

# School Book Buzz

## A Professional Development Collaboration

MARY SCHREIBER

Schools and libraries have a common mission of serving the local community, especially children and families. So why not bring those specialists together for some professional training? That was the goal behind the School Book Buzz initiative at Cuyahoga County (OH) Public Library (CCPL).

CCPL has twenty-seven branches serving forty-seven diverse communities, and each branch works with its individual school system to support the school staff and families.

As teachers, school librarians, and families increasingly have more challenges to overcome, public libraries are looking for ways to further develop these relationships. As a former children's librarian turned collection development specialist, and someone with a lot of educator relatives, I wanted to see how the public library might help.

In fall 2017, I proposed a professional-development day for the area school librarians and educators to help support literacy and learning in the greater community—two key areas of strategic focus at CCPL. My presentation outlined the following:

- Host a free, day-long, professional-development day with lunch for school staff.
- Provide book talks on a curated list of the current year's books as well as offer a taste of upcoming publications.
- Partner with vendor Baker and Taylor and its school division, Follett.
- End the day with an author talk.

My immediate superiors in technical services loved the idea, which was supported by our now executive director, Tracy



Left to right: CCPL Book Talkers Megan Barrett (children's librarian), Kyra Nay (children's librarian), Julie Zukauckas (teen librarian), and Maria Trivisonno (children's librarian).

Strobel. Not only was she supportive and willing to find funding to provide lunch, but also she asked that one librarian from each branch attend alongside their school staff member. I was delighted. What better way is there to develop relationships between the schools and public libraries than having both sides in the same room?

I then pitched the idea to Baker and Taylor and its school division, Follett, who agreed to participate. Follett would do a short presentation on the services offered—more informative than sales-pitchy. Baker and Taylor would provide items for goody bags, book-talk upcoming titles, and help secure an author. With support and funding, the School Book Buzz was born.

To ensure there would be interest for the School Book Buzz, I developed an email survey that was sent to a central distribution list for schools. From the survey findings, I planned a day for librarians and staff who work with students in kindergarten through twelfth grade.

Respondents were most interested in seeing the hottest new titles, listening to an author talk, and learning about the public library's resources. Areas that were felt to make a bigger impact on administrators included the ability to show a direct correlation to the curriculum, book selection to help



**Mary Schreiber** is Youth Collection Development Specialist at Cuyahoga County (OH) Public Library. She is the author of *Partnering with Parents: Boosting Literacy for All Ages* and is serving on the 2021 Randolph Caldecott Committee.

with future purchasing, and networking with public librarian counterparts.

I planned on hosting the School Book Buzz in the fall and most respondents thought October or November would be ideal; we selected a Monday.

Most helpful were the comments, including one that asked for a technology component as that was the only way her principal would allow her to attend. This sparked an afternoon session that involved a tour of the host library's Innovation Center (makerspace). School librarians were thrilled to learn the public library had some of the same maker equipment and that the public library offered training. This is a win-win and technology is now an essential part of the agenda each year.

## Implementation

Once the survey results had been analyzed, it was time to start finalizing the day's activities and details that would make School Book Buzz a success.

Here is a brief list of tasks the event facilitator needs to complete to host a professional-development day at your library:

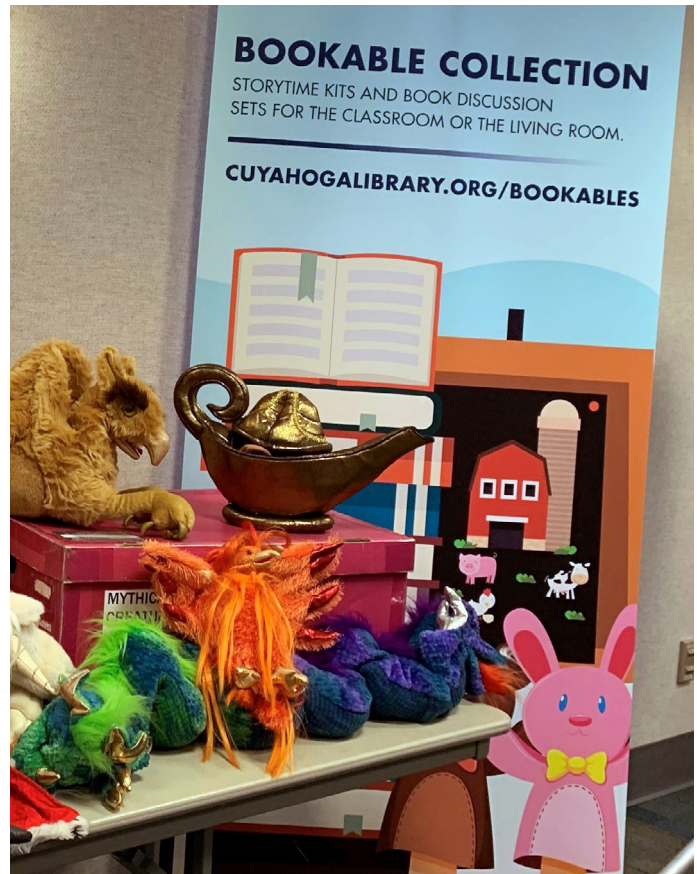
- Book a meeting room.
- Line up speakers and exhibitors.
- Create an agenda and post it on the registration website.
- Send "Save the Date" and registration emails.
- Order boxed lunches.
- Order copies of the titles being book-talked to display.
- Line up helpers for room setup the day before your event.
- Create and send a post survey for feedback.

## Agenda Tips

The agenda is packed, and a timekeeper is used so everyone stays on track. Breaking it into smaller chunks keeps the day moving. For the second year, we offered shorter breaks (fifteen minutes instead of thirty), allowing for more informational sessions.

## Agenda Breakdown for 2019

- Twenty-five minutes for each Book Talk segment (four topics)
- Fifteen minutes for each Resource Sharing segment (four topics)



Display of CCPL's circulating puppets, toys, and kits.

- Ten minutes for each School/Public Librarian Partnerships segment (three topics)
- Forty minutes for Author Talk
- One hour for lunch

To extend the learning, exhibits were available during the breaks and lunch. They consisted of a table staffed by Follett, several tables of CCPL's special-collection materials staffed by the Youth Literacy and Outreach staff, and tables with copies of the titles being book-talked. These books were also available for checkout.

Once the School Book Buzz was over, it was time to start thinking about the next one. No matter how successful, it's vital to listen to what attendees have to say and tweak your agenda. Creating an anonymous form using a product like Google Forms allows for honest opinions to be shared.

Building on feedback from the post attendee survey, we added a session on book talks for diverse books, and school and public librarians were invited to share some of their best practice partnerships in 2019. An electronic resource presentation sparked much discussion about library cards and the various types the public library offers. Topics under consideration for

our 2020 event include a rundown of different library cards, a cataloging segment, and a technology petting zoo.

## Learning as We Go

In October 2019, we held our second annual School Book Buzz and welcomed forty-one attendees. The first year, we had forty-six attendees. While I had hoped to grow a little more in year two, I was happy with the number.

However, I learned during the event that our marketing department's emails may have been blocked by some of the schools. Since the event is only open to the school districts CCPL serves, I do not put the registration information on the public website. Email blasts are currently the only invitations being sent. We are looking at ways to resolve this issue in 2020 so all intended emails reach our school folks.

## Making it Happen

Planning a full-day professional-development workshop is a lot of work, but the results are very rewarding. Cost can be a factor; we purchased boxed lunches from Panera Bread for sixty people, which cost around \$600 including delivery. This

funding has come directly from CCPL, but you could look for a sponsor or simply not include lunch.

The other large expense is the author talk. We were fortunate to have Baker and Taylor sponsor this portion of the day. Author Stacy McAnulty joined us in 2019 to talk about her writing process and her new book, *The World Ends in April*. Her visit was promoted on the registration page and in an email sent to potential attendees.

However, while having an author presentation is a treat for all attendees, it is not essential to your ability to offer a professional-development day. I learned from the post-event survey that it was not the determining factor for school staff to attend. Instead, the public library resources, information, and the many book talks are what draws them in; the author talk is an added bonus. So, don't let this be a stumbling block and stop you from moving forward.

You can begin your planning by conducting a survey to see what your school staff are most interested in. This will direct your planning. Be realistic in what your public library can support and tailor the event to your needs. Make it an afternoon, a couple hours in the evening, or host on a Saturday. No matter how you go about it, the end is the same—the youth advocates in your community are coming together. &

## CCBC Names Charlotte Zolotow Winners

The winner of the 2020 Charlotte Zolotow Award is *Johnny's Pheasant*, written by Cheryl Minnema, illustrated by Julie Flett, and published by the University of Minnesota Press.

Five honor books included:

- *Fry Bread: A Native American Family Story*, written by Kevin Noble Maillard and illustrated by Juana Martinez-Neal (Roaring Brook Press/Macmillan)
- *A Map into the World*, written by Kao Kalia Yang and illustrated by Seo Kim (Carolrhoda/Lerner)
- *Pokko and the Drum*, written and illustrated by Matthew Forsythe (Simon & Schuster)
- *Saturday*, written and illustrated by Oge Mora (Little, Brown)
- *Truman*, written by Jean Reidy and illustrated by Lucy Ruth Cummins (Atheneum/Simon & Schuster)

The Charlotte Zolotow Award is given annually to the author of the best picture book text published in the United States in the preceding year. The award is administered by the Cooperative Children's Book Center, a children's literature library of the School of Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Members of the 2020 Charlotte Zolotow Award committee included Shannon Furman, school librarian, Lake View Elementary School, Madison (WI); Kelsey Johnson-Kaiser, youth services manager, St. Paul (MN) Public Library, St. Paul (MN); Bridget Nolan, kindergarten teacher, Paul J. Olson Elementary School, Verona (WI); and Jeni Schomber, head of library services, Beloit (WI) Public Library. The committee was chaired by Merri Lindgren of the CCBC.

