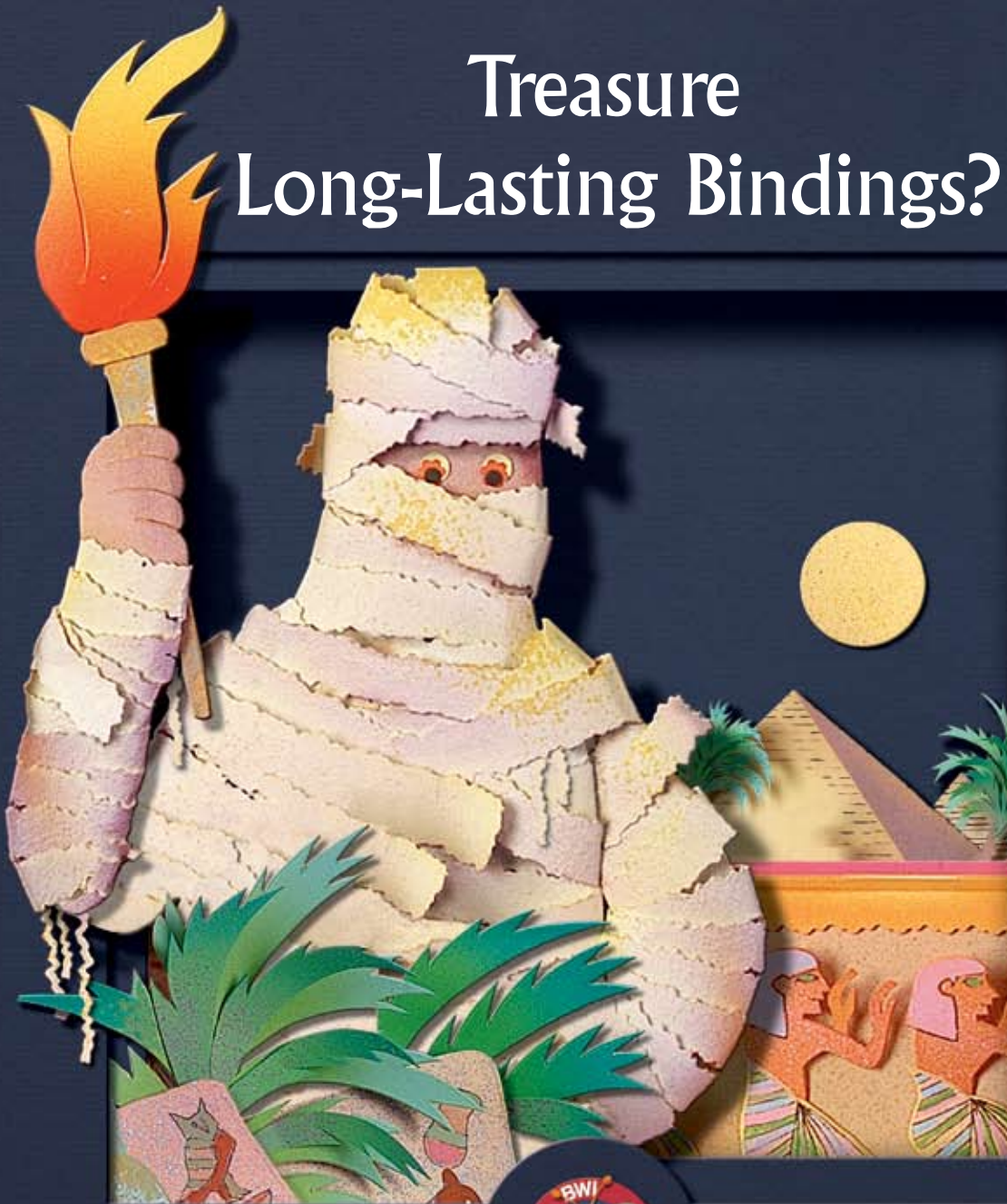
Look for the **Seuss for the Summer** Easel and Bookmarks through your wholesaler, in the mail, or at the Random House Children's Books Booth #3107 at the ALA Annual Conference in Washington, D.C.

Invite the readers in your library to read Dr. Seuss this summer, and you can win a free set of Cat in the Hat Learning Library Books for your library!\*



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