Children

the journal of the Association for
Library Service to Children

&Libraries

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Association for Library Service to Children

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✪ Peer-reviewed

ON THE COVER: Ethan and Paolo love their LEGO bricks and blocks. Photo taken at Brown County Central Library, Green Bay, Wis. by Sharon Verbeten.

Editor's Note
Books Personified

By Sharon Verbeten

A few months ago, "Olivia" came to visit one of our branch libraries and was greeted by squeals of delight (and one shrill cry from a frightened tiny tot!).

Then the fabulously large Elephant and Piggie—personified in all their wry awesomeness!—came to our downtown branch for a doctor's office playtime ("I broke my trunk!").

My 6-year-old daughter, Holland, is a huge fan of both the Ian Falconer and Mo Willems characters, so her visits to the library were amplified even more by these costumed characters. The oversized joy they brought her, and many other children, was a thrill to witness—of course, as you can see below, I was a bit star-struck too!

As librarians, and former kids, books, authors, and characters are *our* icons. *Our* rock stars. And while I love meeting authors at the ALA conventions (and have gotten less shy about it over the years), I am still a little kid when it comes to meeting the books' "characters."

The hugs the kids give these characters are real, palpable, lasting. Sometimes my daughter doesn't even hug *me* as hard as she hugged Olivia! And when it was time for the visit to end, Holland asked, "Is Olivia coming home with me?"

Well, yes, in a way she is. She won't be there physically, but Holland can read those books over and over (and she still can't really "read" yet) and know all the characters by heart.

It's much the same way I felt about the characters in one of my favorite childhood books, *A Bargain for Frances.* When I had tea parties, Frances was there in spirit. Sure, she wasn't real, and I suppose I knew that, but the story was so real, that she *became* real to me.

Every time I introduce a new book or a new character to Holland, I feel happy to bring more friends into her life. I see plenty of children at our local library who don't have that kind of interaction with books, mainly because their parents don't.

So it makes me work even harder as a librarian to reach those families who may not know just what they are missing out on. And if it takes a curious monkey, an attention-getting pig, or a playful elephant and pig duo to help me, then so be it! &

Top: The editor's daughter, Holland, embraces Olivia at a recent library visit. *Bottom:* Editor Sharon Verbeten cozies up to Mo Willems' "Piggie."

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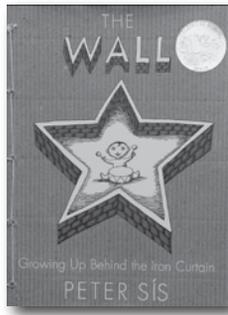
May Hill Arbuthnot Honor Lecture

Reading in the Dark

Peter Sís

Speaker Peter Sís, center, at the May Hill Arbuthnot Honor Lecture with then-ALSC President Mary Fellows, left, and Dr. Brenda Dales of Miami University, Oxford, Ohio, the lecture venue. Photo by Bert Shepard.

*Three-time Caldecott Honor illustrator **Peter Sís** presented the 2012 May Hill Arbuthnot Honor Lecture April 4, 2012, at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio.*

I was born in the mid-twentieth century at the crossroads of Europe in a country that no longer exists—Czechoslovakia, now Czech Republic. Looking back, I can say that books meant everything in my life, and not just because I grew up in a time before television or computers but because I lived in a dark totalitarian empire, not even realizing it, with books being the only beams of light.

Books shaped my ideas; they held my dreams, my fears, and my hopes. Books made me draw pictures of what I had read. They became the most important and continuous stepping-stones through my life.

One hundred fifty years ago, [British philosopher] Herbert Spencer wrote, "Children should be led to make their own investigations and to draw their own inferences. They should be told as little as possible and induced to discover as much as possible."

Luckily this was true of my early childhood. No television, no computer, no babysitters—the word "babysitter" did not exist in Czech. I spent my preschool days with my grandparents, who introduced me to nineteenth- and twentieth-century books—fairy tales like those of the Brothers Grimm and Karel Erben with their princesses, ogres, knights, and even death; also cautionary tales in the tradition of Wilhelm Busch's *Max and Moritz*, where pictures show what happens to disobedient children. The punishments I still remember were severe—like if you do not eat your soup, you will go blind, or if you are too curious, you just might die. This was scary stuff, but it was hard not to be fascinated by it.

You get scared, you get happy, you are a child. You are learning about the world that is close to you, but I had no idea that I was living in a place called Czechoslovakia, which had been a Democratic republic since 1918, annexed by Hitler, liberated by the Red Army, and taken over by Communists to become part of the Soviet Empire. Marxist social philosophy was the opposite of Herbert Spencer's progressive idea to allow children the freedom to learn from experience. Anything considered bourgeois and decadent was forbidden. This included religion and many books and ideas. But people still held on to their books and kept their thoughts to themselves; they also kept their religious beliefs even if they did not express them openly. It was all very confusing for a small child.

My parents, both artists, told stories to my sister and me. They read us fairy tales and the books of wonderful modern Czech writers and illustrators (pre–World War II) like the brothers Karel and Josef apek or Ond ej Sekora, and they drew pictures with us. That was fun.

My father's mother—my grandmother, Marie—did not want me to grow up in sin, so she took me secretly to visit imposing churches. She told me Bible stories and showed me the statues of saints and paintings of martyrs. We read *Fireflies*, a Czech classic written by a clergyman named Jan Karafiát, while she insisted that I not tell anybody. This was a heavy load and not the best preparation for what was to come in my Communist school.

Nor did the other side of the family make things easier. My grandfather Karel was a railway engineer and spent the 1930s designing the technical aspects of the train stations in Cleveland and Chicago. So my mother spent a short time in the Midwest. The family had a library of books they brought from America, which introduced me to many American children's books of that period. I loved their colors and smell. The best of them, in my opinion, was the biggest book I had ever seen. My grandfather collected the funnies—comic strips from Chicago newspapers—and got them bound in a large volume that was taller than I was at the time. I pored over the pictures, virtually lying down on a page, to follow the stories of Little Orphan Annie, Mutt and Jeff, Krazy Kat, the Katzenjammer Kids, and many more. I wore that volume out of existence, but it was in a way a good preparation for the future, my life in America.

Those early years with my sister, my parents, and my grandparents are wonderful in my memories, full of play and sun. We caught glimpses of political reality from time to time—People's Militia marching, flags flying, tanks on parade.

But we did not understand, and besides, little boys like that sort of thing, especially marching soldiers. So when my father came home one day in a uniform, I did not realize it marked the end of the safe part of my childhood.

My father was drafted into the Czechoslovak People's Army, as were all young men of his age. He was a documentary film-maker and became part of the Army Film Corps. He was sent to China, which was also part of the Communist Bloc at that time, to teach the Chinese People's Liberation Army filmmakers how to shoot a documentary. He told us he would be back for Christmas, and then he was gone.

He did come back for Christmas, but not until two years later. Time and distance seemed greater then, and I felt as if he had been gone for many years. I had almost forgotten what he looked like. He brought back fantastic tales about the Tibetan world and its boy-god-king, the Dalai Lama. He told me many stories he did not dare talk about in public. Some of them I retold in my book *Tibet Through the Red Box*. They were even more fantastic and at odds with Communist teachings than my grandmother's stories of saints and miracles.

"Books shaped my ideas; they held my dreams, my fears, and my hopes. Books made me draw pictures of what I had read. They became the most important and continuous stepping-stones through my life."

I was now six years old, and it was time to go to school. It started with the basics but also a daily dose of politics. All children in the Communist school system were supposed to be indoctrinated, as I try to explain in *The Wall*, my book about growing up behind the Iron Curtain. We learned to read and write—in Czech and Russian—but we were also supposed to prepare to become young pioneers with red scarves, trumpets, drums, and banners. We studied and memorized the life stories of Lenin, Stalin, and other heroes from the Communist Olympus. When I speak to people who grew up in other Communist countries I realize we all know the same stories—and the Russian language, which was compulsory.

Hansel and Gretel, the lives of saints, American comics, and Tibetan fairy tales did not mix well with any of this, but I think they saved me from being completely brainwashed. Some teachers did, as well, because not all the people were fanatics. This was a difficult time for parents who could not safely speak their minds, in fear that we might repeat what they said at school! What if we talked in front of the wrong person? The repercussions for the family could be severe.

Drawing and reading. That was my escape from this confusing reality. There were the classics from the past like *Robinson Cru-*

soe, and books by Hans Christian Andersen, Alexandre Dumas, Jules Verne, Rudyard Kipling, and Robert Louis Stevenson. I no longer recall which ones were approved by the government and which were banned.

It was changing all the time. But I do remember a neighbor lady, an old professor who secretly lent me "Western" books, warning me not to tell anyone. This made them very special. All of a sudden, here I was with a pile of "secret" books that I read with a flashlight under the blanket. This made them the most amazing books imaginable, though in reality they weren't literature of a high level. They were Wild West stories and thrillers, and who knows if I would have enjoyed them as much as I did if they hadn't been forbidden. I must have been about fourteen years old when the world we were told about at school and read about in our textbooks—the world of brave Soviet soldiers, pioneers, peasants, and revolutionaries—started to look different.

It was a strange world to grow up in. Nobody was quite sure how the Communist inquisition worked. (Take blue jeans as an example: at times they were considered Western and decadent; at other times they were okay because they were the clothes of the working class.) The Soviet minister of culture Andrey Zhdanov proclaimed writers the "engineers of the human soul." While the Soviet masters were fond of Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* and Jack London's *White Fang*, I have to say each book was extended by a substantial appendix explaining the social conditions and working-class status of the heroes. The official opinion on Russia's own Tolstoy (was he a pacifist?) and Dostoyevsky (was he a nihilist?) was constantly shifting. I am not quite sure how I came to read Dickens and Balzac. They probably came from the family library, as did Ernest Thompson Seton and Upton Sinclair.

Not government-recommended were A. A. Milne and Lewis Carroll. Pooh, Eeyore, and Alice were considered decadent, while the writers Astrid Lindgren and Arthur Ransome were published by the State House of Children's Books, the publisher of some beautifully illustrated books on poor-quality paper.

The big discovery for me was Antoine de Saint-Exupéry and his *Little Prince*. These, together with the Saul Steinberg books my father brought from the West, were life-changing.

In the 1960s, more and more Western books, which until then had been censored and unknown, started to be published and arrived in the bookstores every Thursday morning. I remember long lines extending around the block with hundreds of people waiting for the new book by Artur Rimbaud, Raymond Chandler, Ernest Hemingway, Saul Bellow, Graham Greene, Günter Grass, anybody—our only connection to the outside world. Literary periodicals were reprinting much of what was interesting in the world.

Then in 1965, Allen Ginsberg came to Prague as a messenger of the Beats, and the fact that the Communist government promptly deported him made him even more magical and mysterious. We were all howling. We circulated the poems of

Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Gregory Corso. Prague Spring of 1968 was in the air, and it started at a convention of Czech writers, with speeches by Milan Kundera, Ludvik Vaculík, and Václav Havel. A few months of this most exciting and promising time followed. The border was opened and we could travel to the West, perform theater on the steps of our art school, and play in our own rock bands. All of a sudden we were catching up on all the books we had been denied. It was quite a flood: Henry Miller, Jack Kerouac, Bram Stoker, Boris Pasternak, Colette, Albert Camus, Carlos Castañeda, Aldous Huxley, J. R. R. Tolkien . . . even Prague's own Franz Kafka, who had been denounced as decadent and Zionist until then.

But our spring freedom didn't last. By August, Soviet tanks had arrived and the opened door in the Iron Curtain had slammed shut. And once again, there was censorship, fear, and darkness. Nine hundred university teachers in this small country lost their jobs, as did two out of three members of the writers' union. They became bus drivers and janitors. They were persecuted, exiled, and imprisoned. But it was hard for the regime to stuff the rabbit back in the hat. Information from the West was seeping through the cracks in the wall. Samizdat, the new form of publishing, was now the norm. Dedicated people were copying banned books in secret and again we were reading in the dark with flashlights. The price of such books was steep.

Life, as well as art, was censored with much more ideological determination than before. The government called this oppressive period "normalization." Louis Aragon, a leftist himself, called it "The Biafra of the Soul." Plays and films were banned. Books that were thought to be subversive were destroyed.

I had just finished my studies at the Academy of Applied Arts and was looking for my place in this world. The difference from the early years of Communism was that the artist was personally responsible for the political content of his or her work. My first assignment was a record cover for a rock album called *The Airport*. It was by Karel ernoch, a singer who was closely watched by the government. I did a painting of a little airport with a windsock blowing in the wind, from left to right. When I delivered it, the art director asked if I had checked which way the wind should be blowing. I thought he was joking, but these were uncertain times and the question was highly ideological. From left to right could mean that the wind was blowing from the West toward Moscow. Or other things. The art director called the Ministries of Interior and Culture and asked for an official ruling. We waited anxiously for about twenty minutes. The phone rang, and I was told, "You are lucky. Your wind is blowing correctly." I decided to switch to animation. Maybe the details would fly by and the censors wouldn't notice.

"I do remember a neighbor lady, an old professor who secretly lent me 'Western' books, warning me not to tell anyone. This made them very special. All of a sudden, here I was with a pile of 'secret' books that I read with a flashlight under the blanket. This made them the most amazing books imaginable."

Czech animation had a proud and wonderful tradition. However, I picked the wrong story—Miloš Macourek's "The Island of 6,000 Alarm Clocks"—for my first professional animated film. It was about alarm clocks that wake people up every morning: that is their joy and purpose in life. But the clocks get upset when they are not appreciated for doing their job. Every morning, they get hit by people. Disillusioned, they quit their jobs and march off together in search of a place where they can ring as loud and as much as they please. The film was charming to look at, but it was doomed, for this was a time when people couldn't travel freely. Czech writers and artists like Kundera or Miloš Forman, who had left during the Prague Spring, did not even dare to come back. So the film, like much else, was shelved. Still, my animation won the West Berlin Film Festival's Golden Bear award, and I was "leased" by the Czech government to make films in the West for a fee.

I made a film in Zurich, Switzerland, and in London, England. But, more important, being in London gave me the opportunity to study with Quentin Blake, who was my tutor for a short time. I will always remember showing him a picture and asking what color the background should be. "Just do what you think best," he said. "You know what color you want, you're asking me because you want to be sure." I found old habits hard to shake.

Then the next film project took me to the United States of America, to Hollywood, California, where I was to work for a few months on a film for the summer Olympic Games in Los Angeles. I also got involved in an animated film of a song by Bob Dylan for a new TV channel called MTV. This was fantastic! This was like a dream! Here I was in Los Angeles walking the streets—sorry, driving the boulevards I knew from Chandler's stories and rarely seen Hollywood movies. And just when everything looked so promising, the Soviet Union and its satellites pulled out of the Olympics, and I received a cable to return home immediately.

This presented a dilemma. If I stayed and finished the film, the Czech government could make life difficult for my family in Prague. But what if the film became a hit? Would that justify my disobeying the order? I decided to stay. But the film did not impress MTV, and now I was afraid to go back. I had taken too long to make up my mind—and I was eventually sentenced in absentia to two years in jail for not coming back in the first place.

So here I was, in America, wondering what to do next—animation? sets? paintings? While I was searching for the answer, the director of the Municipal Art Gallery in Los Angeles, Josine

Ianco Starrels, sent some of my pictures to Maurice Sendak. I knew nothing about this until I got a call from Mr. Sendak, a name I somehow recognized, who asked if I had any interest in illustrating children's books. To tell the truth, I had really given no thought to it, but if you were broke in Los Angeles, unable to go home, and Maurice Sendak called you, what would you say?

He introduced me to Susan Hirschman and Ava Weiss from Greenwillow, and I realized I would have to go to the East Coast, where most publishing was done. But how would I get there? By luck, Miloš Forman, a film director whom I had known since childhood, was finishing his movie *Amadeus* and asked me to make a poster for it. I got paid enough to buy an old car, and I drove across the country.

Coming from a Communist world, I half expected to find free or subsidized housing for artists with a small advance or stipend awaiting me. I quickly discovered this was not the capitalist way. I would have to pay my own rent. So I became an illustrator right away. Greenwillow gave me my first book to illustrate, and Steven Heller at *The New York Times Book Review* gave me weekly assignments. I also started showing my work to other children's book editors.

I had written a story and made a storyboard for a picture book about a rhinoceros that I was sure would be the best children's book ever published. I can hardly believe I could have been so clueless, though this gave me the chance to meet with most of the children's book editors at that time and learn how many different ways there were to say no to an idea. One of these editors, gentle and kind, was Frances Foster, who eventually helped

nothing about it. You did not grow up in New York." But I was learning about it, job by job and day by day.

It was an exciting time for me; I felt as if I was encountering history face-to-face. I lived not far from Dylan Thomas's White Horse Tavern. I met with editors and art directors at the Algonquin Hotel. I was meeting my heroes and giants in the world of arts and letters: Allen Ginsberg and Joseph Brodsky, Saul Steinberg, Milton Glaser, Seymour Chwast, Norman Mailer, Dr. Seuss, James Cagney, Mikhail Baryshnikov, Tom Wolfe, Tomi Ungerer, and illustrators and artists from many different countries. I felt that I was part of something important, big, and wonderful. I was in demand as an editorial illustrator, but I made sure I stayed in touch with the book world. Newspapers and magazines come and go. The books stay . . . like they did in my childhood.

One of the early books I illustrated, *The Whipping Boy* by Sid Fleischman, was awarded the Newbery Medal and certainly helped me get known in the world of children's books. I illustrated many of his other books, as well as books by Julia Cunningham, Myra Cohn Livingston, George Shannon, Jack Prelutsky, Diane Ackerman, Goethe, Kate Banks, Jorge Luis Borges, José Saramago, and Pam Muñoz Ryan, to name a few.

I think all of the books that I've both written and illustrated are, in some way, about leaving one's own country and not being able to go back, only forward. They are messages in a bottle, diaries of explorers, travelogues of dreamers and seekers. After *Rainbow Rhino,* in which the hero discovered the mysteries of the world beyond the valley he lives in, came a series of observations of my

"The director of the Municipal Art Gallery in Los Angeles sent some of my pictures to Maurice Sendak. I knew nothing about this until I got a call from Mr. Sendak . . . who asked if I had any interest in illustrating children's books. To tell the truth, I had really given no thought to it, but if you were broke in Los Angeles, unable to go home, and Maurice Sendak called you, what would you say?"

me cut the story from ninety-six pages to thirty-two, and some years later a completely different *Rainbow Rhino* was published as my first written and illustrated picture book. This was a very special moment. Not able to go back home, I managed, with my green card travel permit, to get to Vienna, Austria, and meet with my parents to show them my first American picturebook. A special moment indeed!

I, who knew nothing about baseball, pizza, apple pie, or American children's books, had dared to become a writer and illustrator! When I told one editor I wanted to do a book about New York, she said, "You can't do a book about New York. You know

new surroundings for Greenwillow. These were *Waving, Going Up!* and *Beach Ball.* They dealt with experiences I could never have had behind the Iron Curtain in Communist Prague.

I became an American citizen in the spring of 1989, and the big scary Berlin Wall came down in the fall of the same year. The inhumane, suffocating Communist system was dead, or so I thought. I was now able to return home and was even offered a government post: Minister of Culture Petr Sís ☺! But I wasn't finished with my own exploration of the world. I was working on my tribute to America, to the New World, in *Follow the Dream: The Story of Christopher Columbus.* I felt free. My pictures

became large and full of new colors. Freedom gave me wings. In one picture a young Columbus reads *The Travels of Marco Polo*, and that book inspires him for the rest of his life. Later, Galileo reads Copernicus and Darwin reads Humboldt. Books were their inspiration and fueled their dreams.

And I'm proud to claim connection to the first ever illustrated picturebook: 1653's *Orbis Pictus* ("teaching children about the world through pictures") by Jan Amos Comenius, who was like me born in Moravia, now part of the Czech Republic.

I thought that "making it" in the American book world meant going on a book tour. It happened with *Follow the Dream* and started with a phone call from the owner of the now-defunct Eeyore's Books in New York City.

He said, "You are coming to my store. What is your shtick?" I did not know what he meant, so he explained, "Books don't sell themselves. You must charm the customers. Do you play guitar? Do magic? Juggle?" What could I do? I got my younger brother involved. He was a student in Prague and played guitar, and we put together a cabaret performance with puppets, drawing, umbrellas, costumes, and songs, which we sang cheerfully with our Czech accents. Random House sent us all over the country—there were so many independent bookstores then. Looking back, I think it was rather insane, and some of the booksellers who became my friends later asked why someone with a beautiful book felt he had to sing and dance and maybe scare the children with it? Well, it is a good question, but it gave me a chance to see a lot of America.

Follow the Dream was published the year I got married, and our honeymoon travels gave me the inspiration for picture books like *An Ocean World*—a wordless book about a whale released from an aquarium wondering where she belongs—and *Komodo!* about a Komodo lizard and a boy who dreams about meeting him. And he does!

I was still fascinated by explorers and travelers, so the next book was *A Small Tall Tale from the Far Far North*, about a hero of my Czech childhood, the adventurer Jan Welzl, who left Europe for life in the Arctic. There is a lot of ice and snow in this book, and just when I was painting snowflakes on a picture of Welzl stuck to a magnetic mountain, I had to drop everything to rush my wife to the hospital. Our first baby was being born! I am sure my wife would tell the story differently, but for me as a children's book author everything changed.

I wanted to make a book for little baby Madeleine. Just at this time, I got a phone call from the editor at Doubleday, Ms. Jacqueline Onassis, another name I somehow recognized. She had just returned from Prague, where she met with President Václav Havel, and she asked if I would do a book about Prague. This was a perfect birthday gift for my newborn daughter! *The*

Three Golden Keys made me go back into my childhood, not the oppressive years but before that, to a time of innocence, when I was safe and learning about life with my parents and grandparents.

Doesn't every newborn child deserve a special book? The book for our second-born child, Matej, was *Starry Messenger*, about Galileo Galilei. The inspiration came from my admiration for Havel and other great thinkers of history. I wanted to show that the explorer or dreamer doesn't always have to travel to discover new territories. He or she can be sitting by the drawing table like me! Discoveries happen in the human mind, and they are not always appreciated in their own time. They can even be dangerous. *Do you hear me, Matej?*

Now the children were walking and talking. They were being children, and I was observing and getting ideas. These were the best of times for a children's book creator. *Madlenka* was a story about my little girl when we were living in downtown Manhattan, where everybody on our block came from a different country and cultural background. *Fire Truck* was about my little boy's obsession with the fire trucks in the fire station across the street from our apartment. The hero of the book loves the fire trucks so much that he becomes one! So the books followed in quick succession, one for Madeleine, one for Matej: *Madlenka's Dog*; *Trucks, Trucks, Trucks*; *Ballerina!*; *Dinosaur!*; *Ship Ahoy!*

My life might have gone on in this manner had it not been interrupted by a letter from my father in Prague. He was not well and he wanted to leave me his diaries from Tibet. *Tibet Through the Red Box* was the outcome, and my father lived to see it published. He died a few days before September 11. I left for his funeral from my studio, in the shadow of the twin towers, on September 10. The next day, the Twin Towers were gone, and nothing would be the same again. Seven firemen from the fire station across the street from where we lived had perished. Candles and flowers and shock. I could not see how children's books would make any sense out of this changed world.

At this sad and confusing time, I got a phone call from the Metropolitan Transit Authority's Arts for Transit program, asking me to make a poster for the subway trains, and it made perfect sense. Here was something I could do for the community. Because the space for the poster on the trains was long and narrow, I did a drawing of a whale with a map and skyline of Manhattan. The image seemed to connect with the emotions of subway riders, who left messages and emails just saying "thank you." It was like we were all holding each other's hands. Just "thank you." That gave me hope, and I was fortunate to be involved in more subway art projects. The mosaics for the 86th Street/Lexington Avenue subway station are about hope. I called them "Happy City." They celebrate New York City's vibrant community of people from all over the world living together. There are fewer musicians playing instruments in the

"I, who knew nothing about baseball, pizza, apple pie, or American children's books, had dared to become a writer and illustrator . . . I was learning about it, job by job and day by day."

art than I imagined because a budget is a budget, but the four existing mosaics make me happy.

Doing public art was a healing process and made me realize that it was important to celebrate the human spirit and achievement again—and the great minds that changed our world and made us think differently. The human eye, which is part of my subway mosaic, transforms into the eye of a man who sees our world in a new context in *The Tree of Life*, my book about Charles Darwin—a very ambitious undertaking that I couldn't have finished without the firm and steady guidance of my editor, Frances Foster. (Oh, I was ready to give up so many times!) This book made me aware of many facts of life, not only Darwin's, whose house I visited and diaries I read, but also how a book comes alive through the hard and dedicated work of the entire publishing team: editor, copy editors and fact-checkers, designers, the production manager, marketing and publicity people, and salespeople. I also discovered, when touring with the book—only a Darwin puppet this time—that not all Americans believe in evolution. This is a free country after all.

Darwin came at the same time as a completely unexpected phone call from the MacArthur Foundation, and this time I did not recognize the name. In fact, I was supposed to be doing a telephone interview with *Publishers Weekly* that morning when someone named MacArthur called. I told him he would have to call back later because I was waiting for an important phone call. But the caller insisted that his call was very important, and it would change my life. I was thinking, "What a pushy sales pitch," and almost hung up. I'm glad I didn't. Receiving a MacArthur Fellowship was awesome and humbling.

But the foundation's statement that "Fellows are selected for their creativity, originality, and potential to make important contributions in the future" carried a lot of responsibility. My children were becoming teenagers. Their everyday adventures were not as much fun as when they were younger. I tried to connect with my inner child and their inner child in *Play, Mozart Play!* and *The Train of States*, but when I asked, "How am I doing, kids?" they would politely smile and say, "Great, Dad." I decided my MacArthur project had to be something really meaningful and important.

I had realized with the passage of time how difficult it was to explain, especially to my own children, where and how I grew up. It was like talking about life on another planet. I would make little jokes, little remarks, little drawings, then more little drawings and stories that were much more serious. This is how *The Wall: Growing Up Behind the Iron Curtain* went through a number of incarnations before it found its shape and balance. The original vision was always there—told through my life's experience—of how a society can be gradually oppressed and suffocated by a totalitarian system. The book will forever feel incomplete to me—there was so much more to be said on so many different levels, but reaction to it has proved that it doesn't have to be the last word

on the subject. I've heard not only from children and schools all over America but from many people who were victims of the Cold War and survived the Gulags of the Soviet Union. I see *The Wall* as being different from my books about discovering new and distant worlds; *The Wall* is about the importance of creating better worlds that are free and democratic.

My children are just about fully grown now. The world is undergoing incredible changes in every which way. So is my life.

I was trying to go back in time in *Madlenka Soccer Star*; I recall bits of my childhood in the illustrations for Pam Muñoz Ryan's *The Dreamer*; and I am celebrating ancient wisdom and trying to find allegorical answers to the meaning of life, the pain and the beauty of the human journey, in my retelling of the twelfth-century Sufi poem *The Conference of the Birds*. All these characters are discovering and exploring the world . . . their world, our world, "iWorld."

> *"I have no town or village in America that I can really call home. But I have libraries. . . . These are awesome places and they give me a sense of belonging. Of being part of this country. Of being home."*

Lately I have been wondering what this multitasking iWorld means to someone like me whose life work is creating pictures line by line with pen and ink on paper. Are there children looking at all the little lines and discovering the new world like I did, or are they just scrolling and scrolling?

I think I've found the place to look for the answer. I am the first one in my family to come to this country. It will be thirty years this July that I have been here. Half my life. I have no town or village in America that I can really call home. But I have libraries. Everywhere I go, or we go as a family, I visit the local library. These are awesome places and they give me a sense of belonging. Of being part of this country. Of being home.

Last year, I had the chance to create three murals about the beauty of reading for the children's room in the public library in Champaign, Illinois. These murals are approximately ten feet by ten feet each, and the Champaign Library happens to be a center of the community. It's bustling with life and activity, full of people in love with books.

On a recent visit there, I found a group of children—from all ethnic backgrounds—sitting under my murals, completely immersed in books. Bright light was coming through the big windows—floods of light.

These children do not have to read in the dark.

These children are exploring and discovering the world through books. They are the Galileos and Darwins, the John Glenns, and Neil Armstrongs of the twenty-first century.

These kids will reach the stars and beyond, because with books anything is possible. ੭

C Is for Cooperation

Public and School Library Reciprocal Responsibility in Community Literacy Initiatives

JANET AMANN AND SABRINA CARNESI

D o your library patrons understand that one of the roles of the library—whether a public or school venue—is teaching literacy skills? Libraries evolve from community directives and support the needs of their patrons with collections and services. Most library mission statements or philosophical stands maintain that the library aims to be an important piece of the educational growth for young patrons and a place for continuing education for adult patrons. Literacy skills are embedded in that growth process.

While some public library patrons might fondly recall searching print-only stacks in a stately Andrew Carnegie-sponsored building, and some taxpayers can't recall a library in their elementary school, today's youngest patrons have had vibrant youth services programming with aspects of literacy instruction and access to dynamic multimedia collections in recent years.

But dismal economic conditions threaten collections, access, and programming in all libraries. The degree of cuts varies from state to state, but for some school and public libraries, the reported results have been catastrophic in terms of eliminated library positions and reduced hours. This is a loss no community can afford to accept. Attempts by resolute librarians to maintain collections and programming, especially for the benefit of the library's youngest patrons and specifically to support vital early literacy and information-literacy-skill development, may necessitate cooperative and collaborative activities between school and public libraries at a level not seen before.

Several ALA divisions, including the American Association of School Librarians (AASL), the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC), and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA), have joined to address and promote the need for enhanced youth services collaboration between libraries.

The AASL/ALSC/YALSA Interdivisional Committee on School/Public Library Cooperation was founded six years ago. Its main objective is to keep abreast of school and public library cooperative activities nationally and to publish these activities to help promote the best practices in school and public library cooperation (www.ala.org/alsc/schoolplcoop).

The committee recognizes the specific learning needs for children from infancy to eighteen years old, both for personal recreation and as structured learning. One shared role of public

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and school librarians is patron-literacy-skills education, which includes young patrons and their parents or caregivers. That common instructional mission is behind a current push for more cooperative collaboration between the public and school library worlds. It's a role that has evolved.

Historical Implications

During the late nineteenth century, libraries did not originally exist in the K–12 environment. The public library took on an educational support role for teachers and students, but there were no children's services or direct loans to the classroom. That void led to more collaborative cooperation between school and public library systems to support classroom research and reading materials.[1]

By the 1930s, a few public library branches had started, either within or close to public high schools. A 1941 report by a joint committee of the National Education Association and American Library Association revealed all K–12 grades needed assistance and library services; classroom collections alone could not adequately support the needs of students.[2]

By the 1950s, school libraries began to emerge in both high school and elementary settings, providing services more directly to students and teachers. That trend did not replace the need for public libraries, which, because of higher funding levels, could still supply a larger bulk contribution of resources to multiple classrooms.

In the 1960s, federal laws allocated additional funding to educational systems to stimulate collection development in school libraries. Federal legislation led to broader levels of interlibrary cooperation between local, state, and regional libraries. Professional standards in public and school library associations encouraged cooperation. "Total Community Library Service" became a running slogan that lasted through the 1980s.[3] Public libraries offered more programs that included preschoolers, toddlers, and infants with parents and guardians.[4] Somewhere within this movement, the line of network communications began to thin between school and public libraries. The National Commission on Libraries and Information Science established a task force to investigate the void. The task force recommended school libraries needed to be included in the networking.

With the 1983 publication of *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*, the public was made aware of America's educational crisis and the need for improvements. But the library community was not included as a part of the solution. Library professionals responded to the oversight—first with *Alliance for Excellence: Librarians Respond to a Nation at Risk* (US ED, 1984)[5] and then with *Realities: Educational Reform in a Learning Society* (ALA, 1984).[6] These publications highlighted three insightful concepts for cooperative networking between libraries:

1. Learning begins before school.

2. Good schools require good libraries.

3. If a society is a learning one, it needs libraries throughout the various developmental phases of life.[7]

That forged the path to the fourth major concept in school library curriculums and public library programs: information literacy.

In 2000, the Public Library Association (PLA) launched an early literacy project developed in partnership with the National Institutes of Health, in support of the division's findings published by the National Reading Panel, *Teaching Children to Read: An Evidence-Based Assessment of the Scientific Research Literature on Reading and Its Implications for Reading Instruction*.[8] One product of that research-based partnership was PLA/ALSC's *Every Child Ready to Read* (*ECRR*), released in 2004.[9] PLA and ALSC released the second edition in 2011.

"*Every Child Ready to Read* swept through Youth Services," said Marge Loch-Wouters, Youth Services Manager at the La Crosse (Wisc.) Public Library.

> That tenet product gave Youth Services librarians [who may never have been trained in educational methodology or reading instruction] the tools they needed to help parents. Storytime had been fun before, but it became richer and had more depth, it was not just for babies' entertainment, but also helped librarians become coaches to help give parents [and caregivers] the knowledge and tools they needed to work with children's pre-literacy skills.[10]

Proponents of public and school librarian partnerships to support literacy-skills education and instructional support via library programs offered valid justifications via association workshops; blogs; journal articles about communication, cooperation, collaboration, and literacy at the library; and research.[11]

School librarians moved forward with *Empowering Learners: Guidelines for School Library Programs*[12] and *Standards for the 21st-Century Learner in Action* (AASL, 2009).[13] During this same time, the National Governor's Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) garnered support from numerous states for the Common Core English and Math Standards (www.corestandards.org).

History has a way of emulating itself. Direct input from school librarians was neglected; they were not included in the original drafting of the Common Core Standards. Ironically, many aspects of the Common Core Standards were similar to AASL standards. School librarians correlated library standards to the new core education initiatives in AASL's "Crosswalk of the Common Core Standards and the Standards for the 21st-Century Learner" (www.ala.org/aasl/guidelinesandstandards/commoncorecrosswalk).

It might appear from multiple perspectives that by 2012 school and public librarians were thoroughly ingrained and highly valued constituents in national education initiatives. Unfortunately, that perspective is still not secured. School library

emphasis was neglected in the recent reauthorization proposal of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), and school librarians had to petition the White House with more than twenty-five thousand signatures asking for inclusion for support.[14]

School library programs continue to be reduced or eliminated, and public libraries face personnel and collection reductions, closings, or drastically reduced operation hours. Less stalwart professionals might be discouraged, but librarians tend to remain stubborn and resolute about touting the need and value of libraries for communities. How do we continue to support literacy skills for our patrons and communities? Reciprocity may be the answer.

Reciprocal Program Awareness

Successful reciprocity between school and public libraries requires concerted efforts of planned, mutual, and shared exchanges. Library promotions, programming events, community needs, and resource sharing provide opportunities for cooperative and collaborative literacy connections.

Public and school library students in initial-library-education coursework at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire share three courses—Children's Literature and Programming, Collection Development, and Reference. Learning modules embedded in those courses address the validity of public and school library collaboration and require students to share examples of successful events and best practices. Through journal articles, blogs, and actual events, students discovered the following examples:

- a summer reading program at a public library

- a public librarian booktalking at a middle school

- school and public library after-school book clubs and events

- a community-wide one-book YA read

- readathons

- book and movie tie-in events

- shared author visits

- homework help/hotlines

- information literacy pathfinders posted on public and school library webpages

- public webpage resource lists and how-to's for student research projects

- shared reading lists

- collaborative grants

- annual events and promotions (e.g., School Library Month, National Library Week)

- Banned Books Week, Teen Read Week

- a storytime delivered by high school students

- a school field trip to the library

- collection development cooperation, shared input, and planning for curriculum support.[15]

By many accounts, students had considered school and public librarians not as true colleagues but as distant kin, professionally linked by sharing fundamental core concepts but facing significantly different workplace issues.

Before course collaboration awareness projects, some students conceded libraries may have cooperated on various community ventures, but often admitted to not seeing the need for full collaboration ventures or the need to reach out into domains of other busy librarians, visit others' respective libraries, or invest more than cursory library webpage explorations.

"It does seem like a lot to add to your professional learning network that might not serve you immediately," Tessa Schmidt, youth and special services consultant for the Public Library Development Team of the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, agreed.

> This connectivity is vital, especially when considering literacy skills. Changes in education will have some trickling down effect throughout the community. Public librarians should have access to this information on their radar. It is community news about the process of being prepared to enter school. Children's early literacy programming can also be about teaching to parents, reinforcing skills, and integration of language awareness. It is in the best interest of the kids for all to be on the same page regarding education initiatives.[16]

And it is in the interest of the community's public and school libraries to reciprocate in promoting successful programming, especially when the unique needs of the community are addressed.

Connectivity between a school and public library is a daily experience of students in attendance at the Creeds Elementary School in Virginia Beach, Virginia. The opportunity results in success from both perspectives. Creeds Elementary is physically attached to the small rural farming community's only local public library branch, the Pungo-Blackwater Public Library. School and public librarians, students, and teachers experience an ongoing, shared partnership.

"The school librarian and teachers work very closely with us to coordinate many aspects of the partnership," Branch Librarian Matt Lighthart said. "We coordinate such things as classroom teacher borrowing of public library materials, subject area requests, and shared space usage, as well as special events. We are still in the process of completely aligning our efforts."[17]

Lighthart's "Guided Reading Outreach" and "Technology Instruction and Gaming" programs are just two examples of how the libraries' ongoing collaborative efforts successfully promote literacy and technology usage to elementary students in this twinned facility. "The whole partnership is extremely open and flexible."[18]

Reciprocal Program Promotion

It is logical and essential to promote and summarize successful happenings from your library, but it is a stretch to consider your local colleague's events, and it takes effort. Establishing a habit for this connectivity might be the best way to start.

"From your school newsletter or webpage add information about the public library events," Schmidt suggested. "The school librarian should schedule a meeting with the children's or youth services librarian. It is two-way promotion, so have the public librarian come to a faculty meeting to talk about potential services and contact information. Book lists from both libraries can be made available to support new initiatives. Have information sheets from the schools about preschool on hand in the public library."[19]

Other librarians have suggested having a public library card sign-up station at the school's fall open house event, linking to the public library catalog via the school webpage, and asking a district school librarian to sit on the public library board.

Loch-Wouters believes promoting collaboration comes from contact:

> I strongly believe if we aren't talking directly and speaking to each other, we are all lost. We [public librarians] may not have had early literacy education theory courses, so we need to make an appointment with the school librarian and visit at school, or go to lunch and have a conversation, and actively ask our colleagues to translate educational happenings, all to help us to improve our practice.[20]

Public librarians need awareness of current literacy terminology to connect with constituents, the families using the library, and to be knowledgeable when they confer with school librarians and school administrators. Loch-Wouters shares her knowledge of literacy and school library cooperation with extensive posts on her blog, *Tiny Tips for Library Fun* (http://tinytipsforlibraryfun.blogspot.com).

The school and public librarians routinely get together during the year for conversation and collaboration between the La Crosse district schools, the main library, and branch librarians. "The collaboration is essential for our students," Catherine Beyers said. Beyers is library media director at La Crosse's Southern Bluffs Elementary and a previous winner of ALA's John Cotton Dana Public Relations Award.

Beyer added:

One example is how the public library supports events like National History Day—with displays, a reception, and prizes. The students walk to the public library, meet with the reference librarian, archivist, and young adult services director. The support for that event in itself has cemented a positive relationship between students and the public library, and students continue to be library users for years after."[21]

Librarians from both perspectives will be at different comfort stages with reciprocal program awareness, from an initial experience to well-established connectivity, and it is essential to pursue the possibilities to satisfy patrons. Librarians who work with youth should want to know what it means when a parent asks about materials for their toddler that emphasize "beginning sound awareness" and for their second grader that focus on "nonfiction literacy." What are efficient methods of learning more about the possibilities of connecting school and public libraries, especially with literacy issues? Consider the concept of reciprocal sharing.

Reciprocal Sharing

Public and school librarians consistently seek, participate in, and advocate the value of their own professional growth. It is energizing to think learning conversations can be obtained through conference workshops, continuing education events, webinars, social networking, and professional journals. Those are familiar methods and can provide a wealth of new knowledge. Professional association electronic discussion lists also are common venues for conversations about library issues, such as early literacy programming and literacy collection development. Peer sharing is the foundation of learning in all previous situations, and also is the basis for the concept of reciprocal sharing.

School librarians must consider sharing through public library venues, and vice-versa. Sharing could "excite an expectation for what libraries can provide [for patrons], which would then lead to more support for libraries throughout kids' lives."[22]

Reciprocal sharing does not have to be a formal presentation, and the possibilities are endless—from a simple link to a booklist to a copy of the plans for a detailed author event. Conversation and reciprocal sharing involves stretching a little, but the subsequent literacy benefits for young patrons, parents and caregivers, and the community might be powerful—and the benefits to the field might be immense. &

For more information on the AASL/ALSC/YALSA Interdivisional Committee on School/Public Library Cooperation, visit www.ala.org/alsc/schoolplcoop.

Or visit http://wikis.ala.org/alsc/index.php/ALSC_Committee_Pages. Click AASL/ALSC/YALSA Interdivisional Committee on School/Public Library Cooperation to see and share ideas related to school and public library cooperative programs, services, and events.

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He Said, She Said

How the Storytime Princess and the Computer Dude Came Together to Create a Real-Life Fairytale

SHAWN D. WALSH AND MELANIE A. LYTTLE

Pictured left to right: Melanie A. Lyttle, and Shawn D. Walsh.

It should be fairly clear who's the storytime princess and who's the computer dude. And sometimes it really does seem like we're living a fairytale. It can't be real what we're doing. How can we explain ourselves to others when it seems no one can understand how we are able to work together? We are an aberration. Professional opposites do attract and do magical things. We're proof of that! So after explaining this to many people over time with varying levels of success, someone suggested we write this down in detail. And so our story begins . . .

Shawn: "Long ago in a galaxy far, far away" a technologist and a children's librarian came together on a project, and it didn't involve any wars . . . *Star* or otherwise. The year was 2006.

Melanie: No one is going to get that reference. I only understand it because of the "star" part. You're referencing *Star Wars*. We are supposed to be talking about how we came to work successfully together over the years. Instead, we are starting with an example of how different we are!

Shawn: But different isn't a bad thing. I think that's where most good partnerships begin. Take a look at *The Odd Couple*. Nevermind . . . don't look at *The Odd Couple*.

Melanie: *The Odd Couple* is ancient. Again, no one is going to know what you're talking about.

Shawn: If you're going to be such a librarian, *you* tell the story. Crap, now I've just lost half the audience.

Melanie: Fine, I will. And I will use polite words. *Once upon a time . . .*

Shawn: How is that different from my beginning?

Melanie: Fits the audience we're writing for.

Shawn: OK, now tell your beginning.

Melanie: You make it sound like it's going to be boring.

Shawn: Yes, indeed it is the boring part.

Melanie: But to get to the cool stuff you want to tell people, we have to start at the beginning. The project we worked on was writing software to allow patrons and library staff to register for library programs online. My library hired you to write this program for us, and since it would be mostly used by the children's department to handle storytime registration, you were assigned to work with me. I was head of Children's Services at the Madison (Ohio) Public Library (MPL), and you were the technology analyst for the Northeast Ohio Regional Library System (NEO-RLS).

Shawn D. Walsh *has been the Emerging Services and Technologies Librarian for Madison (Ohio) Public Library since March 2012. Working in public libraries since 1997, he was most recently the Senior Technology Analyst for Northeast Ohio Regional Library System. With a BS/AS in computer information systems from Youngstown State University, he is a past coordinator and long standing member of Ohio Library Council's Information Technology Division. **Melanie A. Lyttle** has been the Head of Public Services at Madison (Ohio) Public Library since 2011; before that, she was the Head of Children's Services there for five years. She received her MLIS from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 2003. She is the incoming Northeast Chapter Coordinator for Ohio Library Council, and she facilitates the Northeast Ohio Regional Library System Children's Network.*

Shawn: That I was.

Melanie: We had only met one time before, when you and your boss came to my library to conduct a training session. Mutual colleagues assured me that we would be fine working together.

Shawn: Oddly enough, I got the same assurance, on my side.

Melanie: After all, we were both twenty-seven years old at the time. I really didn't think that was a great basis to begin a working relationship, but what choice did I have? You were a computer guy, and I knew what all computer guys were like—rude, insensitive, and obnoxious. I was sure you wouldn't listen to anything I said since I had noticed you talked *a lot*, and computer guys never listen anyway! That's who they are. And of course, you would be deathly afraid of children.

Shawn: What? I wasn't listening. Kidding! I was expecting you to be a flighty, flakey technophobe. I had worked with children's librarians before. They liked me, but they didn't really appreciate what I did for a living. I have the most fun in children's departments. That's where my peeps are. Kids always love technology, and I always found it funny that the people running programs for them hated technology. I was really astounded that this children's librarian wanted me to write some software. While I was apprehensive, going back to the aforementioned assurance, I trusted it was all going to be good.

Melanie: After I take a minute to roll my eyes at you, I will continue.

Shawn: Do you remember how we started? It was email, and it was ugly. Real ugly. I wrote stuff. You wrote stuff. No one knew what was going on. It was ugly. *Did I mention it was ugly?*

Melanie: It was awful because I was used to dealing with people face-to-face. And the loss of body language and tone killed my ability to communicate.

Shawn: I knew this wasn't going well. Body language and tone were important to me too. If you haven't figured this out by now, I'm very verbal. So I did what comes naturally. I picked up the phone and asked, "Is this what you really mean?" Honestly, I do think that was our first phone conversation.

Melanie: I couldn't tell you, but that sounds pretty typical of conversations we have even today.

Shawn: And so the dialogue began. *Dun, dun, dun!* We would always start by talking about the project, but we also talked about other things. We talked about a lot of things. What was going on at Madison. What was going on at NEO-RLS. What was going on at home. It was somewhere along the line here that we discovered we both hate olives. Do you remember?

Melanie: All I remember is somehow discovering that your wife and my sister can both eat whole cans of black olives at one sitting. But I don't know that that is something anyone wants out in public. What I do remember of those conversations has to do with swapping library pee stories. I thought I had a great set of

pee stories, but all I really remember is you could one-up every pee or bodily excretion story I had.

Shawn: Man, I like tangents.

Melanie: We're never going to get to the end of the story. But before we completely leave the idea of tangents, I probably should let everyone know, as unprofessional and immature as it is, when I get frustrated or upset, to this day, you tell me a pee story or a poop joke. It always makes me feel better. And while we always end up on tangents, now is not a good time to have one.

Shawn: Point taken. Through these conversations we became less formal and more friendly. I think that helped lead us to the ability to compromise. This is one of the keys to our partnership. I think that's what all technologists and librarians need to do: compromise. We each have our silos, to use a library-esque term.

Melanie: We completed the project and it was successful. Staff and patrons were happy.

Shawn: How about that? Five-ish years have passed and the software is still running. That's pretty good for software (knock on wood). The next part of the story was we started to have more conversations about children and libraries and technology. Now you tell the bit about how I got to Madison once a week.

Melanie: In early 2009, my director, Nancy Currie, decided it was cheaper and much better quality to contract with NEO-RLS for our computer maintenance. That meant Shawn, now the senior technology analyst (He got promoted!), began coming to the library every Wednesday.

Shawn: That's when we started getting into more trouble.

Melanie: No, I think 2009 was a dreaming, scheming, and planning year for us.

Shawn: OK, so we didn't start wreaking havoc right away.

Melanie: Correct, that was 2010.

Shawn: That's when we started doing video. Right?

Melanie: Yes, that's the year you solved our school visit problem. There was one elementary school we couldn't visit to promote summer reading. Your solution? To drop off a DVD of our normal school presentation there. But more importantly, you thought we should also post the video on YouTube for parents and other non-school people to see. And, by the way, you thought we should also film the video more professionally by using the studio at NEO-RLS.

Shawn: That was a learning experience, but a good one.

Melanie: You have no idea! For more information, see "Promoting Summer Reading on YouTube" (www.ala.org/alsc/alsccon-nectonline/alsconnectonline/alscconarcha/june2011) or watch the video at www.youtube.com/watch?v=9AjEFNfrEuI. In 2011, we did a second video (www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Rv5GLWs

Uow&feature=relmfu), which I love, illustrating how we learned from our mistakes in 2010. However, I think the coolest thing we did together we didn't really do together. It was you. I just asked a question out of utter desperation and you bailed me out.

Shawn: Meh, you're giving me more credit. It was fun. It was right up my alley. It was Pac-Man.

Melanie: Well, you're the one who keeps telling me that computer guys like challenges. So this was one. Our kids wanted to play Pac-Man in the library and someone had to turn the videogame into real life. And that someone would *never* be me.

Shawn: It was definitely out of my comfort zone. It was programming for people but not programming code. It was rules for a game. I guess it was coding, wasn't it? It was awesome! For more information, see "Live Pac-Man" (www.ala.org/alsc/alscconnectonline/bright-ideasmarch-2012#pacman).

Melanie: A short time later, you came to work with us full-time.

Shawn: I'm not telling that story. You started it.

Melanie: Fine, I will. In fall 2011, our young adult librarian left to take another job, and he had planned and advertised three months of programs that no one on staff was prepared or inclined to do. This was a crisis for me. With the encouragement and blessing of my director, who also doesn't like olives by the way, she said it was fine to solve my problem in an unconventional way. For a few months, Shawn would serve as the interim teen librarian in addition to the regular technology work he did for us every week. And he would be keeping the teen program going until a new YA librarian could be hired. And, we figured, since he was already going to be doing teen stuff, it would be great if he tried to do a few tween programs because the new person we would hire would do tween things as well.

Shawn: I was apprehensive, but I was kind of excited in the same breath. It was definitely a departure from the technology field, but there was a comfort zone as well. Like I said earlier—they are my peeps.

Melanie: Your peeps are between the ages of nine and eighteen?

Shawn: Yeah. I'm just a really big kid.

Melanie: As it turned out, the kids in Madison adored Shawn. They wanted to talk to him about programs he should do, and he listened. These kids weren't talking about programs written in PHP or Cold Fusion.

Shawn: Hey, you finally learned something. Thanks for the "geek speak." Maybe a little "techy" is rubbing off. Is there a moral to this story? We've been writing for a long time.

Melanie: Yes, there is a moral, but we didn't get to the part where the director and library board decided that things were going so well that they wanted you to come to the library and work for us full-time. And I got to help develop your job title. "Emerging services and technologies librarian" is apparently more profes-

sional than my suggestion, which was "all that and the kitchen sink."

Shawn: "Kitchen sink" isn't as good on a business card. *Wait . . . yeah, it would be.*

Melanie: Just so everyone understands, you are in charge of tween and young adult programming. You are overseeing all and teaching some of the library's computer classes for adults. You also do outreach, and just because there isn't enough on the list, you're involved in pretty much anything new that comes along for the library.

Shawn: You forgot still doing tech and computers too. And the moral of our story is . . .

Melanie: The moral is . . . these things we listed below. And we hope our discoveries help everyone who's still reading this article.

Shawn: Do you think they made it through? Gosh, I hope so, but seriously, I would agree. The things we learned along the way are really the foundations for this partnership.

- **Find your common ground.** Start with the nonprofessional. Do you have similar interests in television or movies or food preferences? Once you have a common ground personally, work on the professional stuff. Do you each have projects you could use help with?

- **Accept that you and your technologist both are coming to this relationship with stereotypes of each other.** You each have biases, and you must learn to mitigate or live with whatever baggage you bring to your working relationship.

- **Be genuinely interested in each other's work**. You will both learn new things from each other. This means listening to what the other person is saying.

- **Compromise**. Can you both stretch and grow as you complete your project? Good collaborators can say, "Did you really mean that?" and then work out a solution.

- **Don't let your job title confine you**. Anybody can be a source of a new program or a solution to a problem.

- Then of course, **if all else fails,** discuss your mutual hatred of black olives and swap stories about children not yet potty trained who don't make it to the library bathroom in time. OK, maybe not that, even though it works for us. But seriously, this is worth repeating: **find common ground.** You have it. You may just have to look in strange places to find it.

Melanie: So that's the moral of our story.

Shawn: Hey, we're in a magazine! That's like that Elephant & Piggie book you gave me to read.

Melanie: He *can* be taught! And for once, I'm getting the last word. ↪

The People on the Bus . . .

Louisiana Program Targets Community Literacy

JAMIE GAINES

Librarians gather after the first CPPL City Bus Outreach Program ride. *Pictured left to right*: Judy Davidson, CPPL public information officer; Melanie Pesson, program coordinator; Pam Edwards, associate librarian for Public Services; our driver; and Delores Guillory, Carnegie branch manager.

Some programs beg to be repeated again and again . . . and again . . . which is the case for the City Bus Outreach Program hosted by the Calcasieu Parish (La.) Public Library. Targeting the most vulnerable population—children and their families living in poverty or with disabilities—the City Bus Program places librarians, books, and library resources on city buses.

But like most, this library program depends on volunteers and donations to complete two rides a year for two hours each trip. In an effort to expand the program to four rides, longer hours targeting high-traffic commute times, and additional resources for bus riders, the library applied for the Light the Way: Library Outreach to the Underserved Grant sponsored by Candlewick Press and administered by the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) Library Service to Special Population Children and Their Caregivers Committee. While our library didn't win, we believe it was a contender.

I'm a city girl. Born and raised in New Orleans, I swam in cement ponds, used public transportation (both bus *and* streetcar), and attended elementary school next door to a public library. When I moved to the predominantly rural southwest corner of Louisiana, I was surprised to learn that all pools weren't manmade—and that bus passes and library cards didn't hold prominent places in everyone's wallet.

No longer a member of the commuter tribe, who greeted each day by queuing up with exact change and book in hand, I morphed into the proverbial soccer mom with 2.3 vehicles, who listened to books on tape between work, carpools, and after-school activities.

It was a full year before I even knew there was a bus stop near my new home. It took joining the staff of the Calcasieu Parish Public Library (CPPL)—and Melanie Pesson's City Bus Outreach Program—for me to learn the routes.

Pesson, a program coordinator for CPPL, celebrated National Library Week 2011 with a project that would supplement the system's elementary and preschool outreach programs. She specifically wanted to reach out to the region's traditionally underserved population: children and their families living in poverty or with disabilities.

The premise for the program was simple—strategically place librarians and library supporters on public buses to foster relationships with parents. While en route, staff members would share information about the system's thirteen branches, available materials, and services.

"My office is in a high-poverty area, and it was easily apparent that there are so many people who don't know about the resources that the library provides—for free! I just wanted to

Jamie Gaines is a part-time Grant Coordinator and Support Group Liaison for the Calcasieu Parish (La.) Public Library, as well as a Strategic Communication Consultant and Interpersonal Communication and Business Management Instructor at a local college.

A rider accepts a resource bag during the Calcasieu Parish Public Library's City Bus Outreach Program in April 2011.

get the word out there," said Pesson, a former teacher who also worked with a nonprofit to foster reading in low-income children.

Her nonprofit job included working with pediatricians and their staffs to ensure that every patient between birth and pre-school received a free, age-appropriate book following a well-child visit. Each parent received a bookmark reinforcing the importance of being a child's first teacher.

"We wanted children to know about books and to enjoy them, even if they chewed on them," Pesson explained. "We would tell parents, 'If they chew on the book, it's OK. Next visit, get a new book.'"

After joining CPPL, Pesson continued her early reading initiatives by collaborating with local day care centers in need of reading material. The centers can now check out one of many themed backpacks, which include books, props, and age-appropriate activities. The "insect" backpack includes nothing less than giant bugs, while the "colors" backpack is a rainbow of blocks, balls, and other kid-friendly teaching tools. The day care centers keep the backpacks for two weeks to a month, and then exchange them for another theme.

The backpacks augmented librarians' visits to day cares for storytimes, weekly storytimes at each library branch, and the monthly Fun with Fideaux, an evening dedicated to children reading to a group of ever-patient, nonjudgmental therapy dogs.

"One of my goals for the City Bus Program was to let riders know where the libraries are in relation to the bus stops," Pesson said.

While the system includes thirteen branches, only four are located in Lake Charles—the parish seat and only metropolitan area with a transit system. Only one bus route stops within a block of a branch.

"We knew that people riding the bus weren't getting to the library. This was an untapped—and captive—audience," Pesson said. "We have people who do not have cars in an area ruled by cars, with little or no money. What better place to reach them?"

To reach as many riders on as many routes as possible, Pesson joined forces with Ginette Evans, programming coordinator, and Danielle McGavock, programming supervisor, and other staff volunteers for the inaugural ride.

There were a number of programs that Pesson specifically wanted bus riders to know about. For example, the Southwest Louisiana Bar Foundation had recently begun a partnership with CPPL to offer free legal advice, and each branch had public computers, free WiFi, and a plethora of job-hunting and educational resources available for the asking.

After all, Calcasieu Parish shares the same stigma as the rest of Louisiana, a state that prides itself on its cultural and geographic diversity, abundance of outdoor recreational opportunities, and triumph over the adversity of consecutive and nearly concurrent hurricanes. Louisiana ranks second to last in the nation in "Indicators of Child Well-Being," according to the 2010 National Kids Count Data Book.[1]

In our little corner of sportsman's paradise, nearly a quarter of our children live in poverty and, according to the *National Survey of Children with Special Health Care Needs*, more than a third of our children have functional difficulties or behavioral, emotional, or developmental issues.[2]

Of the 192,678 residents in Calcasieu Parish, 17,137 are disabled children under 18 years of age, and more than 50,000 adults lack a high school diploma, are unemployed or physically disabled to the extent that it prevents employment, or suffer from major depression or recent drug use, according to the 2010 Census.[3]

Add the devastation of Hurricane Rita in 2005 and Hurricanes Gustav and Ike in 2008, and it's not surprising that many within the community were unable to move forward. "It's almost as if their lives and educational goals are stagnant," Pesson said.

The statistics were a battle cry for Pesson and her band of merry librarians.

Armed with a bus route map; exact change; various age-appropriate books, magazines, and goodie bags of bookmarks, pencils, stickers, and programs; and event and storytime information, our teams boarded different city buses. While we shared our wealth of information about the libraries, the riders shared with us.

We met students from both the community college and university, parents who commuted with their children from failing schools

A program coordinator for the Calcasieu Parish Public Library shares reading material with riders during the April 2011 City Bus Outreach Program event.

for themselves and their children, and others seeking an additional social venue, while enabling the city to provide an additional service to its customers.

In addition to the transit authority, partners in the City Bus Outreach Program included local media. A reporter from the daily paper joined us for the first ride and provided copies of the morning's edition, and the local NBC affiliate provided coverage of a subsequent event.

CPPL's City Bus Outreach Program was so successful that it was held as a National Library Card Sign-Up Month event in September 2011and again as a National Library Week event in April 2012—and staff vie for the opportunity to ride.

Ultimately it is Pesson's goal that everyone on the bus goes, "Read. Read. Read."

near home to thriving schools across town, the underemployed shuttling to or from work, those who just get on the bus and ride, and those who rely on public transportation because of a disability. (In addition to the parish para-transit service, which provides on-call, door-to-door transportation for the disabled, the city's para-transit bus rotates along the regular bus routes during the week.)

The ride was also enlightening to the city transit authority, which is researching the possibility of rerouting a bus to stop at the system's main branch. The library stop would be an asset to students, parents seeking additional programs and resources

References

1. The Annie E. Casey Foundation, "Kids Count Data Center," datacenter.kidscount.org (accessed Oct. 25, 2011).
2. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, Maternal and Child Health Bureau, *The National Survey of Children with Special Health Care Needs Chartbook 2005–2006.* (Rockville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2008).
3. U.S. Census Bureau, "2006–2010 American Community Survey," http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/22/22019lk.html (accessed Oct. 27, 2011).

Brick by Brick

LEGO®-Inspired Programs in the Library

TESS PRENDERGAST

Programs utilizing LEGO® bricks have been springing up in many children's libraries for the past few years. Why? It seems many librarians have found them to be an effective way to blend hands-on play with literacy.

Some people believe that the type of play inspired by LEGO bricks is linked to many of the same kinds of skills needed to build literacy. Such programs can be adapted to almost any library space or schedule and are great ways to meet new families, especially those with children who are reluctant readers. Additionally, LEGO provides play that grows along with the child, and within a few years, LEGO enthusiasts will be tweens, an age group that librarians have recognized as being particularly vulnerable to disengagement from reading and libraries. Teens have roles to play in this as well, as LEGO provides challenging options for teen builders who may also be keen to act as mentors in library LEGO programs for younger kids.

The popularity of the LEGO brand in children's publishing (mainly early readers) also makes it easy to connect the playtime aspect of the programs to your book collection. Libraries can promote the value of open-ended—and often cooperative—play while encouraging spatial, sequential, and problem-solving skills.

LEGO programs at public libraries have proven to be a great addition to school-age programs, making the library a favorite destination for a diverse range of kids week after week. In this article, I provide a solid rationale for offering such programs in the library, as well as ideas about how to acquire program planning ideas, booklists, and great pictures. Get building!

Children's librarians need ways to connect with all kids, and when those kids grow out of preschool storytime, offering something that appeals to them to bring them into the library regularly is ideal. However, most of us are already incredibly busy offering a wide range of programs for babies, toddlers, and preschoolers. There is only so much time in a day to plan and carry out great children's programs, and the spare time available to plan a new program is often minimal for most practitioners.

Experience over the past year has shown me that, compared to other school-age programs, LEGO programs require minimal planning and deliver maximum satisfaction. I believe that the introduction of a LEGO program can keep school-aged children coming to the library for fun, stimulation, and learning.

The link between play and literacy appears to be a subject of renewed interest in the early childhood research sphere. Many practitioners and parents firmly believe that the type of play that LEGO inspires is linked to many of the same kinds of skills needed to build literacy. For example, segmenting and learning how things fit together to create new things are features of both

*Children's Librarian **Tess Prendergast** of Vancouver, British Columbia, is pursuing a PhD in early literacy. This article is a revised version of a poster session that she presented at the ALA Annual Conference in Anaheim, California, in June 2012. Some of the content is available on the blog* LEGO in the Library *(www.legointhelibrary.wordpress .com), where she encourages others to share their library LEGO success stories.*

activities. In other words, as a child learns how to build a bunch of different things from the same pile of bricks, so too can that child learn how to make a bunch of different words from the same pile of letters! Cognitively speaking, I think these activities are similar.

Since LEGO blocks clearly inspire and allow for a wide range of play scenarios, and play is linked to literacy development, it may not be long before dedicated research is conducted that investigates some specific links between playing with LEGO and various aspects of literacy development.

Planning a LEGO Program

To begin your planning, start by talking to some of the kids in your library and community to gauge their interest in participating in a group LEGO-play program. Ask parents, caregivers, and recreation program leaders what they think of the idea. Get some LEGO-related magazines to start conversations and hear what everyone has to say.

Meanwhile, read some of the links provided in the sidebar to this article and build a solid rationale for offering a LEGO program in your own library that will meet a community need and interest. Once you have the go-ahead, look for a good timeslot (I recommend one hour) that will be easy for school-age kids to attend; late afternoons and Saturdays are good choices.

Start asking around for donations of LEGO bricks well in advance of your planned program. Both adults and teenagers might be willing to contribute some of their old blocks, so don't be hesitant to ask. Community bulletin boards and online sites such as Craigslist might also yield some generous results. If you have a Friends group or a Foundation, apply for a grant that cites the learning and social benefits of LEGO for the middle-years crowd. Once you have a large box of bricks, advertise your program through your usual community channels, especially local schools that might be willing to place a notice in their newsletters.

Running a LEGO Program

You may have to do a bit of legwork to get your program approved, acquire your bricks, and get your promotion done. However, after that, the program pretty much runs itself, and
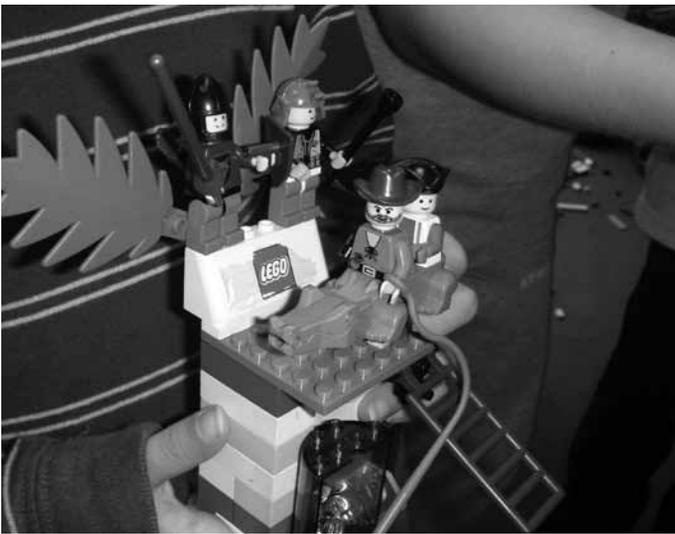
you can incorporate as much or as little structure as you wish.

For example, you can set weekly themes for your LEGO programs, such as dinosaurs, rescue personnel, transportation, or space travel. You can also start with a rousing picturebook, choosing one that has lots of visual appeal, colors, and action that will inspire amazing construction creations. Feel free to sing a few silly songs and dance around for the first few minutes so everyone feels relaxed and focussed.

I have run LEGO programs both with and without books and songs; all are equally well-received, so I recommend just doing what you think best suits the needs of the group that day. Most importantly, just open the LEGO box and watch the kids get started on their designs. Parents and caregivers may get down on the floor with the kids and build along with them, or take the opportunity to visit with you or one another, or just read a book!

Considering Inclusion

I encourage you to consider your LEGO program to be an excellent opportunity for diverse children to attend together in the spirit of the real meaning of inclusion. In the program I have been involved in, there have been participants with a wide range of cultural, linguistic, and developmental diversity. All have thrived, interacted, learned, and participated with equal joy. By all means, take steps to promote your LEGO program as being well-suited to children with special needs, but there is no need to offer separate programs for children with developmental differences.

LEGO-Based Book Collections

You can encourage aspiring architects and builders to explore print literacy by providing a wide range of LEGO-themed books at the program. Besides taking the books home to read, kids will spend time during the program hour perusing the collections featuring their favorite characters and themes.

With new titles emerging on a regular basis, consult catalogs regularly so you can add new high-interest items to your program's circulating collection as your budget allows. See list of recommended books in the sidebar.

Take Pictures!

I recommend having a digital camera on hand throughout the program. If you wish, take pictures of the participants as they work on their designs. These are good visuals to include in your reports to your library board, Friends, or Foundation; they offer financial supporters (and maybe potential donors as well) a way to see the engagement of the children.

Toward the end of each program time, ask each child to come get a picture taken with their creation. This is a great time to get them to talk about what they have accomplished in their

Learning More with LEGO® Books

Here's a brief list of recommended LEGO books for your program.

Bedford, Allan. *The Unofficial LEGO Builder's Guide*. San Francisco, Calif.: No Starch, 2005. 319p.

Beecroft, Simon, and Jeremy Beckett. *Star Wars Lego: Visual Dictionary*. London: DK, 2009. 95p.

Dolan, Hannah. *Brickbeard's Treasure*. New York: DK, 2011. 32p.

Dolan, Hannah, Elizabeth Dowsett, and DK Publishing. *LEGO Star Wars Character Encyclopedia*. London: DK, 2011. 206p.

Dowsett, Elizabeth. *LEGO Harry Potter: Building the Magical World*. New York: DK, 2011. 95p.

Easton, Marilyn, and Kenny Kiernan. *All Hands on Deck!* New York: Scholastic, 2011. 31p.

Kenney, Sean. *Cool Cars and Trucks*. New York: Holt, 2009. 32p.

———. *Cool Robots*. New York: Holt, 2010. 32p.

———. *Cool City*. New York: Holt, 2011. 32p.

Lassieur, Allison, and Dave White. *Mars Alien Attack!* New York: Scholastic, 2008. 31p.

Lipkowitz, Daniel. *The LEGO Book*. London: DK, 2009. 199p.

———. *The LEGO Ideas Book: Unlock Your Imagination*. London: DK, 2011. 198p.

Martell, Nevin, and Daniel Lipkowitz. *Standing Small: A Celebration of 30 Years of the Lego Minifigure*. London: DK, 2009. 96p.

Sander, Sonia. *Help Is on the Way!* New York: Scholastic, 2009. 31p.

———. *Fire Truck to the Rescue!* New York: Scholastic, 2009. 31p.

———. *Calling all Cars!* New York: Scholastic, 2010. 31p.

———. *All Aboard!* New York: Scholastic, 2010. 31p.

———. *Ready for Takeoff!* New York: Scholastic, 2010. 31p.

———. *3, 2, 1, Liftoff!* New York: Scholastic, 2011. 31p.

The Ultimate LEGO Book. New York: DK, 1999. 124p.

unique design. You will hear some great stories. You can either obtain addresses to email the pictures to them afterward or print them to distribute next time. Because the participants cannot keep their creations, they, and their parents, often really appreciate the photos.

Clean Up!

I recommend giving alerts at fifteen minutes and ten minutes before the program's end time. Five minutes before the program's end time, it is group clean-up time. No matter how far the bricks have spread throughout the room, five minutes is sufficient time to get it all back into the bin. A couple of small dustpans are helpful, but a lot of little fists can get those bricks safely stored in just a few minutes. I encourage the kids to select a book on their way out and tell them to come back next week.

Offering creative outlets, opportunities for making new friends, and a source of good early reading material, library LEGO programs give kids what they want (and what developmental experts will say they *need*): a chance to *play*. The literacy, language, spatial, mathematic, and other cognitive benefits of LEGO play can be explained to the parents, but just let the kids build! ↵
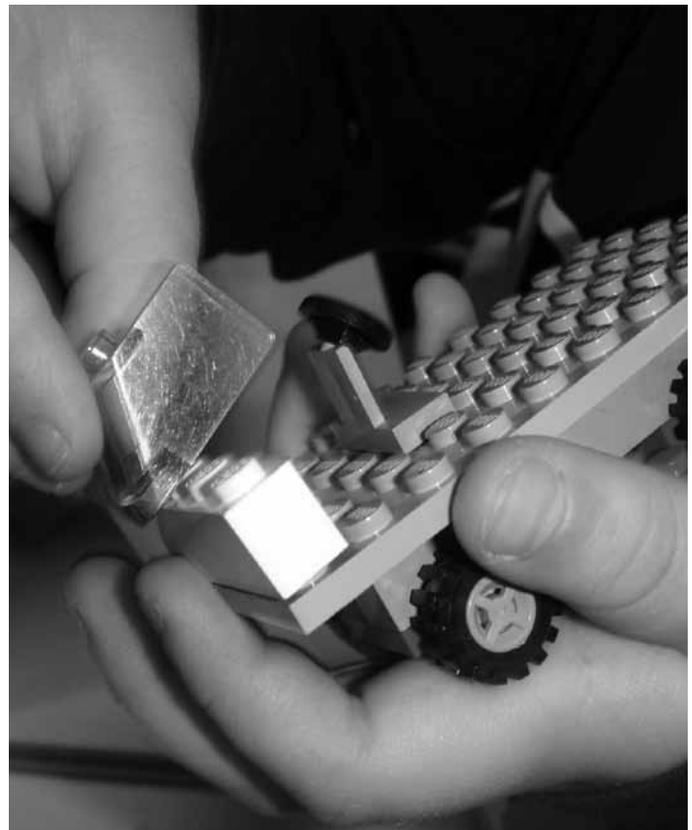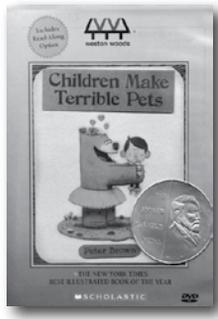
Carnegie Award Acceptance Speeches

Bringing Lucille to Life

Melissa Reilly Ellard and Paul R. Gagne

Melissa Reilly Ellard

Good morning. First let me say thank you to [chair] Martha [Seif Simpson] and members of the 2012 Andrew Carnegie committee. We can't imagine the hours you spent this past year viewing all the films you received, and we are so honored that you chose ours.

I think many of us can relate to the story *Children Make Terrible Pets*. At one time or another everyone probably has tried to convince their parents that they *really* deserve that cat, dog, rabbit, etc., and will promise to take care of it.

Dutifully, the parents explain you have to be responsible and walk the new dog every day, feed the cat, and clean up after your special new friend in all weather conditions. All the kids swear they'll take care of it and do everything themselves.

Then reality sets in. I am a dog person, and for those who know me personally, my Boston Terrier Sadie is my baby girl. To paraphrase [the book's character] Lucille, "She is the cutest critter in the whole world." But like most pet owners, I have my limits; I don't like to take her out if it's pouring rain or bitter cold outside. Fortunately for me and her, I can get my husband to do that.

This is the second Carnegie medal for a Peter Brown book that we have had the privilege to adapt, and I just want to say thank you to Peter. I really admire you for continuing to push yourself and work in different media. You create stories that touch us all. It has been fun to be part of this experience with you.

I also want to thank the animation producer David Trexler and his amazing team at Soup2Nuts. We continue to be surprised at their ability to capture that one moment that you know everyone can relate to. In this film, the manner in which they were able to capture the look on Lucille's face, particularly her eyes during Squeaker's temper tantrums. I am sure that made every parent chuckle.

In addition, I want to thank them for their dedication and patience with the multiple changes we requested while working on our sixth production together, which in the end paid off, and this award is proof of that.

We may be a small group at Weston Woods, but we have a big heart and all of us love working on these films. Linda, Paul, and I have been working at Weston Woods for more than twenty years now, and we are committed to bringing children the best.

I'd like to thank Steve Syarto, our sound engineer, for creating another brilliant soundtrack, and Linda Lee, our general manager and VP, who paves the way for our films to shine brightly.

On a personal note, I would like to thank my wonderful husband and our girl, Sadie. We both agree: "You are the best pet ever!"

Paul R. Gagne

SQUEAK!

That's the entire text of my speech. I worked on it for *hours*. But perhaps I should translate.

Good morning. Thank you, Martha, members of the 2012 Carnegie Medal selection committee, ALA and ALSC for choosing *Children Make Terrible Pets* to receive the 2012 Andrew Carnegie Medal. As some of you may be aware, a few of our films have received this honor in the past—this is our eleventh, but who's counting?—and I may have said this before, but it's worth saying again, it never gets old.

I'd like to continue along the lines of Melissa's remarks by sharing a few more details about the amazing team behind this production, starting with our remarkable narrator, Emily Eiden. We are very pleased to have Emily joining us today. *(Emily, please stand!)*

When Emily first contacted me looking for voiceover work, her samples and the fact that she had the starring role in an LA stage production of *Lily's Purple Plastic Purse* caught my attention. But, being a bit of a backyard telescope nerd,

I was particularly impressed to learn that she's one of the narrators of the planetarium show up at Griffith Observatory.

The planets must have been in some kind of alignment when she came down to the Midwinter conference in San Diego last year and we met in person. We had just learned that we'd won the Carnegie Medal for our adaptation of another Peter Brown book *The Curious Garden*.

There were two things about Emily that kind of stuck in my head. The first is that she walks with a distinct, bouncy skip in her step, almost like she's dancing. The second is that during any lulls in conversation, I'd notice that she was quietly singing to herself.

A few weeks after the Midwinter conference, a copy of *Children Make Terrible Pets* had found its way into the hands of our editorial committee. We instantly fell in love with Lucille Beatrice Bear, and Melissa proceeded to go to work negotiating an agreement for the rights while I went through the process of estimating a budget.

One of the first things we need to figure out is how long the production will be. I read the book aloud—usually very badly—trying to mentally imagine the book's illustrations as a movie while I time myself with a stopwatch. So, here I am looking at Peter's first illustration in the book, a bear walking through the forest. Well, she's wearing a pink ballet tutu, so she's *dancing* through the forest. Picturing that movie image in my head, I started to read, "One morning, Lucy was practicing her twirls." And as I was imagining her dancing, skipping, and singing to herself, I suddenly froze: dancing, skipping, and singing to herself? OH MY GOSH! Lucy is Emily Eiden in a bear suit and a pink tutu!

As I continued to read the story, I vividly imagined Emily's voice reading the story. I went into work the next day and played some of Emily's samples for Melissa, who in turn shared them with Peter; we all agreed that we'd found the perfect voice for Lucy, and here we are today.

Thank you, Emily, for doing such a great job with the narration and voices for this project. As a side note, during Jack Gantos's Newbery acceptance speech last night, Emily was very relieved that he didn't name Carol Ryrie Brink, author of the 1936 Newbery award-winning book *Caddie Woodlawn*, in his listing of Newbery winners with checkered pasts. Carol Ryrie Brink was Emily's great-grandma.

I'd also like to thank our composers, Jack Sundrud and Rusty Young, for their wonderful musical score. Jack and Rusty are members of Poco, one of my all-time favorite bands from my college days, and it has been such a pleasure to be able to work with them on a number of our productions. We loved the little theme song they did for the end credits so much that we asked them to turn that into the main melody for the rest of the score, and we even booked Emily for a second recording session just so "Lucy" could be the one to sing it!

I'd also like to thank all of our coworkers at Weston Woods, who make it a pleasure to come to work every day, and the Scholastic family for giving us such a good home. And once more, a big thank you to our vice president, Linda Lee, for her patience and support—and I think we do try her patience at times!—and most of all for fostering the kind of environment that makes it possible for us to put a lot of tender loving care into our productions.

And last, but never least, thank you to my wife, Lynn, and our daughters, Melanie and Brianna, for their tender loving care. ᓚ
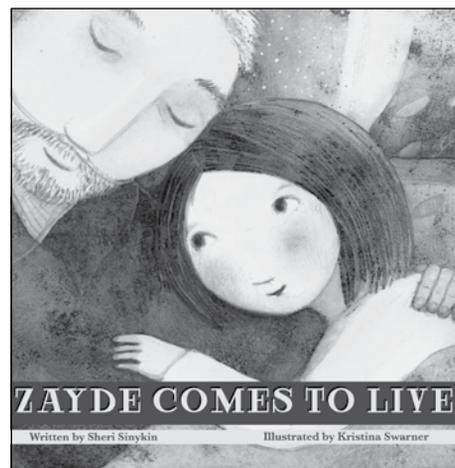
Robert F. Sibert Award Acceptance Speech

On Inspiring Parade Balloons

Melissa Sweet

One night last January, I dashed the few yards in the falling snow from my kitchen to my studio to prepare for work the next day. I was paying bills at my computer when the phone rang.

No one calls me at night, so I thought it was a telemarketer. But it was Andrew Medlar of the Sibert Committee. He told me they had chosen *Balloons Over Broadway* for this year's Sibert Medal. I thought, "Did I just use my cranky *I think you're a telemarketer* voice . . . and did he just say 'medal?'" Somehow I mustered a "thank you" to the entire committee on speakerphone. What a warm gift on a cold winter's night!

Andrew told me I could only tell my husband and the dogs. *(How did Andrew know I have dogs?!)* I raced back to my house and toasted Tony Sarg with my husband. I will never forget the joy inside my bright kitchen in contrast to the dark, snowy quiet outside.

Tony Sarg was introduced to me in another life-altering phone call.

An art director I work with described him as a brilliant illustrator, a puppeteer, and the man who invented the Macy's Parade balloons. I had the same reaction most people do—I'd never heard of him!

But there was a collection of his work in Nantucket where he once lived, and four days later, I was at the Nantucket Public Library copying newspaper clippings.

Over the next five years, I pieced together his life by talking to puppeteers, finding out the inner workings of Macy's, and even corresponding with a man in his nineties who worked for Sarg at the 1939 World's Fair. The more I researched, the more enamored I became with Sarg.

As I tried to find the story that would illustrate the essence of his genius, my editor, Ann Rider, posed a pivotal ques-

tion: Was anything ever difficult for Sarg—did he struggle in any way?
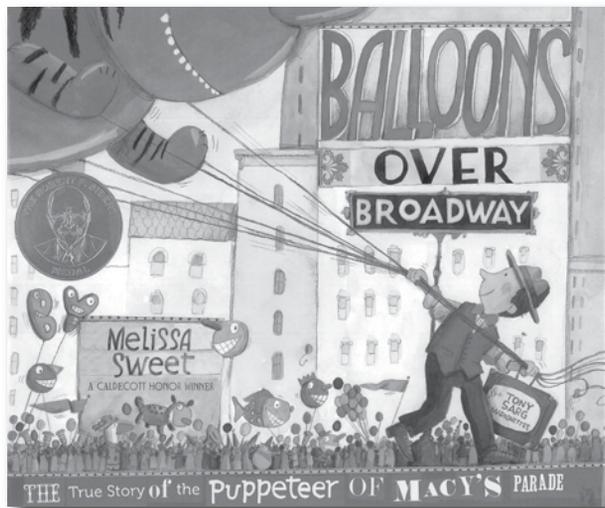
I hadn't yet considered what it was like to *be* Tony Sarg. To find out, I began making toys and puppets with the same materials Sarg would've used. My studio was mayhem! But as my work became more three-dimensional, it began to feel like Sarg's world. My publisher never questioned how tricky it might be to pull this off, but encouraged me to make the art that inspired me.

Because the final art was too heavy and delicate to ship safely, I packed my Mini Cooper to the gills and drove in a fierce rainstorm to my publisher's offices in Boston. The art director, Rachel Newborn, and the production team of Crystal Paquette and Donna McCarthy met me at the door. From there, they worked their magic.

I want to thank everyone at Houghton Mifflin Harcourt for creating a book even more beautiful than I envisioned. And most importantly, I want to thank Ann Rider. The pleasure and privilege I have in crafting a book with her is immeasurable.

Thank you Bob Sibert, Committee Chair Andrew Medlar, and the entire Sibert committee for this distinguished award. I am honored that you not only chose a book about a man who continues to light up our imaginations, but a picture-book that celebrates the creative process that inspired him. ℰ

CAL Article, Authors Prompt New LC Subject Heading

PATRICIA SARLES AND PATRICIA MENDELL

In 2010, we published an article in *Children & Libraries (CAL)* regarding children's books about being conceived via assisted reproductive technology. It included an extensive annotated bibliography of thirty-eight titles—all the books we were able to identify at that time. (The number of children's books on that topic has since doubled).

Our annotated bibliography of children's picturebooks was important because it was the most comprehensive book list published on the subject at that time. Bibliographies on this subject have been difficult to compile. One of the very first published lists was from the American Society for Reproductive Medicine Mental Health Professionals Group ASRM/MHPG compiled by Elaine Gordon, PhD., and Ellen Speyer, MFT in 2003, specifically for children created through ART (www.asrm.org/uploadedFiles/ASRM _Content/About_Us/Specialty_Societies/Professional _Groups/MHPG/MHPG_Childrens_Bibliography.pdf). It was last updated in 2007 by the MHPG Education Committee and includes books for both adults and children.

I thought, as a librarian, such a list should have been a breeze to compile. I figured I would start with ASRM's list and then search for those books in the Library of Congress (LC), see what subject headings were assigned to catalog them, and then create a new list. But the LC had no subject headings for "Donor offspring," "Children of gamete donors," or "Children of surrogate mothers," let alone subject headings for children of egg donors, sperm donors, or embryo adoption.

Having already identified a few titles about these subjects that were included in the LC, but not cataloged as such, I wrote the LC suggesting they create a new subject heading, "Donor-conceived," defined as individuals who have been created via sperm, eggs, or embryos donated by another person (a gamete donor).

I soon received a response: "We have not had the need to establish a heading for the children of sperm donors, as we have not cataloged any items that specifically focus on that topic. The existing headings have been adequate for the items that we've cataloged. We establish new headings only as they are needed for cataloging new works being added to our collection."

Not deterred, I wrote back suggesting other headings ("How about 'Artificial insemination, Human—Offspring' or 'Surrogate mothers—Offspring?'")

They responded: "Our practice has been to use headings such as 'Artificial insemination, Human' and 'Surrogate motherhood' to catalog works on this topic." That was in April 2009.

Later, Sanford Berman, noted radical librarian and Library of Congress gadfly, shared with me that he had seen our 2010 article in *CAL* and wrote to the LC suggesting that they add the subject heading "Donor offspring" because of our article and our extensive bibliography. This past June, I received a letter from Berman informing me that the LC, in March 2012, had changed their position and established a new subject heading: "Children of sperm donors."

Our one regret as professionals is that this new subject heading, "Children of sperm donors" is extremely limited in its scope, officially recognizing one group of donor children over another, instead of acknowledging all children born through donation including egg, embryo, and traditional surrogacy. "Children of donor conception" or "Donor-conceived" would have been a more accurate and inclusive subject heading.

We will continue to write to the LC sharing with them not only the books we have found in their catalog, but new ones yet to be added. We are also urging the authors of these books to send them to the LC and suggest the subject heading "Donor conceived," which will encompass all children created through a third party.

We hope that over time the LC will finally create appropriate subject headings that acknowledge the estimated one million children created with the help of donors and surrogates. This is just the beginning.

For more on the backstory to this exciting new development at the LC, visit http://yabooksfordonoroffspring.blogspot.com. &

Louisa May Alcott

The Author as Presented in Biographies for Children

HILARY S. CREW
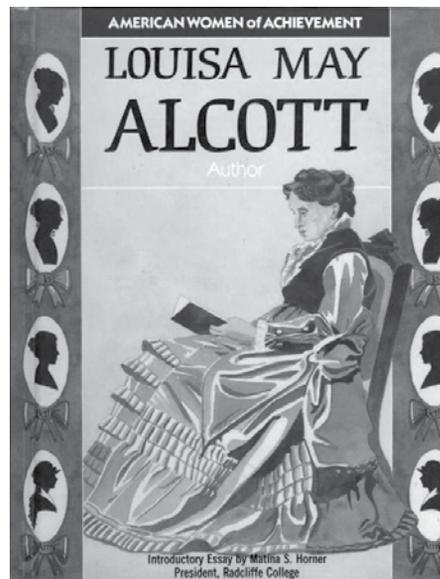
Harriet Reisen's biography, *Louisa May Alcott: The Woman Behind Little Women* and the 2009 PBS Masterpiece Theater documentary based on Reisen's script have once again focused attention on this remarkable nineteenth-century American author.[1] (The Pennsylvania native would have turned 180 this November.)

Cornelia Meigs, whose biography of Alcott received the 1934 Newbery Medal, wrote in her introduction to the Alcott Centennial Edition of *Invincible Louisa* (1968) that it had "steadily remained the fashion to read *Little Women*."[2] Still read, it is being adapted into different formats for today's readers, including a graphic-novel edition for teens that includes some of Alcott's gothic stories.[3]

The biographical associations between Alcott's own family and the March family in *Little Women* have been well discussed. Alcott wrote her life as she wished it to be represented in journals and letters (which she chose to preserve and edit) as well as in various sketches and reminiscences. Alcott is the subject of many biographies for children and teens, many of which carry the subtitle, *Author of Little Women* or *Author*. In this article, examples are drawn from sixteen biographies published for young people between 1933 and 2009 to discuss the extent to which biographers draw on Alcott's autobiographical writings, to demonstrate how biographers' evaluations of Alcott's writings have changed over time, and to illustrate the contexts in which biographers choose to present Alcott and her writing. Biographies were chosen that represent a variety of dates and formats.

Alcott as Child Writer: Autobiographical Sources

"Monday 29th—I rose at half past 4 and bathed and dressed and had my singing lesson."[4]

From when she was a young girl, Alcott wrote extensively about her experiences and feelings in her journals, letters, and poetry. In her introduction to Joel Myerson's and Daniel Shealy's edited collection, *The Journals of Louisa Alcott*, published in 1989, Madeleine Stern comments that by the age of ten, "Louisa had already begun searching for her self, analyzing her self, describing her self."[5]

Her mother Abba Alcott recognized that journal writing was important to her daughter. Eleven-year-old Louisa wrote in one

Hilary S. Crew *is a former Associate Professor at Kean University, New Jersey. She has worked in public and school libraries and has published articles and books in the field of youth literature including* Is It Really Mommie Dearest? Daughter Mother Narratives in Young Adult Fiction *(Scarecrow, 2000) and* Donna Jo Napoli: Writing with Passion *(Scarecrow, 2010).*

journal entry that she liked her mother to write in her "book." Her mother's written reply includes the comment, "I like to have you make observations about our conversations and your own thoughts. It helps you to express them and to understand your little self. Remember, dear girl that a diary should be an epitome of your life."[6]

The fragments that remain of Alcott's childhood diary also include poems, letters from her mother, examples of school lessons, and a record of what she was reading. It is a unique primary source for biographers writing about Alcott.

Entries from Alcott's diary and journals first appeared in Ednah Cheney's seminal *Louisa May Alcott: Life, Letters, and Journal*s (1889), where they are interwoven with Cheney's biographical narrative.[7] But, as Stern explains, Cheney omitted material that she deemed unimportant or that "reflected poorly on her subject."[8]

Biographers now have easy access to all of Alcott's journal entries (except those that were destroyed by Alcott or lost). Her letters are also available in Myerson's and Shealy's *Selected Letters of Louisa Alcott*.[9]

Alcott's idealized memories of her childhood are found in "Recollections of My Childhood," published posthumously in *The Youth's Companion*, May 24, 1888. Alcott also wrote about incidents in her childhood in "Poppy Pranks," a sketch in the sixth volume of *Aunt Jo's Scrap-Bag*.[10] "Transcendental Wild Oats" is her satirical account of the Fruitlands experiment in 1843.[11] Other primary materials include letters and journals by her father, Amos Bronson Alcott, in which he meticulously recorded Louisa's development as a child,[12] and personal accounts by those who knew Louisa.[13] The following section focuses on the extent to which these rich sources are acknowledged in biographies for young people.

Cheney's work has been, and continues to be, an influential source for biographers of Alcott. In her Newbery Medal acceptance speech, Meigs acknowledges her love of Cheney's work, which she had "read over and over again through [her] growing years,"[14] and it is listed as one of her sources in her biography.

Before Meigs' biography, Cheney's book had been the only comprehensive source of Alcott's life and writing for adults and children alike. May Lambert Becker comments that Meigs' biography provides children with a book that can be "read more readily and rapidly" than Cheney's.[15] What distinguishes Meigs' biography from later biographies is that Meigs "personally" acknowledges "verbal information" from the daughter-in-law of Anna Alcott Pratt (Louisa's sister) and others closely connected to the Alcott family.[16]

Meigs, however, does not quote directly from Alcott's childhood diary (available in Cheney's work) but rather paraphrases and interprets her writing so that it illumines the character of the young Louisa. Anne T. Eaton writes of Meigs' "imaginative understanding" that enables her to bring Louisa to life.

Meigs, argues Eaton, "interprets *Invincible Louisa* herself," showing "why her life and writing took the course they did

and explains the quality that the reader feels underlying all her books."[17] But Meigs' biography, like Cheney's, presents an idealistic portrait of Louisa and glosses over many of the traumas and difficulties of Alcott and her family.

Jean Brown Wagoner's *Louisa Alcott: Girl of Old Boston* (1943),[18] similar to other early biographies in the Bobbs-Merrill series Childhood of Famous Americans, is a fictionalized narrative with inventive dialogue and truth-stretchers presented by an anonymous narrator. The fictional narrative serves the purpose of creating a moral story for youngsters, especially girls, who are expected to change from tomboys to responsible young women.

There is little space devoted to celebrating Alcott as a writer. Even in the final chapter, "Louisa the Writer," Wagoner only briefly refers to *Little Women, Little Men, and Jo's Boys* reserving most of the chapter to Alcott's nursing experience in the Civil War. Her emphasis is on how Alcott was not changed by the money and fame she received for she "shared with others all the good things of her life. The lessons she had learned as a little girl were not forgotten."[19] Wagoner does not provide information about her sources nor does she list Alcott's novels published for young people.

Despite significant changes, characteristics of Wagoner's biography persist in selected biographies of Alcott for younger readers. Fictionalization is retained as a narrative strategy in Beatrice Gormley's *Louisa May Alcott: Young Novelist* (1999)—also in The Childhood of Famous Americans series.[20]

Gormley, Wagoner, and other biographers draw on a canon of stories about Alcott's childhood. These includes her rescue from the "Frog Pond," her running away as a small child and her subsequent rescue by a town-crier who finds her with her head resting on a large dog, the "plummy cake" story, descriptions of the plays in the Concord barn, and Alcott's using the tail feathers of hens to make dolls' clothes. It is difficult in Wagoner's narrative to sort fact from fiction but it is not clear that these anonymously narrated stories have their source in Alcott's autobiographical writings.

Even in Yona Zeldis McDonough's recent picturebook biography (2009),[21] there is no indication that Alcott's rescue from the "Frog Pond" by an African American boy and the runaway story are taken from Alcott's written reminiscences that she wrote later in life in *Youth's Companion*, a literary magazine for young people—a fact, it would seem appropriate and interesting for children to know.

In *The Story of Louisa May Alcott: Determined Writer* (1996), Marci Ridlon McGill does at least inform readers that these stories originate from Alcott's "earliest memories."[22] She does not reference any primary sources but provides, as do many biographers, a list of other biographies for children and young adults.

While biographers link Alcott's writing to events in her life, a persistent problem is the absence of references to sources. Examples are biographies by Gormley and McDonough. McDonough

provides a page of quotes from Alcott's writings, but children will have to guess exactly from where they are taken.

Another problem is the reliance on secondary rather than primary sources. In Elizabeth Silverthorne's 2002 biography, her resources are all secondary resources, including biographies by Cheney, Martha Saxton, and Madeleine Stern, as well as Meigs' work, despite the fact that she lists the collected editions of Alcott's letters and journals in a bibliography of Alcott's works.[23]

Certainly, biographers can, and do, select snippets from secondary sources that are not always found in other biographies for young people, but a reliance on secondary sources can also result in the perpetuation of previous biographers' value judgments, a repetitive litany of quotes, points made, and happenings resulting in similar, and usually, more idealistic representations of Alcott's life.

An increase in the use of primary sources is evident in Amy Ruth's *Louisa Alcott* (1999), Karen Warrick's *Louisa May Alcott: Author of Little Women* (2000), and Susan Aller's *Beyond Little Women* (2004).[24] Ruth's extensive bibliography of primary and secondary resources is especially useful for young people who wish to conduct further research.

Given the emphasis placed on diary-writing for children, it seems fitting that biographers would highlight the importance of journal-writing for the Alcott family and for Louisa Alcott in particular. In Christin Ditchfield's biography (2005), a page is devoted to the Alcott family's practice of keeping journals.[25] Since the publication of biographies by Meigs and Wagoner, biographers have included, in varying degrees, quotes and passages from Alcott's diary so that readers have some sense of Alcott's own thoughts and feelings about her girlhood and writing.

Selected passages frequently include the diary entry that begins, "A very strange and solemn feeling came over me . . . " in which Alcott describes how "she felt God" as "never before" and Alcott's first poem, "To the First Robin," written when she was eight years old.

Two works that offer younger readers the fuller experience of reading Louisa's diary are *Louisa May Alcott: Her Girlhood Diary* (1993), edited by Cary Ryan, and *The Girlhood Diary of Louisa May Alcott, 1843–1846* (2001), edited by Kerry A. Graves.[26]

Ryan brings together Alcott's "diary entries, letters, and poems" reprinted from sources that include manuscripts in the Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cheney's work, and *The Journals of Louisa May Alcott*. She retains the original spelling, stylistic inconsistencies, and punctuation of Alcott's entries, connecting them in a narrative in which she interweaves more details about the Alcott family using quotes from her such as Bronson Alcott's journals. Chapters begin with appropriate passages from the 1915 edition of *Little Women*, which, Ryan explains, "most faithfully reproduces Louisa's own text."[27]

Ryan's work is an excellent example of how Alcott's diary and writing can be presented for children in an accessible and scholarly form that illuminates Alcott's life. Graves constructs a different reading experience by embedding Alcott's diary entries into a documentary-style format that includes text boxes and photographs that provide information on topics such as slavery, the Shakers, *Pilgrim's Progress*, and *Little Women*. Activities such as pressing flowers and writing a diary are also included.

Using Primary Sources

The examples below illustrate how primary sources can be used to reinforce the associations made between Alcott's writings and her personal life. Alcott's journal entries and letters document her lifelong love for the theater and its influence on her writing. Biographies reference the plays that Alcott wrote and acted with her sisters during her childhood, including "The Witch's Curse," accompanied by some descriptions of costumes and scenery. Yet Katherine Owens Peare, whose biography of Alcott was published in 1964,[28] is the only biographer to list as one of her resources *Comic Tragedies*, written by Louisa and Anna, which is now available online.[29] The book with Anna's foreword and the scripts for six plays is a treasure-trove for biographers and interested young readers alike.

The use of primary sources can influence the perspective from which a biographer writes. In her introduction to her biography published in 1991 for young adults, Norma Johnston refers to the publication of Alcott's letters and journals from which "we learned that Louisa May Alcott's family life had not been as picture-perfect as it had seemed." Johnston, drawing and quoting from this material and from Bronson Alcott's journals, writes about the Alcott family as a "dysfunctional family" that "survived as a loving family unit and as individuals of distinction, in spite of poverty, illness of body and mind, love and losses, and traumas that left long lasting stress."[30]

Primary resources enliven oft-repeated stories. Ruth, like Johnston, does not gloss over the difficulties of Alcott's life, pointing out that Alcott probably suffered from malnutrition as well as chronic illnesses during her time at Fruitlands—a utopian community developed by her father and Charles Lane. She makes visible Alcott's later attitude toward Bronson Alcott's and Lane's experiment by integrating quotes from Alcott's autobiographical satire, "Transcendental Wild Oats," into her text and by explaining how the characters "Abel Lamb," "Sister Hope Lamb," and "Dictator Lion," relate to Bronson and Abba Alcott and to Charles Lane, respectively.[31] Alcott's essay is included in with other selections from her writings in *Louisa May Alcott: An Intimate Anthology*, which is an appropriate collection for young adults.[32]

Alcott as Professional Writer: Contradictions and Evaluations

Alcott's journals and letters are a record of the development of a professional writer. She noted her progress as a writer, made evaluative comments about her writing, and meticulously recorded her royalties. Stern points out that Alcott's "development as a professional writer was based in large measure upon the ability to assess the demands of publishers, the tastes of readers."[33]

Alcott reveals in journals and letters her contradictory feelings about the romantic tales she wrote and published under A. M. Barnard. In one journal entry dated "*June, July, August,*" (1862), Alcott writes, "I enjoy romancing to suit myself; and though my tales are silly, they are not bad; and my sinners always have a good spot somewhere. I hope it is good drill for fancy and language, for I can do it fast; and Mr. L. [Frank Leslie, editor of *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*] says my tales are so 'dramatic, vivid, and full of plot,' they are just what he wants."[34]

It is also clear from Alcott's many detailed records of royalties and sales in her journals that earning the money needed to support herself and her family was a dominant concern. When she began writing children's books, Alcott was conscious of a divide between writing novels such as *Moods, Work*, and *A Modern Mephistophele*s for an adult audience and writing for a child audience. Her letters reveal her ambiguity.

In answer to one letter-writer praising *Little Women*, she avers that she would "gladly write this sort of story altogether, but unfortunately, it does n't [sic] pay as well as rubbish, a mercenary consideration which has weight with persons who write not from the inspiration of genius but of necessity." [35]

Yet she also notes in her journal, "January, February 1877," that she had enjoyed writing *A Modern Mephistopheles* (a Gothic thriller that draws on Goethe's *Faust*) for she was "tired of providing moral pap for the young."[36]

In recapping her career for an aspiring woman writer who asks for advice, Alcott tells her plainly that she does not "enjoy writing 'moral tales' for the young," but does it "because it pays well."[37]

Leonard Marcus argues that Alcott would have been happier if her novel *Moods* had had a similar success and that she "welcomed" the success of *Little Women* "only inasmuch as it had allowed her to fulfill what she took to be her duty to her family."[38]

Anita M. Vickers argues that her decision to "reprint and acknowledge authorship" of Alcott's Gothic thrillers *A Modern Mephistopheles* and *A Whisper in the Dark* (1887) is also evidence of the author's "desire to be known as more than a writer of children's literature." [39] In what ways are these tensions treated in biographies for young people?

A biography, Betty Carter maintains, is "as much a product of the times in which it is written as it is of the times and lives it portrays."[40] This is especially visible when we look at how attitudes have changed toward Alcott's writing in biographies for youth.

In her introduction to the Alcott centennial edition of *Invincible Louisa*, Meigs makes no secret of her disdain for Alcott's "exotic tales." She argues that Louisa, in her determination to "take care

of her family" through her writing, "pushed herself too hard" and followed "the line of least resistance" in writing what she called "'necessity stories" that were "full of wildly romantic and impossible adventures, for which she was paid not much more than a pittance." Meigs argues that Alcott saw that they were "ineffective and artificial and did not want them to be republished." Writing *Little Women* allowed Alcott to enter "a new field of writing far removed from the lurid romance which had tended to be in vogue before."[41]

Meigs' judgmental attitude toward some of Alcott's writing for an adult audience can also be discerned in the main text of her biography. Alcott, she writes, was despondent after the success of *Moods* had passed and said she would go back to writing her "'rubbishy tales for they paid best'" and she could not "starve on praise.'" This, remarks Meigs, "was a belief unworthy of her, unworthy of her real powers, of her father's principles, of Emerson's teaching."[42]

Meigs judges *Hospital Sketches* to be "rapidly and even carelessly written, being for the most part, actual letters written during the brief periods of her nursing. Perfection of style was nothing and vividness was everything in the light of the purpose, as she wrote." Meigs acknowledges, however, that they were "so alive and so full of just what everyone longed to know, that they reached a "broader circle of readers" than when Alcott first serialized the letters in *The Commonwealth* (an antislavery newspaper). Alcott, herself, she remarks, "thought very little" of her "sketches."[43]

In reference to *Little Women*, Meigs believed that Alcott had now "begun to see her work in its proper light; she understood also that just such stories were needed for young readers instead of the sentimental and tragic tales with which their minds were usually fed."[44] Meigs saw this "genuine and familiar" family story[45] as an excellent example of literature for young people. But she also saw it as a representation of the Alcott family life that she idealizes in her biography. She makes it clear to her readers that it is for *Little Women* and her novels for young people that Alcott should be praised and remembered. [45]

The changing opinion toward Alcott's melodramas is seen in Johnston's 1991 biography of Alcott published thirteen years after the 1968 centenary edition of *Invincible Louisa*. Johnston refers to those traits and abilities that had prepared Alcott to be a professional writer, including her "voracious reading," her "perseverance and the work ethic," and her "gift for drama," then lists the themes that Alcott wrote about in her stories for her melodramas, including "suicide," "insanity," "passion," dead and "stillborn children," and the "victimization of women, and the power of a woman's fury." Alcott wrote, Johnston comments, what she knew about. She was not the only author "writ-

ing melodramas about these subjects," but she "had lived with them." Alcott had gone without food and clothing. She knew the evils of festering slums, and the horrors of slavery."[46]
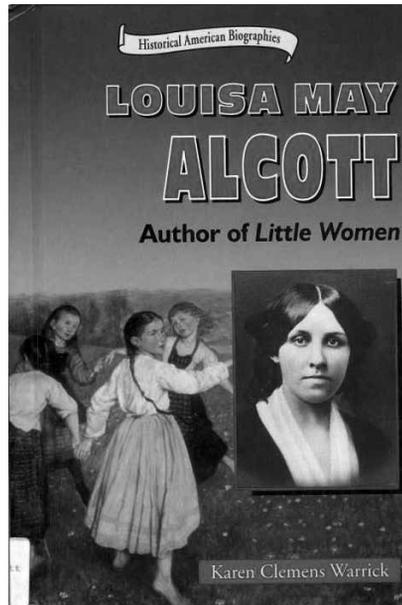
Warrick's summation of Alcott as a writer represents the sea change of opinion that has occurred in selected children's biographies since Meigs. Warrick notes in her biography (2000) that "Louisa May Alcott had sometimes been criticized for not reaching her full potential as a writer, because scholars thought she 'only' wrote for children. Finally her immense talent and versatility were recognized." Alcott "could write charming tales for children and pen dark tales peopled with villains, vengeful women, blood, and violence."[47]

Biographies now acknowledge, in different degrees, the range and sheer volume of writing that Alcott produced during her lifetime ranging from a few standard titles in biographies for younger children to a wider spectrum in biographies by Carol Greene (1984) and Gormley (1999).[48]

Hospital Sketches, *Moods*, and *Work* are the most frequently mentioned titles of her works written for adults. Surprisingly, Kathleen Burke's biography for young adults (1988) does not make reference to the discovery of Alcott's stories published under the pseudonym of A. M. Barnard, discovered by Leona Rostenberg and Stern in 1942, but biographies for young adults from the 1990s do include this information.[49] Warrick provides the fullest account of the discovery of Alcott's "other" writing life.

Ditchfield (2005) closes her biography with the boxed section, "Behind a Mask," in which she explains that Alcott wrote stories under pen names and informs readers that these stories are now available in collections under Alcott's own name. However, a list of Alcott's works, whether for young people or adults, is not provided.[50] In fact, it is the exception rather than the rule that a full list of Alcott's novels for either adults or children is provided in these bibliographies.

There are only a few references regarding the tension experienced by Alcott in writing for both young people and adults other than references to Alcott's "rubbishy tales." Ruth states that Alcott "preferred writing for adults" and "continued to write for children because her stories were so popular and profitable."[51]

Aller writes in her biography that Alcott was "growing tired of providing, as she put it, moral pap for the young" and refers to her anonymously written "sensational" novel, *A Modern Mephistopheles*, which "is filled with scenes of corruption, drugs, and forbidden love." She would not have dared, Aller states, to have written "such a story under her own name!"[52]

Alcott: A Woman Writer in the Nineteenth Century

"I have at last got the little room I have wanted so long, and am very happy about it," Alcott writes after she and the family are settled back in Concord at Hillside House.[53] Well before Virginia Woolf wrote *A Room of her Own* in 1929, Alcott recognized that,

to write, she needed space and time set apart from the work and care she expended on the family. This tension is visible in her journal entries, where she expresses the pull between being a dutiful daughter who earned money to support her family and cared for them when in need and her own need for time alone in which to write.

"Mother sick, did little with my pen," she writes in her journal in September 1866.[54] In a genre that is recommended for use in school curricula to promote moral development and to convey "social values and expectations,"[55] it is not surprising that biographers of Alcott's life for children and young adults focus on Alcott as an exemplar of a young woman who dedicated herself to supporting her family from an early age Burke, for example, makes reference to the fact that Alcott was continually "torn between the desire to take care of her family and the need to be independent."[56] Writing from a more feminist stance, Burke provides more information than found in most biographies about the expectations and limitations of women in Alcott's time.

Biographers tell an almost uniform story of how Alcott achieved her objectives through her work as a seamstress, teacher, and finally, as a writer. In her introduction to the 1968 edition of *Invincible Louisa*, Meigs explains that in a time when it was "considered little short of a disgrace" for women to work, teaching was the only profession deemed as respectable[57]—a point taken up in many biographies.

Two episodes that are linked and repeated in biography after biography illustrate the difficulties that Alcott faced. The first is her experience of working as a servant for a Dedham lawyer and being paid four dollars for seven weeks labor, which she later wrote about in "How I Went Out to Service: A Story" (1874). The second is the snub she received when she first took the manuscript for this essay to James T. Fields, editor of *Atlantic Monthly*, who told her that she should "stick to her teaching."[58]

Biographers love to discuss Alcott's independence as a professional writer and her unmarried status along with conjectures about her suitors. They also love to describe her experience of writing in a "vortex." However, they pay less attention to placing or evaluating Alcott in context with other writers of her time.

It is clear from Alcott's letters and journals that she was acquainted with the foremost literary figures of her time. Meigs, more than most biographers, provides a sense of the literary and intellectual circles within which Alcott moved by mentioning the other authors with whom Thomas Niles (editor of *Little Women*) worked, including Emily Dickinson, Susan Coolidge, and Helen Hunt Jackson, among others. She mentions Alcott's meeting with Henry James and with Charles Dickens, whose books she so much enjoyed. Ditchfield and Gormley provide young readers with the information that Mary Mapes Dodge and Frances Hodgson Burnett, the authors of *Hans Brinker and The Silver Skates* and *The Secret Garden*, respectively, were known to Alcott. Alcott, as Ditchfield and Gormley point out, corresponded with Dodge regarding the serialization of novels in *St. Nicholas*. Mentioned more frequently is Alcott's editorship of the children's magazine *Merry's Museum*.

As Beverly Lyon Clark points out, Alcott became very popular soon after the publication of *Little Women*; Clark quotes from an 1880 *New York Times* article that stated that she was regarded as one of "the most popular and successful literary woman in America." However, serious critical attention to Alcott waned, and she was "dismissed" as being "sentimental" and as a writer for children—until the discovery of her previously unknown works and feminist scholarship brought a new appreciation of her work.[59] More recent biographies for youth partly reflect this new scholarship. However, Ditchfield's argument in her 2005 biography that Alcott wrote "under pen names, in part, because of a gender bias" because readers "had preconceived ideas about the 'sappy' types of stories" women were writing seems to be based on former critical attitudes toward sentimental novels by women authors such as Susan Warner, whose *Wide, Wide World* is mentioned by Jo in *Little Women*. Ditchfield goes on to state that women were not interested in reading these kind of stories and that the "use of a masculine pen name gave an author more credibility and increased her readership."[60]

This kind of simplistic analysis does not take into account the popularity of sentimental and gothic novels or Nina Baym's point that women readers came to "dominate the reading public" after the Civil War.[61] Alcott was certainly reticent about writing her "lurid" tales under her own name, but Stern reports that in one of her conversations Alcott explained that she was a "wretched victim to the respectable traditions of Concord."[62]

Does A. M. Barnard indicate a male pseudonym? There is need for a more in-depth discussion of the literary landscape in which Alcott worked, especially regarding novels written for upper grades. Ruth (1999) puts Alcott's success in the context of an increase in mass-produced printed materials and increased rates of literacy,[63] but, as discussed later, children's biographers put more emphasis on placing Alcott and her writings in the context of social history.
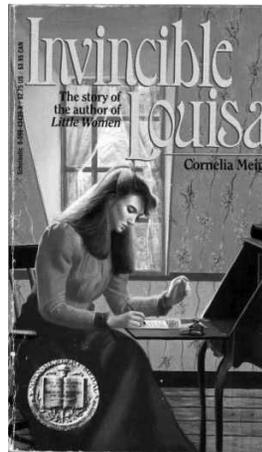
A Mother's or a Father's Daughter?

The wide range of her reading preferences, including novels, poetry, history, and essays, are recorded in Alcott's girlhood diary and in her journal. John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*—a book passionately loved by Bronson Alcott—is frequently mentioned by biographers who note its connection to *Little Women*.

Bronson's interest in his daughter's writing is acknowledged in Alcott's journal, in which she notes, for example, that it was her father who took her manuscript *Flower Fables* to publisher George W. Briggs. There is, however, a discernible difference in the representation of Bronson Alcott in these biographies.

In biographies by Ruth and Johnston, this difference is shown through their opinions regarding the influence of Alcott's parents on her success. Bronson's support of Louisa as a writer is acknowledged in Ruth's biography, who argues that "the unreli-

able and stubborn Bronson was partly responsible" for Louisa's "success." She argues that his "ideas for societal reforms fueled [her] imagination and "steered her pen" and that his "positions on education and women's independence found their way into [her] life and writing."[64]

Johnston, who presents the most negative view of Bronson and his effect on the family in biographies discussed in this paper, has a different view and argues that Louisa "became what she was almost in spite of—not because of—the influence of her father." She was, Johnston argues, "first and foremost, 'her mother's daughter'—Louisa May."[65]

Placing Alcott in the Context of Social Reform

Regarding Alcott's advocacy for social reform, she was both her father's and mother's daughter. As noted in all biographies, the Alcotts were passionate abolitionists and long-suffering Abba Alcott, another iconic figure in these biographies, was involved in social work and the suffrage movement.

In A Hunger for Home, Elbert writes that "Alcott's life and works demonstrate the full range of feminist concerns in the nineteenth century" and argues that her "fiction made an important contribution to popular acceptance of liberal reform institutions."[66] Alcott's biographers for young people place Alcott's life into the context of social movements of the time, such as Transcendentalism (represented by Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau) and utopian communities such as the Shakers. The links made between Alcott's life, writings, and social history form a narrative canon.

Alcott's rescue from the Frog Pond by an African American boy segues into a discourse on slavery and into Alcott's stance as an abolitionist (a link made by Alcott herself in "Recollections"). Alcott's nursing experience in the Civil War, which she wrote about later in "Hospital Sketches," often segues into additional information about the war. Ditchfield, for example, includes a chapter "Country at War."

In her introduction to the 1968 edition of Invincible Louisa, Meigs reminds readers that Alcott "emphasizes in more than one book the right of young people to independence and to the opportunity of earning it if they wish to."[67] In biographies for older readers, there are now more examples of how Alcott used her novels to advocate for such issues as abolition, educational reform (especially for girls), and women's suffrage. Burke, for example, draws attention to Alcott's friendship with Lucy Stone and to the articles that Alcott wrote for The Woman's Journal, which was devoted to women's rights.

Alcott as Autobiographical Writer

Although there has been an increase in quoted materials from Alcott's autobiographical writings, some biographers do not

acknowledge sources or rely on secondary sources. Alcott constructed herself in her journals, letters, and sketches, but she is too often hidden behind the mask of anonymous narration in texts reconstructing her life in biographies for youth. Too often, her difficulties are ignored or glossed over in biographies for young children, while her life is constructed through a repetitive canon of events produced through similar narrative patterns and associations. Meigs' and Johnston's biographies, although far apart in terms of style and approach reflecting, in part, the different time-frame in which they were written, offer more holistic representations.

In biographies for youth, Alcott is summed up as the beloved role model who gave us *Little Women* and who had achieved what she had set out to do. Approaching Alcott's life from the perspective of how she represented herself through her autobiographical writings would allow young people to hear more of her voice and thus enable them to gain a greater insight into the contradictions that she experienced as a writer. Larger questions could be raised about autobiography and self-representation regarding how she shaped her childhood memories and ambitions for an audience of young readers. There has been a significant change over time in biographers' attitudes toward Alcott's "blood and thunder" stories, but, because Alcott's life is predominantly placed in a socioeconomic context, less emphasis is placed on an evaluation of Alcott and on the literary landscape of her time—a perspective that would enable young people to better understand her position as a woman writer in the nineteenth century. &

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More than Just Books

Children's Literacy in Today's Digital Information World

DENISE E. AGOSTO

Friends, *left to right*, Jordan Stein, Leo Riesenbach, Rachel Agosto-Ginsburg, and David Agosto-Ginsburg explore an e-book together.

Courses in children's literature have long been mainstays of library education, and as a result, most children's librarians are well versed in the importance of encouraging children to read traditional paper books to support their developing literacy. Paper books still make up the majority of most children's collections in public and school libraries, and many of today's children are still avid readers of paper books.

However, it is important for children's librarians to realize that in today's digital world, most children and teens spend many more hours per day online than they do reading traditional paper books. The average for youth ages eight to eighteen is to spend *seven and a half hours per day* online.[1] That's about as much time as they spend at school each day, and when we figure in weekends and holiday breaks, it works out to much more time spent online per year than in school. The only other activity that occupies as much of young people's time is sleeping.

If children are spending so much time online, what does this mean for their literacy development? Is time spent online taking away from time children would otherwise spend reading books and developing crucial literacy skills, or do today's children develop literacy skills in different ways?

This article will explain how the concept of literacy is changing for today's children, and it will explain how children's use of digital information resources, such as online social networks, virtual worlds, and e-books, actually contributes to their development of both traditional literacy skills and new literacy skills.

The Changing Nature of Reading

Although many adults are quick to condemn time spent online as wasted cognitive time, it doesn't necessarily mean that children and teens are spending time online instead of reading. Actually, much of youths' online activities involve reading and writing, such as texting friends, surfing the web, and playing interactive online games.

However, it does mean that *the nature of reading itself is changing*. With the prevalence of online social networking (such as Facebook) and other digital interactions (such as cellphone texting), reading is becoming more and more a fundamentally social act. As Jackie Marsh explains, "Recent work indicates that young children are becoming increasingly social in their reading and writing on the Internet."[2]

As a result, children are learning to read not just from interpreting traditional paper texts, but also from engaging with digital texts, such as sending and receiving online messages and playing interactive games online with other players. Rachael Levy

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and Jackie Marsh explain that this means that modern literacy skills extend beyond interpreting and creating paper texts (traditional reading and writing skills) to interpreting and understanding a wide range of digital media as well:

> What these kinds of activities offer is the opportunity for children to be engaged in social networks with both known and unknown interlocutors and they learn, from their earliest years, what it means to be involved in the participatory culture of the new media age. There is, therefore, widespread evidence that young children are confident and competent users of a range of new technologies in the home and that, through this use, they develop understanding and knowledge relating to reading and writing on screens.[3]

Because of the great deal of time youth are spending online, the "texts" of children's educational and social lives are less likely today to be traditional printed books, newspapers, and magazines, and more likely to exist in any of a variety of digital formats. As Larson wrote,

> Contemporary transformations in digital technologies have prompted a reassessment of what literacy means; hence, the definition of what constitutes "text" is rapidly changing. Traditionally, text has been perceived as written messages and symbols in the forms of books, magazines, and newspapers. Today, text is recognized as much more than written words or images.[4]

Most of today's children are able to read and interpret a wide variety of digital texts, provided that they are first exposed to them at a young age. Based on a study of preschoolers aged three to six, Levy found that most young children were exposed to and able to read a variety of "multidimensional texts within many different contexts and settings," from websites to television shows to video clips to computer games.[5]

Levy suggests that schools need to broaden their literacy education to focus less on books and more on the wide range of texts that are prevalent in the modern multimedia world. The same can be said about the literacy education efforts of school and public libraries: it's not enough just to focus on collecting and creating programs around paper books. Library collections, programs, and services should also include a wide range of digital texts.

Online Social Networks, Virtual Worlds, and New Literacy

Most public and school libraries support children's use of databases and Internet resources for homework and other formal information-seeking tasks, but few support children's use of online social networks and virtual worlds because of the perception that the activities taking place in these environments are not educational.

Social network use, in particular, is often dismissed as a waste of children's time and an inappropriate library activity. Nonetheless, many children do choose to spend time using social networks. Facebook, in particular, is popular with elementary school children. Even though users must officially be thirteen or older to create accounts, as of May 2011 an estimated 7.5 million Facebook users worldwide were under thirteen, with more than 5 million registered users younger than ten.[6]

It is important for children's librarians to understand why children use online social networks. Anne Collier and Larry Magid explained that children use them for the following reasons:

- Socializing or "hanging out" with their friends, for the most part, friends at school

- Day-to-day news about their friends, acquaintances, relatives, and peer groups

- Collaborating on schoolwork

- Validation or emotional support

- Self-expression and the identity exploration and formation that occurs in adolescent development

- What sociologists call "informal learning," or learning outside of formal settings such as school, including learning social norms and social literacy

- Learning the technical skills of the digital age, which many businesspeople feel are essential to professional development

- Discovering and exploring both academic and future professional interests

- Learning about the world beyond their immediate home and school environments

- Civic engagement—participating in causes that are meaningful to them.[7]

It is also important to understand that social network use can contribute to children's literacy development. For the most part, interacting in these environments involves reading, writing, and building technical skills, crucial aspects of literacy for today's youth. As Belinha De Abreu explains, "It is still difficult for some parents and educators to recognize that new media environments fall under the umbrella of 'literacy.' Besides enabling teens to work on their reading and writing skills, many of these technological platforms also provide for creating, collaborating, and much more."[8]

While much of the language used in online social networking environments is nonstandard language—including slang, abbreviations, and phonetic spelling—so-called text language forms a significant part of modern youth communication, and learning how to understand it is an important part of becoming literate in today's highly networked society.[9] Learning text language and other related new forms of language enables youth to participate fully in the modern communication world.

Virtual worlds are also increasingly popular with children. Virtual world environments are "online simulations of offline spaces [that] involve the use of an avatar to represent individual users."[10] Popular virtual worlds for children include websites such as Club Penguin, Barbie Girls, Neopets, and Webkinz. As is the case with online social networks, much of children's use of virtual worlds involves reading, writing, and building technical skills. Participation in virtual environments requires registration and fees, so they are not appropriate resources for most public and school libraries. However, it is important to recognize why children enjoy using these websites and the possible educational outcomes of their use.

Several researchers have investigated issues of literacy and children's use of virtual worlds. For example, Marsh studied children ages five to eleven as they engaged in out-of-school use of virtual worlds.[11] The children tended to use virtual environments for extended contact with peers known first in the offline world. The author concluded that children's online literacy-development practices are tied to their social development practices, and that we must think of literacy and socialization as occurring together:

> Through repetitive and ritualistic uses of literacy practices, such as the sending and receiving of postcards and the synchronous use of particular words, emoticons, and phrases, the children created a set of practices that served to build social cohesion and thus develop a stable social order. This is not to suggest that all literacy practices served this purpose; there were numerous instances in the data overall in which children used literacy for other purposes, such as individual pleasure or entertainment."[12]

These findings indicate that literacy skills—writing, reading, and interpreting graphics—are crucial for participating in virtual worlds, and that children playing in virtual worlds are not just wasting time, but learning important traditional literacy and newer media literacy skills.

Another educational benefit of children's use of digital texts of all types is increased creativity due both to the fluid, nonlinear formats of most digital texts and to their multimedia components. As Cathy Burnett explains, "In considering the significance of this for the early years, it is worth noting that studies of children's interactions with digital texts in informal settings have highlighted the playfulness, agency, and creativity with which very young children may engage with digital texts."[13]

E-Books and Children's Literacy Development

Few school or public libraries provide children with access to online social networks and virtual worlds, both because of concerns about their educational value as well as privacy and security issues. Instead, libraries can provide children with access to e-books as a middle ground between traditional paper books and interactive online environments. E-book use promotes both the traditional literacy benefits of paper books and

the new media literacy benefits of digital texts described above, especially building technical skills and increased creativity.

There are many types of e-books, including those read on hand-held dedicated devices such as Barnes and Noble's Nook or Amazon's Kindle, as well as web-based e-books that are read on computers, electronic notebooks, and cell phones.

E-books are increasingly popular with adult readers, but the children's e-book market has been somewhat slower to take off, partly because fewer children have access to the hardware needed for digital reading and to the disposable income needed to purchase e-book readers. Still, the children's e-book market is growing, and many public and school libraries are getting into the children's e-book business.[14]

Before libraries jump too far into the business of providing e-books for children, it's prudent first to consider the impact of e-books on children's reading development and on their broader literacy practices. Researchers are just beginning to investigate the impact of e-books on children's emerging literacy. As Larson explains, "Although early forms of electronic books have been available for almost two decades, studies examining how students interact with and respond to e-book texts are still few, and results are somewhat conflicting."[15]

Most of the limited research to date indicates that children tend to be enthusiastic users of e-books, and that advanced e-book features are useful in promoting early literacy skills. For example, in a study of seventeen second graders' use of Kindle books, Larson found that children take frequent advantage of advanced functions while reading, especially adjusting font sizes, accessing the built-in dictionary, and using the text-to-speech feature to listen to unfamiliar words or to reread difficult passages.[16]

Other e-book features that support literacy development include keyword searching and the ability to mark and easily relocate passages of interest. Larson studied ten fifth-graders' use of an e-book as a part of a school reading project.[17] She found that interactive features, particularly the ability to write notes on the text, enabled students to interact with the text while reading: "By using the note tool, they engaged in new literacy practices by envisioning new ways to access their thought processes to engage in spontaneous, instantaneous response to the e-books."[18]

E-books might also provide added educational benefits for children with reading disabilities and delays. Larson writes, "Because e-books can be presented in an individualized format, students with special needs (ELL, visually impaired, struggling readers) may benefit from the additional text tools available with the use of electronic texts."[19] For example, children with dyslexia can increase font sizes for easier reading.

Some theorists suggest that in the future, as e-books become more ingrained in society, children might become more accustomed to reading them and, ultimately, less comfortable reading paper books. At this point, however, children seem equally interested in and comfortable with both formats. For example,

Sally Maynard loaned e-books to six children ages seven to twelve and their parents and studied their use.[20] At the end of the two-week period, all of the adults expressed preferences for reading paper books, but the children's preferences were split, with half preferring paper books and half preferring e-books. This indicates that children might be more receptive to reading e-books than adults, and that in the future, e-books might continue to grow in popularity.

Children seem to be able to learn to read equally well with both print books and e-books, provided there is high-quality reading instruction. Ofra Korat and Adina Shamir divided 128 kindergartners into two school groups. One group read an educational electronic storybook, and the other listened to a print version of the same story read aloud by an adult.[21] Testing revealed roughly equal learning outcomes for both groups of children.

Adult Assistance during Literacy Development

It's not enough, however, just to provide e-books for children and to encourage them to use them on their own. Librarians, parents, teachers, and other adults must still provide active learning assistance to maximize the learning potential of both digital and print resources.

Korat, Shamir, and Livnat Arbiv's study of e-books and emergent writing skills reinforced this important point. The researchers divided ninety-six kindergarten students into three reading groups. Over four sessions, the first group read an e-book independently without adult support. The second group read the same e-book with adult support during and after the reading sessions. The third group received the regular kindergarten program without an e-book reading component. The children who received adult assistance exhibited greater progress in phonological awareness and in emergent word writing than either of the other two groups.[22] The authors concluded, "These results imply that reading an e-book, even though it is well planned for young children, might not be enough for achieving good levels of progress in emergent literacy in general, and emergent writing in particular."[23]

For librarians, this means that continued adult assistance—in the form of story programs, dialogic reading, and book discussions—should continue even as children's reading moves more and more toward e-books.

Regardless of the format of books, it is important to remember that the main indicators of a child's literacy attainment are the home environment and the parents' education levels. As Maynard explains,

> The home environment is the most accurate predictor of a pupil's achievement, and literacy is a good opportunity where parents can make a difference, as simple actions such as being read to or even just being exposed to books, can impact a child's progress in learning to read. This evidence suggests that, to a large degree, a child's attitude to reading is affected positively by the attitude of their parents. Therefore, if a posi-

tive relationship with reading is promoted in the home, it is likely to be passed on to the children.[24]

Regardless of whether today's and tomorrow's children are learning to read from paper books or from e-books, or from some other future invention, librarians must continue to provide literacy support, especially to children from disadvantaged family backgrounds. This support should include the provision of literacy materials and literacy-related programs representing a wide range of resources, from paper books to e-books to computer resources, helping children to learn to read with any available tools that meet children's needs and interests.

All of this is to say that when children are online, they are not just wasting time. They are learning traditional literacy—reading and writing—skills, as well as new literacy, social, and technical skills, and they are learning how to live and interact

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Resources for Libraries

E-Book Collections for Children

Libraries interested in collecting e-books to expose children to new literacy benefits might find the large-scale purchasing of e-books and e-book readers prohibitively expensive. Luckily, several free and low-cost online e-book collections exist that libraries can promote for both library and home use. Some of the better-known online children's e-book collections include the following:

- **Children's Books Online: The Rosetta Project** (www.childrensbooksonline.org/library-complete_index.htm). Historic children's books in multiple languages.

- **Digital Gallery of World Picture Books** (www.kodomo.go.jp/gallery/index_e.html). Historic picture books from the 1700s to the 1930s.

- **International Children's Digital Library** (http://en.childrenslibrary.org). Children's literature from around the world.

- **Story Cove** (www.storycove.com). Picture book folktales from around the world. (A portion of the animated and read-along online titles are available free of charge.)

- **Storyline Online** (www.storylineonline.net). Famous actors read picture books in this collection sponsored by the Screen Actors Guild Foundation.

- **Tumble Books** (www.tumblebooks.com/library). Subscription-based access to web-based e-books for school and public libraries.

in the online world. It is important for children to learn how to become good digital citizens, learning both technical and social online norms, because our lives are increasingly moving into the online arena.

It is almost impossible for a child today to participate fully in school, home, and peer culture without engaging in online interactions. This, of course, indicates that libraries must provide active support for children's online activities and interactions, helping them to become better-educated citizens of the digital world. It also indicates that we need to broaden our thinking about children's literature to include both paper and digital texts. Doing so will enable us to support the full range of children's literacy needs in the modern multimedia information environment. &

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From Board to Cloth and Back Again

A Preliminary Exploration of Board Books

ALLISON G. KAPLAN

This is an example of hard and soft covered books that are noted on their covers as "untearable" or "mounted on linen."

As a library educator with an emphasis on youth services, I found myself wondering if it might be possible to discover a lineage (for lack of a better term) for the board books of today. If so, would that lineage be able to tell us something about trends in the philosophy of literacy education for very young children?

With that question in mind, in 2010 I applied for and received the Louise Bechtel Fellowship from ALSC. This award allowed me to spend the month of March 2011 in the Ruth Baldwin Collection of Historical Children's Literature at the University of Florida, Gainesville, to investigate this question. Working with the knowledgeable staff and examining hundreds of books, I was able to find what I think is something of a line from the board books of today back to the late 1800s.

My studies are limited to the Baldwin collection, and I tried to focus on American publications, although going back in time as far as I did, I had to include British publications as well. In terms of examining the collection, there was nothing very methodical about my approach. Mostly, I checked the catalog for any note referring to "pages on cardboard," "cardboard," "board books," or "boardbooks." In the end, the book I found most significant in my explorations was one I came across accidentally while looking for books published by McLoughlin Bros. The statement on the catalog record, "Pages pasted on cardboard," was just the kind of catalog note I had been looking for. The book, *A Peep at the Circus*, published in the 1880s, nearly had me weeping with joy because, even though its measurements were more the size of a traditional picturebook (approximately 12" x 9") rather than contemporary board books (approximately 6" square), it could be considered nothing less than a board book. It was this book that led me to believe in my quest.

Prior Knowledge and the Research Question

In beginning this study, I had to start with what I knew about early literacy and the history of the book. I knew that board books played an important role in the development of early-literacy skills in children younger than age four. I also knew that little research had been published about board books. A review of *Library Literature and Information Science* and *Education*

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Left: This alphabet book, from Dean's Rag Book Co. Ltd. (London), is the earliest example of cloth books that I found in the Baldwin collection. It is from 1900 or 1901. The inside of the book has color illustrations. *Right: A Peep at the Circus* (New York: McLoughlin Bros., ca. 1880).

Index Full Text (both major databases for library and education research, accessed via EBSCOhost) revealed that most articles referencing board books are reviews of new board book titles. Very little research beyond the depiction of minorities in board books (and even that reflects just a handful of studies) has been published. Some books about children's book illustrators will include information about illustrators of board books, but this is the exception rather than the rule. A notable example of this is Barbara Bader's *American Picturebooks from Noah's Ark to the Beast Within* (Macmillan, 1976), which includes an entire chapter on board and cloth books and which played an important role in my research for this project.

While there is little research about board books themselves, there is a large body of research about literacy and emergent literacy in young children. Often mentioned in passing is the value of board books as vehicles for getting infants and toddlers interested in books and reading because the books are hard for chewing purposes and small enough to fit in little hands. Sites such as Reach Out and Read (www.reachoutandread.org/FileRepository/ROR-milestones_English.pdf), Zero to Three (www.zerotothree.org/early-care-education/early-language-literacy/choosing-books.html), and Caring for Kids (www.caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/read_speak_sing_to_your_baby) mention the importance of providing board books to babies and toddlers, although, again, the research behind these statements is scarce.

That's what I knew about the research. Additionally, through observations of early-literacy programs in public libraries, I knew that it was becoming more common to see board books being incorporated into these programs. This knowledge informed my idea that somewhere along the line, someone must have connected those "toy" board books together with early-literacy skills.

In terms of the history of the book for children, my knowledge was considerably less. I knew that books were created for the education of the school-aged child starting around the fifteenth century.[1] I knew about hornbooks and battledores, of *Pilgrim's*

Progress and *A Apple Pie*. What I did not know was, When did the experiential element (tactile illustrations and thick or cardboard pages) become important in children's book publishing? When did we first see books for babies to chew on and for toddlers to touch? Finally, was there a connection between the content and format of books for children and the educational philosophies of the day? The following is a description of my exploration and the tentative conclusions I have drawn.

Hornbooks and samplers of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries notwithstanding, books for children up to about the nineteenth century tended to focus on moral education. "Metamorphosis" books—where the illustrations changed by pulling a tab or lifting a flap—appeared in the early nineteenth century as an engaging way to teach young people proper deportment and the dire results of ignoring the teachings of Mother or God.[2]

However, books for the sake of entertainment or to use as a stepping stone to early literacy, with the notable exception of alphabet books, were generally scarce until the 1800s, when the old dame with her dog, the doleful tale of cock robin, and the delightful repetition of the house that Jack built joined with the depiction of nursery rhymes and fairy tales (often also set to rhyme) for the entertainment of good boys and girls.

In looking at the Baldwin collection, I found evidence of books that catered to the amusement of children and were created to be long lasting. Around the mid-1800s, books began to appear that were noted on their covers as "indestructible," "untearable," or "mounted on linen." From the Baldwin collection, it appears that in England the main producers of such works were the printing houses of Dean and Sons, Darton, Tucker, and Nister, while in the United States, E.P. Dutton (in partnership with Nister), appeared to be the main importer of such books. In the latter half of the 1800s, McLoughlin Bros., with their advanced color processes, became well known in the United States for their amusing children's books and linen toy books.[3] Some of the "untearable" books were linen-based, but others were made of thicker pages—not quite the thickness of the board books we see today, but thicker than the page of an adult book.

The other types of amusement books were toy, movable, metamorphic, and pop-up books. Out of necessity to accommodate the mechanics of the book, those pages were also typically of thicker material, or even linen. I am not considering them as precursors to board books, however, because the thickness of the pages was solely to accommodate the structure of the book.

The shape and content of children's books appear to have been influenced by the social attitude about children throughout the ages. "Indestructibles" and "juveniles" started appearing with regularity around the mid-1800s by independent printers as well as by British and American printers who cooperated with the publishing of children's books.[4]

It makes sense that children's books would start to take on a more playful mood around that period following John Newbery's experimental, yet rather profitable, example. Newbery began printing and distributing his books around the mid-1700s. These

books were notable because they reflected a deliberate departure from religious and moral education stories to present books to children that were fun, filled with adventure, and entertaining. In terms of attending to the needs of the young reader, Newbery "set a standard in every detail throughout. He often went to the expense of copperplate engravings. His engraved script . . . had a new charm all their own. . . . If you add to those technical improvements, trifling though they may seem . . . you get some measure of John Newbery as a benefactor of children."[5] Not coincidentally, by about this time, as children had better chances of surviving past the age of five and the middle class population began to grow, the attitude toward children developed from soul-saving to nurturing.[6]

In the United States, from about 1682 to 1836, about eight hundred children's book titles were published.[7] Within that period (beginning around 1720), Charles Perrault's fairy tales, Mother Goose nursery rhymes, the Arabian Nights, and variations of Robinson Crusoe became more prevalent.[8] Printers such as Newbery in England and Isaiah Thomas in the United States published and republished these stories using stock illustrations and variations in prose. Newbery's printings, in fact, were widely reproduced in the United States. By the mid-1800s, the face of books themselves changed from black-and-white or two-color woodcut covers to brightly colored covers and colored illustrated texts.[9] Toy books were published with renewed dedication to durability and quality, including the use of such illustrators as Randolph Caldecott, Walter Crane, and Kate Greenaway.[10]

The late 1800s, early 1900s, and the "Quiet Revolution"

In 1873, the U.S. journal of the trade, *Publisher's Weekly*, noted that some of the best writers in the States were writing children's books, while *American Bookmaker* noted that "upon entering a large bookstore at this season the eye is fairly bewildered by the countless titles" of children's books but that "half of these books are not worth publishing," referring to the books that were cheaply made with republished content.[11] The reference to books of low literary quality may be disappointing; nevertheless, the fact that both *Publisher's Weekly* and *American Bookmaker* commented on the extent of children's book publishing is worth noting. It is also worth noting that not all books were cheap and unworthy. Books now considered classics, such as *Hans Brinker; or, the Silver Skates* (1866), *Captains Courageous* (1897), and *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900), emerged with the growing interest in providing exciting fiction for the young reader.[12]

John Tebbel concludes the section on children's book publishing (1865–1919) with this remark: "The record of the period [from 1865] to 1919 is one of widening the world, until it embraced virtually all the kinds of children's literature we know today, and developed into the quiet revolution in children's book publishing that began about 1920."[13]

What did this "quiet revolution" mean for early literacy books? The references in Tebbel to the cheaply made, mass-produced books are exactly those that focused on the early literacy and special needs of very young children. Again, referring to the Baldwin books, by the early 1900s, there were cloth or "rag" books created with the selling point that they are "washable, indestructible, and hygienic," and for the first time, the alphabet could be introduced to a child of any age.

The early part of the twentieth century also saw the growth of publishing houses and literary criticism of children's books. Library luminaries, such as Anne Carroll Moore through her reviews in the *New York Times*, Bertha Mahony Miller in the founding of the *Horn Book Magazine*, and Caroline Hewins in editing the lists of best books for children for the American Library Association, elevated the genre of children's books.[14] However, with few exceptions, the "toy" books of the early 1900s were disregarded, and evidence of them in the literature is negligible at best.

Cloth books are in evidence from 1900 through the 1940s, at which point most printers in the U.S. halted publication because of wartime rationing of cloth. What replaced cloth books were cardboard, or at least "substantial" paper books.[15] For a person looking at the history of early literacy books, the period from about 1920 to about 1950 is a very exciting time. It was then that publishing early literacy books for the very young child virtually exploded. In considering these publications, one must include a discussion on educator Lucy Sprague Mitchell and publisher William R. Scott.

Early Literacy, Yes, But Are They Board Books?

Very briefly, experimental, and experiential philosophies in education began around 1900 and came into full bloom in the 1920s and 1930s.[16] Two champions of experiential books for young children were Mitchell, co-founder of the Bank Street College of Education in New York City, and Scott, printer and parent of a child in Bank Street's preschool. Barbara Bader spends a great deal of space in *American Picturebooks from Noah's Ark to the Beast Within* describing the books that resulted from the testing process Scott and Mitchell used to find books just right for "the very young child."[17]

It is difficult to summarize the process by which these stories were "tested" in this short article. Suffice to say that the Bank Street teachers read their stories to the children in the two-year-old classes, and if those children responded well, then the stories went to the threes, fours, and so on until the age range was determined for the story. "We consider this stage of the process of the greatest value," said Scott, "as it puts author, artist, and publisher into direct contact with children during the final shaping of the manuscript into a book; humor that isn't funny is revised or dropped; the all-important matter of timing is checked; the book is custom-made for its eventual users."[18]

In this way, Scott published such books as *The Little Fireman* (1938) by Margaret Wise Brown, illustrated by Esphyr Slobodkina, and printed on "substantial paper"; *Bumble Bugs and Elephants: A Big and Little Book* (1938) by Brown, illustrated by Clement Hurd, and printed on "extremely tough cardboard, ring binding"; and *Pitter Patter* (1943) by Dorothy W. Baruch,

Left: Bumble Bugs and Elephants (William R. Scott, 1938). *Right:* Here are two examples of American publications from the 1860s; both written and designed by Lydia L. A. Very and published by L. Prang of Boston.

illustrated by Charles G. Shaw, which is—according to an insert in the book—for ages two to four and part of the Young Scott Cardboard Books collection.[19]

Not part of the Scott publications but clearly a landmark book in early literacy books that must be mentioned here is *Pat the Bunny* by Dorothy Kunhardt (Simon & Schuster, 1940). Although Scott also experimented with tactile books along the lines of *Pat the Bunny*, they were commercially unsuccessful. As well received by the public as these types of books were, they failed to get "approval" by Moore and *Horn Book Magazine*.

Louise Seaman Bechtel, on the other hand, who had participated in the writing workshops of Mitchell with Brown, did appreciate them, even if she did not encourage the publication of such books with Macmillan publishers. Bechtel was the director of the children's books division of Macmillan from 1919 to 1934.

As a publisher, Bechtel seemed to have had little use for the toy—or what she called the "throw away"—books of the day. In an article from the September 1941 *Horn Book Magazine* titled "Books Before Five," Bechtel questioned books for "babies," stating, "The whole field is so experimental that no rules as to size, colors, kind of artwork, can be applied . . . [and] very few publishers or authors seem to know babies, or be willing to take the time for trying out material on them."[20] I think Bechtel philosophically acknowledged the place of these "throw away" books, but she did not include them nor seek them out in the books she selected for Macmillan. Nevertheless, her support of Mitchell's work in this area caused me to wonder if we would have the board books we have with an emphasis on books for babies if it hadn't been for Bechtel's support.

In the 1940s and 1950s, books published on heavy paper or cardboard, in odd shapes, and with lift-the-flap or other interactive devices were published with greater frequency. They did not compare to, or get the accolades of, works by Charlotte Zolotow, Maurice Sendak, Else Holmelund Minarik, or Dr. Seuss; nevertheless, I think they played an important role in preparing children to read the works of those authors and paved the way for contemporary board book authors such as Sandra Boynton and Rosemary Wells.

And Back to Board Books

This brings us back to my research question and the board books of today. Could I find a link between contemporary board books and early-literacy books of the past, and did that link relate to the sociocultural status of children through history? Clearly, I need to conduct more research to fully understand this connection. However, I do think I have some basis for answering affirmatively.

Although there is a large gap in time from the 1880s book *A Peep at the Circus* and the cardboard books of the 1920s and 1930s, I think the Baldwin collection has enough items that show evidence of the connection between changes in the education of children and the production of "toy" books that encourage early-literacy skills.

Further research needs to be conducted to confirm a strong connection between early books, such as those published by the William R. Scott Company, and the board books we see today. Specifically, more specimens from the 1940s through the 1960s need to be examined for similarities in content and construction. I certainly look forward to being able to go back to that collection for further research. &

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Play to Learn

Free Tablet Apps and Recommended Toys for Ages 3–7

HAYLEY ELECE MCEWING

Play to Learn

I was recently at a conference where a "tech guy" presenter reminded the audience that by Merriam-Webster definition, technology is not directly defined as "computers." Technology refers to an "application of knowledge" or a "manner of accomplishing a task" where "accomplishing a task" involves efficiency and success.

The newest technology that efficiently and successfully accomplishes the library's tasks of promoting access to information and increasing one's motivation to learn is tablet apps (short for "applications"), individualized pieces of software used on portable, touch-screen computers.

While this article focuses on introducing the library community to some *free* early literacy, math, and science apps, it is also a quick reminder of the availability of "unplugged" technologies (for example, activities and physical toys) that can be effective and successful in the development of our youngest patrons. In addition, perhaps the descriptions of the apps below will inspire the invention of your own technologies—your own means to accomplish the same learning objectives.

As public and school librarians looking at research from the education community, we acknowledge that the key to any of these technologies is hands-on interaction through play—the play that occurs especially with others and with physical or virtual objects. You can offer these technologies within your existing programs, encourage play sessions after programs, offer scheduled parent-child, play programs, or make these technologies available during regular library hours for walk-in patrons.

For example, here is the advertisement for a parent–child play app program I will be offering for the first time:

> Hey, kids! Want to use an iPad? Hey, adults! Want to motivate your child to learn? Call XXX-XXX-XXXX and ask for a librarian. We'll ask for the subject area you'd like to explore with your child and schedule you for a twenty-minute session. During your personal appointment, the librarian will briefly demonstrate two specially selected apps and leave the rest of the time for you and your child to interact and explore together. Use the library's iPad, or bring your own. Registration is required, and space is limited. For kids from age four to those in sixth grade. Child must be accompanied by an adult.

Tablets and Apps

The two main markets for tablet apps are **iTunes** and **Google Play**, formerly known as the Android Market. At this point, iTunes has about 650,000 apps while Google Play has about 600,000. The apps on the iTunes market will work on devices using the iOS operating system, mainly Apple-made devices. Be aware that some apps in the iTunes store will work only on

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iPhones or iPods, so look for the apps that can be used on the iPad, which is Apple's tablet. Google Play is the market for apps that will work on the variety of devices that use an Android-based operating system, such as the Samsung Galaxy tablets.

Choosing between an iOS or Android tablet is a choice to be made by each library. At this point, I personally have more experience with the iPad and have found, as you will see, more quality apps through iTunes than Google Play. I have also been able to use a VGA cable (about $5) and an Apple VGA Adapter ($29) to plug the tablet directly into our library's projector, making programming with the iPad easy to share with a group. (For example, this is great for enlarging and sharing an interactive e-book or for creating a backdrop scene for a story.) I have not yet explored connecting a Galaxy Tablet this way.

As far as pricing, currently, one can purchase an iPad 2 with a 9.7-inch screen and 16 GB of memory for $399, or one could choose a Samsung Galaxy Tab 2 with 7-inch screen and 8 GB of memory for $249.99. Some Android tablets, like this particular Samsung Galaxy Tab, allow one to increase storage through the purchase and use of a separate microSD card (8 GB for about $24.99), and I wonder if this would allow one library branch to more readily share purchased apps with another branch.

Recommended Apps

Note: I have not provided age limits in the app descriptions because, as we know, each child comes to us with his or her own interests and his or her own developmental level. These apps would typically work best with ages three to seven.

Recognizing the Alphabet and Shapes, Writing Letters, and Forming Words

ABCs&Animals Lite by Mezmedia, iTunes only

A narrator states the letter of the alphabet and a word that begins with that letter. The screen shows the letter and then adds other letters to create the word. The image of the word is interactive—just touch the screen to discover an animation. After the interaction is complete, the next letter of the alphabet with an image and the image's word appear. Arrows at the bottom of the page allow you to move forward and backward, one page at a time, through the alphabet. The free version cycles through all twenty-six letters, while the $1.99 upgrade to the full version appears to include an additional twenty-six alphabet interactions.

Alphabet Tracing by Oncilla Technologies, free through iTunes
Letter Tracing by FunLittleApps, 99 cents through Google Play

Choose numbers, uppercase letters, or lowercase letters. Use a finger to trace the outline, following the animated train, truck, or worm. Supporting images can be touched and a narrator will voice its name. The tracing color can be changed. One can also erase drawn lines or choose a blank page to draw on.

Kids Can Spell—Animals: Letter Sounds and Writing First Words by Kids Place, iTunes only

Choose the "classic" or a timed game. An image and word appear on the screen, accompanied by sound effects. A narrator says the animal name, and the word (made up of tiled letters) falls apart. Touch the image to hear a sound, and drag the correct letter tiles to the correct positions. Tiles stick to the correct spot and incorrect placements fall. Manipulation can be a little tricky, requiring slow and exact placement. Music and a light show celebrate the correctly spelled word. A timed game will eventually correctly place the letter tiles.

Little Writer: The Tracing App for Kids by Innovative Mobile Apps, iTunes only

Choose upper or lowercase letters, numbers, shapes, or words to trace. Listen to the narrator state the name of the chosen letter, number, or shape and watch icons like a whale or a fish appear. Start tracing at the biggest icon, such as the whale picture, and follow the trail of the fish. When traced, the narrator gives a compliment and again states the name of the letter. Lines will not be drawn if one does not follow the correct order or direction.

My First Wood Puzzles: Dinosaurs. A Kid Puzzle Game for Learning Alphabet by Alexandre Minard, iTunes

My First Puzzles: Dinosaurs by AR Entertainment, Google Play

Pick the upper or lowercase alphabet, then pick a degree of difficulty. Complete levels to unlock new levels. There are three free levels for each degree of difficulty, but more levels are available for $1.99. A dinosaur shape appears and shows the puzzle-piece outlines within the dinosaur shape. Each puzzle piece has a letter on it. The trick is to place the pieces correctly as well as in alphabetical order. The narrator will say the name of the letter when a piece is correctly placed. Incorrectly placed pieces will not fit. If a piece is placed correctly but is not the next letter in the alphabet, the piece will bounce out of the puzzle. Letters and their order are repeated by the computer when the puzzle is complete.

Shapes Toddler Preschool by Toddler Teasers, iTunes and Google Play

There are four game options. In Quizzing, a narrator asks the user to touch a certain shape. When an incorrect shape is touched, the narrator repeats the name of the chosen shape and encourages the user to try again. Flashcards mode shows the shape with its name written under the picture, and the narrator says the name aloud. Swipe left-to-right or right-to-left to get a new flashcard. In Toybox mode, the user pops a balloon. A shape bursts out of the balloon, and the narrator says its name. The next level is loading these shapes into a circus cannon and watching them burst out. The narrator says the name of the shape as it is placed in the cannon. The last game is moving shapes onto a train track. The narrator states the name of the moved shape.

6 in 1 Children Games by PopAppFactory, iTunes only

Six icons represent six game choices. The kite image is a letter match game, the deer image is a seek-and-find-the-character game, and the question mark is a two-by-four-tiles concentration game that would work for two- to six-year-olds. The other

three games are more suitable for early elementary schoolers—addition/subtraction and tangram or dot picture making.

E-Books

Goodnight Safari by Polk Street Press, iTunes only

This interactive e-book invites the reader to interact with different wild animals before they go to sleep. A blue blinking dot encourages the user to touch certain places to cause certain animations. Choose to read yourself, or listen to narration. Text appears on the screen, and the words change color as they are read.

Narrative Skills

Feed the Animals: Kids Educational App by Curious Fingers, iTunes only

As stated by the developer, "Drag the right food item near the animal's mouth. Unlock new stickers as you feed more animals." The free version includes about ten animals, while the full version claims to include more animals.

Guess 'Em by GameWeaver, iTunes only

This game is similar to the Guess Who board game by Hasbro. One player secretly picks a character on the screen, while the other asks questions to determine the chosen identity. Touch a character to hide it from the choices. The last character face up should be the first player's secret identity. Players switch roles. The basic character set is free.

LEGO® DUPLO® Zoo by The LEGO Group, iTunes and Google Play

This app works almost like a wordless picturebook. Interactive, discoverable animations, music, and sound effects lead you through an otherwise wordless story where rabbit and giraffe attempt to get to the zoo.

Model Me Going Places 2 by Model Me Kids, iTunes only

Pick a destination—hairdresser's salon, mall, doctor's office, playground, grocery store, or restaurant. This begins a short narrated story that uses photographs and simple sentences to introduce children to expectations and behaviors at these locations. Pages can be turned one at a time—allowing room for child and caregiver conversation—or narration and page-turning can occur automatically.

Story Wheel by EverAge, iTunes only

Create and voice record a story. First select a theme. Add one to four players' names. Spin the wheel to choose an image that will be used in the story. Press "record" to begin telling your story, incorporating the chosen image. When this player stops, the next player spins the wheel, which selects the next object in the story. This player records and continues the narration. Players can continue to spin and tell the story, or touch the "done" button to save the story. The saved story can be played, shared on the web, emailed as an iBook, or deleted.

Touch and Learn: Emotions by Innovative Mobile Apps, iTunes only

The screen is composed of four photographs of people, diverse in age and ethnicity. The computer mentions a feeling word or adjective, and the child must touch the picture that best matches that description. Wrong answers are noted by a low-pitch musical sound, and correct answers receive the narrator's praise and a visible checkmark.

Numbers, Math, and Money

ABC 123 Writing Practice Lite HD: Trace Alphabet Letter and Number Shapes by Creeem, iTunes only

The free version shows you how to write the numbers one through nine as well as all the uppercase and lowercase letters of the alphabet. Circles with numbers in them show which lines to draw first and in what direction, so a child would need to know numerical order before writing and tracing the numbers or letters. The narrator will state the name of the number, and the screen will provide that number of objects to illustrate the concept. Note that ads run on the bottom and sometimes top of the screen in the free version of the app.

Amazing Coin (USD) LITE by Joy Preschool Game, iTunes only

Play four games before an ad to buy the full version (99 cents) pops up. Learn patterns (with coin images), determine least and greatest value, match the coin with its value, and collect the correct coins to buy a certain object.

Baby Count 123 by Bouncy Interactive, Google Play only

The four modes of play include count, find, match, and order. In "Count", the player is given several images of two objects and must sort them into two piles by dragging and releasing. As the objects are sorted, they are organized in rows and counted by a narrator. "Find" is like a concentration or memory game in that cards are face down and must be touched to reveal the number printed on the other side. However, in this game, one must overturn the cards in numerical order. For "Match," the top of the screen shows the shadow of a number. The gamer moves the number puzzle piece from the bottom of the screen to the shadow outline on the top. "Order" requires the gamer to place four numbers in order. Note that an ad does appear on the bottom of the screen in this free app.

Counting Money by King's Apps, iTunes only

One can change the settings: mode, number of questions, display letter grade, difficulty, timer, and "Show the Coins" total. A monetary value is displayed. Touch the correct amount of coins to equal that value. This is where the "Show the Coins" total feature in the upper lefthand corner, if enabled, comes in handy. In the free version, an ad is displayed at the bottom of the screen.

Dots for Tots Free: Teach Toddlers to Draw, Count, and Alphabet by SID On, iTunes only

Tips for Choosing Apps

- Look for free apps first.

- Make sure your tablet's settings are controlled to avoid in-app purchases—purchases for extra features/levels/games that are offered while playing the app.

- Be aware of apps that have pop-up ads, which can make it easy for little ones to touch and get diverted to a purchasing screen. While controlling in-app settings will prevent unwanted purchases, the pop-ups may decrease interest in the game.

- When you find an app you like, search by the developer.

App (Review) Sources

Online

www.apple.com/education/apps

http://beta.appsineducation.com

http://blog.schoollibraryjournal.com/touchandgo

http://dailyappshow.com

www.kirkusreviews.com/childrens-book-apps

https://play.google.com/store

http://appadvice.com/applists

http://boingboing.net/tag/appsforkids

http://childrenstech.com/blog/archives/category/platform/app

www.commonsensemedia.org/app-reviews

Also consult the following book:

Brady, Lois Jean. *Apps for Autism: An Essential Guide to Over 200 Effective Apps for Improving Communication, Behavior, Social Skills, and More!* Future Horizons, 2011.396p.

Ads, including pop-up ads, are used. Choose the animal or shape category. Draw lines from one number to the next in order. The next correct number is highlighted. Wrong lines will be erased and a buzzer will sound. When complete, a cartoon image appears, and the player is congratulated. The cartoon image does not necessarily follow the outline of the lines that

were drawn. Add-ons include sets of other shapes at 99 cents per set.

Kids Connect the Dots Lite by Intellijoy, iTunes and Google Play

This connect-the-dot game gives a hint as to what number is next by highlighting that number. A narrator will speak the number as it is touched and gives a compliment when the entire outline and object is finished. One can change the preferences to use natural, odd, or even numbers or upper and lowercase letters.

Kids Do Count Lite by Gino Coletta, iTunes only

In learning mode, touch images to have a narrator count aloud. As an image is touched, it becomes animated and leaves or hides in the scene. In practice mode, a fish or frog animation has a number, progressing from one to ten. Touch the matching number on the top bar showing numbers one to ten. Test mode is like practice mode, but the numbers are in random order.

Learning Gems: My Piggy Bank Lite by Blue Fire Ventures, iTunes and Google Play

Level 1 and 2 are free, and each includes 12 rounds. Level 1 is identification of coins by dragging and dropping them into the bank. For example, the narrator will ask you to put all nickels into the bank. Level 2 is matching coins to their picture. An ad does appear on the bottom of the screen for the free version.

Motion Math: Hungry Fish by Motion Math, iTunes only

This app claims to be based on the Common Core Standards. Good music and graphics provide a great background for learning addition or subtraction. You can play a bit for free, until a pop up asks you to buy an upgrade. (The addition mode is 99 cents.) Give your fish a name and pick its fins and colors. Turn the music on or off. Choose your difficulty level.

Motion Math: Wings by Motion Math, iTunes only

Choose an island (beginner or advanced level) where you will fly your bird character. Enjoy the background music or turn it off. Control where your bird moves by tilting the iPad itself left and right. The goal is to fly into the bigger number, which is represented in six visual forms—"rows of dots, clusters of dots, 'groups of' dots, a grid, a labeled grid, and symbols" that lend themselves toward learning multiplication. Wrong choices cause the bird to fall away from the numbers. Upgrades allow you to customize your bird and play other levels.

Peter Pig's Money Counter by Visa, Google Play only

Choose easy, medium, or hard level. Games include learning and adding the value of coins, sorting coins, and determining which sums are greater. There is a choice to hear a narrator share a fun monetary fact.

Pizza Fractions: Beginning with Simple Fractions by Brian West, iTunes only

A pizza pan holds a certain number of pizza slices. The child picks the correct fraction. Incorrect choices result in a buzzer sound and a frown from the pizza man while correct choices elicit a chime sound and a smile. Time and accuracy determine a final score for each round.

PLAY123 by CJ Educations, iTunes only

Included are various games that encourage drawing and stacking shapes, overlapping and spinning the colored shapes to create new colors (for example, discovering that yellow and blue make green), and moving shapes in different directions. Explore counting, addition, and subtraction by touching shapes with numbers to make more shapes appear, by adding shapes together, and by slicing them apart.

Science (See "Play123" app for color mixing.)

The Four Seasons: An Earth Day Interactive Children's Story Book HD by TabTale, iTunes and Google Play

This is an interactive e-book to read (and if desired, voice record!) oneself or be read to by the narrator. Some animations, music, and sound effects are automatic, but others are discoverable as one touches various images. On some pages, the narrator will ask the "reader" to find and touch certain objects, and animation of that object will provide a hint. Wrong choices elicit a dissonant sound, while the narrator compliments correct choices. There is also a puzzle feature on each screen where the reader can drag one of three images to the shadowed part of the picture. The free version includes a banner ad at the bottom of the screen, or one can pay 99 cents to make the experience ad-free.

Live Butterfly Garden by Questsphere, iTunes
Live Butterfly Garden by Insect Lore, Google Play

This virtual butterfly hatching kit allows five butterflies to grow at a time. First, name the bug. Add an egg to the jar, and wait for it to hatch. Feed the caterpillar, and watch it grow and shed its skin. While waiting for the caterpillar to change to a chrysalis and then a butterfly, change the background from a sunny to a cloudy sky. Zoom in and release the butterfly.

Soundrop by Develoe LLC, iTunes only (Google Play has an app by the same name, but it is not the same application.)

Advertised as "Musical Geometry," this app allows the user to play with sound. Drag and drop to draw or remove a line. As pinballs fall onto these lines and bounce off them at different angles (and hit other lines!), different sounds are made. This app will not only develop one's musical and mathematical awareness but also the curiosity and engagement in experimentation which are key to science learning (e.g. What is happening? Why? How can I create different results?) Experience the process at www.youtube.com/watch?v=s_63sHkEye0.

Puzzles

Animal Puzzle for Kids by Play Toddlers, iTunes only

Seven of eighteen puzzles are available in the free version. After selecting an animal, choose a level of difficulty—four, six, or nine pieces. Drag the pieces into the square puzzle board. Outlines within the puzzle board provide guidance. Pleasant music accompanies the experience. When done, arrow over to the next game board or select the home icon to choose another animal.

Hidden Egg Hunt by Zivix, iTunes and Google Play

Choose background or no background music and sound effects or no sound effects. Choose one of the five free scenes. The player has one minute to find as many hidden eggs as possible, but pausing (which will hide the screen) is possible. Find "Bonus Game Eggs" to perform a matching game to earn tokens. Tokens can be used to stop the clock while still searching the scene, or they can be used to reveal hidden eggs that the viewer is having trouble finding. One can buy tokens, if desired.

Kids Puzzle: Animals by Sun Ground, iTunes and Google Play

Choose a scene—the farm, woods, birds, wild animals, or sea life scenes are in the free version with ten or more puzzles per scene. Choose the "normal" (four-piece) or "hard" (eight-piece) mode. The chosen puzzle will show the image's outline and the pieces partitioned within the outline. Drag and drop pieces into the outline.

My First Tangrams Lite by AR Entertainment, iTunes and Google Play

There are four free tangram choices. The tangram shapes are arranged to suggest animals or objects. Precise placement may be an issue with this app.

Shape Puzzle HD Free Word Learning Game for Kids by Newness World, iTunes only

The free version is a jungle scene with fifteen animal puzzles of ten pieces or less. Drag the pieces into the outline and let go when you hear a sound. When the image is complete, the animal's name appears.

Sea Puzzle for Kids HD by ADS Software Group, iTunes only

Upbeat, bubbling background music can be turned on or off. Choose easy, medium, or hard to control the number of pieces in the puzzle. Choose between nine sea creatures. Move the pieces from the border of the screen onto the puzzle board. The board shows a faded version of the image to be created. Puzzle pieces will slide back to the border of the screen if not properly placed.

Toy Tangram: 40 Interactive Shapes Puzzle Game by TabTale, iTunes only

Choose one of the ten free tangram objects. An opening animation shows the finished tangram, while a narrator gives a small rhyme about the chosen object and encourages the gamer to create the picture. Background music sets the scene. Correctly placed pieces are praised while incorrectly placed pieces emit

Time to Unplug?

While tablet apps are awesome learning tools, balance and a variety of technologies is key. When it is time to unplug from virtual environments, use the following technologies to create physical learning environments.

Paper Activities

- Alphabet Tracing Worksheets available from www .enchantedlearning.com/themes/abc.shtml.

- Make 8-1/2" x 11" letters in Microsoft Word, print, and invite kids to drive toy cars to trace over the letters.

- Invite kids to write a letter on a whiteboard, chalk board, or poster board using the letter-writing rhymes from Jean Feldman and Holly Karapetkova's *I Love Letters! More Than 200 Quick and Easy Activities to Introduce Young Children to Letters and Literacy.*

- Print out your own paper money (larger than life size) from www.enchantedlearning.com/math/money/coins.

- Collect dead bugs and place in zip-locked baggies for kids to explore. *(Yes, I have a dead bug collection in my desk!)*

- Make large magnets to sort and count. For example, make wild and domestic animal magnets, and encourage children to sort them by category. Britannica Image Quest database (http://quest. eb.com/) to access non-commercial, educational use images.

- Ideas for paper toys at www.thetoymaker.com/2Toys.html.

Choosing Toys

- Pick items that can sustain sanitizing—being thrown in a washer or dunked quickly in soapy water. Keep in mind that toys wiped with bleach will eventually make it back into mouths, though this might be the best option for safely sanitizing wooden puzzles.

- Have a bin labeled "Toys to Sanitize" so parents can throw "mouthed" or germy toys in to be cleaned.

- Consider rotating your toy collection every month or every other month, but be aware that a particular toy may be requested frequently and consider keeping that one out year- round.

- Limit the size and number of pieces in toys that will be available on the floor.

Toys that Should Already Be Available in the Library Environment

- Puppets

- Blocks like Soft and Quiet Classroom Blocks washable foam for $29.99 via www.lakeshorelearning.com or try LEGOs, Duplos, or Flexiblocks

- Puzzles—knob and soft puzzles for littlest learners as well as traditional cardboard puzzles ranging in number of pieces, say three to twenty-five pieces; see www.melissaanddoug.com.

- Magnetic letters like the Jumbo 5-inch Magnetic Letters Uppercase and Lowercase set each $39.95 via www.lakeshorelearning.com with accompanying

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a low-pitched sound and are automatically moved back to the section of unplaced pieces. The completed image will become animated.

Reading

Eggy 100 HD by Blake eLearning, iTunes or Google Play

Begin by selecting a level—the first of ten is free and uses simple words like "a" and "the." The narrator tells you what word or letter to "swipe," but touching will also work. The letter or word appears on an egg that is tossed into the air. Swipe it before it hits the ground and breaks. Swipe an incorrect egg, and it will break. Breaking eggs loses you a smiley face. Swipe a smiley-face-decorated egg to gain one back. Do not swipe the potatoes or pigs! The pace of the egg toss will increase and the thrown objects will vary in size.

I Can Write 2 by Innovative Net Learning Limited, iTunes only

First choose one of four scenes. Move images into the blank spots in the scene. Then create a four-to-six-word sentence that correctly describes the scene. Touch the "OK" button. If the created sentence is accurate to the picture, a narrator will say the sentence and music will play. If incorrect, a kazoo will sound and the sentence will blank out the incorrect words. At this point, the sentence can be reconstructed to match the scene or the chosen images can be rearranged and a different sentence can be attempted.

Word Games for Kids—Futaba by INKids, iTunes only

In this app, the iPad acts as the game board. The free version allows two players to play at one time, or one can play alone. Each player picks one of the four sides of the iPad. An image appears and rotates in the center while each player must pick one of the four flashcards that has the correct written word for that image. The first player to touch the correct word gets a point. Other players will see the correct card flash, so that they will be learning and reading, too. The player or players

magnet board, cookie sheet, or other magnetized surface; see magnetic paint from www.rustoleum.com.

■ Homemade magnets with labeled pictures

■ Child-safe musical instruments like the Woodstock Percussion Musical Double Egg Shaker, www.amazon.com

■ Abacus

■ Plastic animals, fruits, and vegetables like Toddler-Safe Food Basket from www.toystogrowon.com and Giant Soft and Safe Dinosaurs from www.lakeshorelearning.com

Early Literacy Toys to Consider for Purchase (via www.lakeshorelearning.com):

■ Lakeshore Letter Builders Uppercase and Lowercase set, each $29.95

■ Giant Tracing Letters—uppercase $29.95; lowercase $24.95 (see "Alphabet Tracing" otherwise known as "Letter Tracing" app)

■ Sight Word Puzzles, $49.95

■ Word Building Puzzle Three Word and Four Word sets, each $14.95 (see "Kids Can Spell" app)

■ Build-a-Phrase Sight Word Set, $49.95 (see "I Can Write 2" app)

■ Learn-The-Alphabet Rubbing Plates, $19.95

■ Magnetic Color Maze, $39.95

■ Magnetic Learning Letters, uppercase and lowercase, each set $149.95

Math and Science Toys and Resources

■ Beleduc layered puzzles, www.beleduc.de, www.amazon.com

■ Real Bugs Discovery Kit, $24.95 and Magnifier Discovery Board, $24.95; www.toystogrowon.com

■ Magnet Discovery Board, $24.95; Magnetic Counting Maze, $39.95; Learn to Count! Picture Puzzles, $69.95; Number Sequencing Puzzles Complete Set, $49.95; Magnetic Learning Numbers, $69.95, all from www.lakeshorelearning.com

■ www.acornnaturalists.com/

■ www.enasco.com/science/

■ www.toystogrowon.com/categories/math_counting_toys

■ www.toystogrowon.com/categories/science_nature

with the most points wins a round. (Each round is one-minute long and can be paused.) Rounds continue until one player has won three rounds. The full version allows four-player mode as well as the option to create one's single-image or single-word card sets.

Sound

I Hear Ewe—Animal Sounds for Toddlers by Claireware Software, iTunes only

Choose from three pages—farm animals, wild animals, or modes of transportation. Touch an object and here its name and sound. This is a virtual adaptation of the Fisher-Price *See and Say* toys.

Princess Ph.D. by Bear-Eco Technologies, iTunes only

In the free version, select the rhyming words, analog time, or addition game. For rhyming words, one is given a word and is asked to choose one of four choices to find a rhyming word. For each right choice in any of the three games, the player receives a gold coin. As money is accumulated, the player can visit the store and select upgrades to the princess's outfit. One can control the sound effects and background music in the main menu's options.

Rhyming Words by GrasshopperApps.com, iTunes only

This is a preschool matching game. Pictures on the left must be matched to pictures on the right. Touch the picture to hear the object's name. Drag and drop a picture on the left to its rhyming match on the right.

Singing Fingers HD by Beginner's Mind, iTunes only

This is a drawing platform that records the talking and singing that occurs while you draw. Done drawing? Retrace the lines and listen to your creation! For the best explanation, check out the YouTube video: www.youtube.com/watch?v=iCYA7N-vdZA.

Twinkle Twinkle Little Star by Samsung Publishing, iTunes and Google Play

This is mostly a music video of the most common verse of "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star." Animations occur on their own without any interaction from touching images on the screen. The one verse repeats itself until the viewer chooses to stop the app.

Twinkle Twinkle Little Star—Interactive Children's Sing Along and Activity Center by Kids Games Club, iTunes only

Here to Stay
Mobile Technology and Young Children in the Library

Amy Graves

When I bought my iPad, it was for professional reasons—I wanted to learn about children's apps because I knew mobile technology was gaining relevance in the lives of the children we serve.

What I didn't know was, after a crotchety transition period of learning how the foolish thing worked, I would soon forget how I ever lived without it. My email. My calendar. Twitter. The web. At arms length, anytime, on a screen big enough to read.

This is just one example of how, often unwittingly, technology permeates our lives. As adults continue to increase the number and type of devices they use, all these ubiquitous screens and gadgets become a fact of life for children, too. We can't possibly predict how these tools and toys will evolve as young children grow older, but I assume they will continue to do just about anything, just about anywhere, with a continually expansive definition of "anything." This is the world we live in now. Mobile technology is here to stay.

Not All Screens are Created Equal

If these devices are everywhere in kids' lives, do they really need to be confronted with more when they come to the library? I've asked myself that when considering the use of tablets—specifically iPads—in library services and programs. It's a question of screen time—how much is too much, and should we, as librarians, worry about adding to the daily intake?

The most commonly cited guidelines for screen time come from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). In policy statements, the AAP discourages any screen exposure for children under two years of age and recommends no more than two hours of screen time per day for children ages two and up.[1] These guidelines cite research studies that suggest a variety of possible negative effects of passive screen time, including sleep disturbances, language delays, and obesity.

While the AAP uses the generic term "screen time" in its policy statements, the policies do not consider a broad range of technologies. There is no mention of how interactive media, such as tablets and smartphones, might be considered differently than traditional, noninteractive media—namely, television and videos.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) draws a clear distinction between the two in their position statement. NAEYC asserts that each type of device deserves its own usage guidelines, and that developmentally

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appropriate interactive media may actually be useful as learning tools.[2]

Solid research on the long-term educational benefits of interactive media is nonexistent, and the wait for such research could be indefinite. Changes in technology are too rapid and unpredictable to allow for longitudinal studies. This is a subject where reports are bound to become outdated or superseded within a few years of their release. This state of flux calls on us to make some reasoned assumptions, based on existing research and our own professional judgment.

Given what literature there is, we can reasonably assume that interactive media are potentially beneficial—and, at the very least, not harmful—to our young patrons, especially if those interactions are facilitated by a caring adult.

Getting Engaged

While traditionally known as co-viewing, screen time shared between adults and children has gone far beyond the simple act of watching. A new term has emerged to encompass the interactive aspects of shared experiences with all types of media, new and old: joint media engagement.[3] For young children, joint engagement with adults can mean the difference between just using a device and engaging in a learning experience.

If you give a book to a child who is not yet reading independently, the child may still be able to "read" the book by looking at the pictures and discovering the story. While this type of independent experience is important, the child will obviously get more out of the story if an adult reads it aloud. The adult can extend the experience by discussing what is happening in the text and illustrations, relating the book to a child's real world experiences, and even adding new learning content by counting something on the page or pointing out shapes or colors.

Joint media engagement can add such opportunities to mobile device use as well. What could be used as simple entertainment has the potential to become a learning experience. But let's set aside educational value for a moment—there's

more to it than that. The intergenerational play that interactive media can foster is important in and of itself. Families coming together to have fun, are critical to the success of our programs and services. Interactive media can provide a great option to encourage family connections.

"It's a question of screen time—how much is too much, and should we, as librarians, worry about adding to the daily intake?"

What We Can Offer Families

Libraries aren't just a source of media. We have more to offer our patrons than just our collections. As we move forward to harness the latest technologies, we need to consider our roles in our communities and what we are uniquely positioned to offer.

Access

Mobile devices may seem to be everywhere, but the truth is, these devices aren't quite so commonplace. In 2011, Common Sense Media sponsored a survey on the media habits of children from birth to age eight, taking care in their method to approach an accurate representation of the U.S. population. Among all children in the age group, only 41 percent have a smartphone in their homes, and just 8 percent have a tablet.[4] Clearly, an iPad at the library is not a duplication of most kids' home media environments.

Not surprisingly, the survey also revealed inequity of access between income brackets. Smartphone access ranges from 27 percent in lower-income households to 57 percent in higher-income households, and tablets were only accessible in 2 percent of lower-income households versus 17 percent of the higher-income households. This has been dubbed the "app gap"—the latest manifestation of the digital divide. Access at the library

could be particularly beneficial in addressing this disparity.

Advice

Finding quality apps for children could be a full-time job. In the iTunes App Store, more than 80 percent of apps in the education category are aimed at children, with 58 percent geared toward the toddler and preschool age set.[5] With the added fact that there are no standards for labeling apps as educational, consumers are left with a huge market to wade through—and that's just one category. It's nice to have options, but broad ranges in quality and price can be overwhelming, and parents should be able to turn to us for advice, as they do with other media.

Pointing parents to review sources could be a starting point, but offering app-advisory services, based on personal recommendations of apps we've used firsthand, could prove invaluable. If we expand our collection-development expertise to include apps, engaging in these conversations with parents will also afford us the opportunity to talk about screen time, joint media engagement, and other areas where parents may have concerns. It is in our best interests to keep abreast of existing research so we can offer sound advice.

Modeling

Not all parents will automatically become engaged as their children play with interactive media; they may not recognize a need for it. This is an opportunity for us. If children are using the devices inhouse, we can chat with kids as they poke through the apps. Name what they're doing and seeing. Engage in the same kind of dialogue you would when reading a book. Take a moment to play alongside the child and show everyone just how much fun you're having. Trust me, you will have fun. ⌘

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67. Meigs, acknowledgment to *Invincible Louisa*, xi.

Kick Start Your Programming!
The "Best of the Best" Library Ideas for School-Age Children

Sarah Stippich

M aybe you want to pep up your book club. Or you want to get an edge on that hot new series your tweens are talking about.

Maybe a second-grade class pops in unexpectedly, and you need a program in a pinch. Or your library director is looking for fun ways to get families involved in library fundraising.

Perhaps you're expecting twenty-five very boisterous third graders in your library next week and want to put their acting (and reading!) skills to the test. Or the after-school crowd at your library is bored and wants something new to do.

We've all hit the brick wall of creativity when it comes to brainstorming programming ideas for kids. Or we become bored or dissatisfied with our tried-and-trues. Luckily, we're in a profession of information-sharers, collaborators, and creative co-conspirators—also known as children's librarians. Just ask your colleagues, and within a half hour, you'll have armloads of exciting, inspiring new ideas.

That's what ALSC's School-Age Programs and Services Committee has done. We've collected the best programming ideas for school-age kids. Our committee members have tried these programs in their own school and public library settings, with great success.

If you see something you like, please try it in your library. Then help us continue to improve by going to the ALSC blog and commenting on one of our Best of the Best Program Ideas posts, telling us how it worked for you and the children in your library. Below is just a taste of what we've come up with. You can download the whole list of School-Age Program Ideas at www. ala.org/alsc/kickstart.

- **Action! Bringing Books to Life.** Show a few great book trailers advertising books at the library. Use FLIP cameras and let kids make their own trailer. Mount them on your webpage.

- **Black History Scavenger Hunt.** Create a scavenger hunt featuring African American authors and illustrators. Can you find a book by Walter Dean Myers? Information about the Montgomery bus boycotts? How about pictures of activists during the Civil Rights Era? Give extra points or prizes for facts found using reference materials and credible websites.

Sarah Stippich is a Children's Librarian at the Free Library of Philadelphia, Blanche A. Nixon/Cobbs Creek Library. She is also the chair of the ALSC School-Age Programs and Services committee, which also includes Sarah Abercrombie, Kimberly Castle-Alberts, Patricia Clingman, Marge Loch-Wouters, Claire Moore, Sara Paulson, Elizabeth Rosania, and Kristine Springer.

- **Countdown to "Noon" Year**. Designed for the youngest ones who may not make it to the New Year's Eve ball drop. Make noisemakers and party hats, play games, and at noon on December 31, release confetti and celebrate the "Noon Year!" Share Gail Piernas-Davenport's *Shante Keys and the New Year's Peas* and talk about different New Year's traditions.

- **Diary of a Wimpy Kid Party**. Do a "Manny Cereal Toss" of mini boxes into a toilet seat, a "clothes" relay race, and trivia games. Ask kids to chat about favorite passages. Serve mini bags of chips like Dad likes to stow away and eat.

- **DIY (Do-It-Yourself) Day/Crafternoon.** Set out stations of stuff and craft projects—like origami, jewelry-making, picture frames. Load each station with leftover craft materials. Kids get creative, and staff has a great opportunity to take pictures of the kids' artistic prowess. Display your many craft and decorating books for kids to stimulate ideas and to boost circulation.

- **DramaRama.** Choose a children's book with loads of action. As the librarian narrates, kids act out the parts. Use simple props and scenery—but no worries, the kids are the stars. They learn beginning stage craft (stage right, stage left, never to turn their back on the audience). Picture books with lots of characters work best, including Eric Kimmel's *Anansi and the Moss Covered Rock*, Margaret Read MacDonald's *Fat Cat*, and Betsy Maestro's *Wise Monkey Tale*. Or, for beginning readers, choose one of Mo Willems' Elephant & Piggie books.

- **Hometown Hero Night.** Invite a returning veteran to talk about life in another land and show different equipment. End the program with card making for service members still overseas.

- **LEGO® Club.** You can let kids have free build time or give them ideas of specific things to build related to a book or subject of your choosing. (Zoo animals? Angry Birds?) It could be a competition or just for fun. Members break down bricks and help clean-up. Be sure to display your Lego Ninjago titles.

- **Scintillating Science (or Mad Scientists Club or Ms. Frizzle's Magic School Bus Presents . . .).** Kaboom! Create a workshop science series in cooperation with a local museum or science teacher or on your own. Prepare easy science experiments, describe the science, and let the kids make science happen. Great books to use include Sean Connelly's *The Book of Totally Irresponsible Science*, Vicki Cobb's *See for Yourself*, and Sudipta Bardhan-Quallen's *Kitchen Science Experiments*.

- **Star Wars Party.** May the force be with you! Encourage kids to dress as characters and enjoy all things Star Wars. Show a Star Wars movie (with necessary permissions), and don't forget the Wookie Cookies and Yoda Soda.

- **Stuffed Animal Sleepover.** Invite kids to bring their stuffed animals for a sleepover at the library. Read Megan McDonald's *When the Library Lights Go Out*, Donald Freeman's *Corduroy*, and, of course, Margaret Wise Brown's *Goodnight Moon*, then tuck them in. Staff takes pictures of the animals in various parts of the library having a great time at their "sleepover." Print the pictures for the kids to pick up with their stuffed animal the next day.

- **Superhero Yourself.** If you were a superhero, what special powers would

you have? What would your costume look like? Draw yourself. Which superheroes would you form an alliance with, and who would be your archenemy?

- **What's Cooking?** Cooking programs with kids are always great. You could base it around a theme such as desserts or explore a culture such as Italian or French. Movies and books to tie in include Disney/Pixar's *Ratatouille* or William Steig's *Pete's a Pizza*. For a simpler program, try no-bake cookies, fresh fruit/vegetable faces, or smoothies.

- **Wii/Just Dance Contests.** Whether you have a Wii or one of your staff or patrons is willing to let you borrow theirs, this is a great way to bring kids together for some friendly competition. You could also check to see if a neighboring library is willing to loan their system and games. Or you could just go unplugged, and have an old-fashioned dance-off. 𝄐

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ALSC News

Save the Date

The 2013 Arbuthnot Honor Lecture, to be delivered by Michael Morpurgo, Britain's third Children's Laureate, will be held on May 16, 2013, and hosted by Nazareth College and the Youth Services Section of the New York Library Association in Rochester, New York. The honor lectureship will be tied to several other significant events for librarians and readers of children's and young adult literature during Children's Book Week and will kick off the 38th annual NYLA Youth Services Section's Spring Conference.

"The Youth Services Section of the New York Library Association submitted an application that was carefully prepared and embodied incredible community collaboration from local library systems, colleges, and even the Seneca Park Zoo," Arbuthnot Chair Susan Pine said. "The lecture presents a wonderful opportunity for ALSC to partner with a vibrant state-wide library association."

Ticket information will be posted at www.ala.org/alsc by early next year.

Think with Your Eyes!

Conclude our year-long Caldecott celebration at the ALSC President's Program in Chicago by experiencing a powerful method of engaging with pictures—and exploring the value of using that technique with children. The program takes place on Monday, July 1, 2013, during the ALA Annual Conference. Whether the images are masterpieces on a museum wall, part of a picture book narrative, or photographs and charts in a science text, understanding what we see is a skill that can be developed. In part one of the program, Oren Slozberg, Executive Director of Visual Thinking Strategies, will invite audience participation as he introduces the process. This method has proven to be highly effective in public libraries and schools in developing observa-

tion skills, critical thinking, and civil discourse—powerful habits of mind across the curriculum and throughout life. In part two, library and museum partners will demonstrate how collaboration adds up to more than the sum of its parts in supporting visual literacy. If you've ever wondered how to facilitate enriching conversations using art as a stimulus—and where to turn for live assistance or virtual resources, this program is for you! More information will be posted as it becomes available at www.ala.org/alsc.

Celebrate Caldecott 75th in Chicago

Take a wild ride through the past, present, and future of award-winning children's book art at this stimulating preconference, celebrating 75 years of the Randolph Caldecott Medal, to be held at the Art Institute of Chicago, prior to the 2013 ALA Annual Conference. Hear about the creative process from an array of Caldecott winners, as well as editors, art directors, and production managers. Engage with one another in small focus groups and interactive, critical discussions of Caldecott medal books throughout the years. The preconference will be held on Friday, June 28, 2013, from 7:45 a.m.–4 p.m.

Confirmed speakers include: Brian Selznick, 2008 Caldecott Medalist; Leonard Marcus, children's book historian, author and critic; and Paul O. Zelinsky, 1998 Caldecott Medalist. Additional speakers and illustrators will be announced when confirmed at www.ala.org/alsc/annual. Registration opens with ALA Annual Conference registration on January 7, 2013.

ALSC Board Actions

The following actions were recently taken by the ALSC Board. To follow the Board on ALA Connect, visit http://connect.ala.org/node/64109.

APPROVED, ALSC's Emerging Leaders Project Proposal: Get-to-Know ALSC Roadshow. (September 2012)

ACCEPTED, an ALSC letter of support for an IMLS grant project proposed by Dominican University-GSLIS. (September 2012)

APPROVED, the adoption of the white paper, "The Importance of Play, Particularly Constructive Play, in Public Library Programming," to post on the ALSC website, and distribute in conjunction with the partnership between ALSC and LEGO® DUPLO.® (September 2012)

ALSC Names 2012–13 Spectrum Scholar

ALSC chose Ticha Gwaradzimba as its 2012–13 Spectrum Scholar. Gwaradzimba is currently pursuing her master's in library and information science from the University of Western Ontario in London, Ontario.

A native of Zimbabwe, Gwaradzimba first began working in libraries while living in Atlanta. "I moved to Atlanta, Georgia in 1997," Gwaradzimba said. "I found a job as library associate with the Atlanta Fulton Public Library System (AFPL). A few months later, while at AFPL's Perry Homes branch, I was co-opted to help with the children's story hour. A whole new world opened up to me; interacting with the children during that story hour was the most fun I ever had during work hours! I was hooked!"

This summer Gwaradzimba began working as a library assistant at the Beacock Branch of the London (Ontario) Public Library. She also volunteers at the Huron Heights Literacy Working Group as well as the Salvation Army Hillcrest Community Kidszone program.

"Ticha's unique background and experience make her a wonderful choice as this year's 2012–13 ALSC Spectrum Scholar," ALSC President Carolyn Brodie said. "We're excited by her commitment to working with youth and we're very eager to watch what will surely be a very successful career in children's librarianship."

Dollar General Grant

The Dollar General Literacy Foundation has awarded a Youth Literacy grant in the amount of $226,876 to ALSC and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA). ALSC and YALSA will use the grant to support three important initiatives, El día de los niños/El día de los libros (Children's Day/Book Day), Teen Read Week™ and summer reading for teens.

"As one of the most important celebrations in children's librarianship, we're very excited to have Dollar General Literacy Foundation continue its support of El día de los niños/El día de los libros (Children's Day/Book Day)," said ALSC President Carolyn Brodie. "The Dollar General Literacy Foundation's strong commitment to multiculturalism in children's library services is highly admirable."

Thanks, Institute Sponsors

Sponsors play a very important role in the success of the National Institute, and we thank the following organizations for their generosity: Disney-Hyperion; LEGO® DUPLO®; Little, Brown and Company; Random House Children's Books; Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis School of Library and Information Science; Indigenous Crafts from Bolivia; Blocks Rocks!; and Big Fish Games.

ALSC also thanks the following organizations that donated door prizes and advance reader copies given to attendees throughout the Institute: 4 Imprint, Baker & Taylor, Blekko, DEMCO/Upstart, Findaway World, Guildcraft Arts + Crafts, Hachette Book Group, HarperCollins Publishing, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, Indianapolis Convention & Visitors Association, Indianapolis Motor Speedway, Lakeshore Learning, Macmillan Children's Books, Midwest Tapes, Movie Licensing USA, Oriental Trading Co., Penguin Young Readers Group, Scholastic Inc., Tea Pots & Treasures, and Warm Glow Candles.

2013 ALSC Midwinter Schedule

(as of November 6, 2012)

*Denotes closed meeting

2014 Award/Notable Chairs Orientation
Friday, January 25, 7–9 p.m.

AASL/ALSC/YALSA Jt. Exec. Committees
Thursday, January 24, 4:30–6 p.m.

AASL/ALSC/YALSA Joint Intellectual Freedom Committees
Sunday, January 27, 1–2:30 p.m.

AASL/ALSC/YALSA Jt. Legislation Committees
Sunday, January 27, 4:30–5:30 p.m.

AASL/ALSC/YALSA Jt. Youth Council Caucus
Sunday, January 27, 1–2:30 p.m.

ALA Youth Media Awards Press Conference
Sunday, January 27, 1–2:30 p.m.

All Committee Meetings I and II
Sunday, January 27, 8:30–11:30 a.m.

All Discussion Group Meeting
Sunday, January 27, 4:30–5:30 p.m.

ALSC/PLA Every Child Ready to Read Oversight Committee
Saturday, January 26, 9–11 a.m.

ALSC/REFORMA Jt. Executive Committees
Saturday, January 26, 6–7 p.m.

ALSC/YALSA Jt. Membership Reception
Monday, January 28, 6–7:30 p.m.

Arbuthnot Honor Lecture (2014)*
Saturday, January 26, 1:30–3:30 p.m.

Batchelder Award Committee (2013)*
Friday, January 25, 8 a.m.–12:30 p.m.
Saturday, January 26, 8 a.m.–10 p.m.
Sunday, January 27, 8–10 a.m.

Batchelder Award Committee (2014)
Saturday, January 26, 1–4 p.m.

Belpré Award Committee (2013)*
Friday, January 25, 8 a.m.–12:30 p.m.
Saturday, January 26, 8 a.m.–10 p.m.
Sunday, January 27, 8–10 a.m.

Belpré Award Committee (2014)
Sunday, January 27, 4:30–6:30 p.m.

Board of Directors
Saturday, January 26, 1:30–5:30 p.m.
Monday, January 28, 1:30–5:30 p.m.

Budget Committee
Sunday, January 27, 10:30–11:30 a.m.
Monday, January 28, 10:30–11:30 a.m.

Caldecott Award Committee (2013)*
Friday, January 25, 8 a.m.–10 p.m.
Saturday, January 26, 8 a.m.–10 p.m.
Sunday, January 27, 8 a.m.–10 a.m.

Caldecott Award Committee (2014)
Saturday, January 26, 4:30–6:30 p.m.

Carnegie Medal/Notable Children's Videos Committee (2013)
Friday, January 25, 1:30–10 p.m.
Saturday, January 26, 8 a.m.–10 p.m.
Sunday, January 27, 8–10 a.m.*

Collection Management Discussion Group
Sunday, January 27, 4:30–5:30 p.m.

Division Leadership
Saturday, January 26, 8:30–11:30 a.m.

Executive Committee
Thursday, January 24, 2–4 p.m.

Geisel Award Committee (2013)*
Friday, January 25, 8 a.m.–10 p.m.
Saturday, January 26, 8 a.m.–10 p.m.
Sunday, January 27, 8–10 a.m.

Geisel Award Committee (2014)
Sunday, January 27, 1–4 p.m.

Library Service to Special Populations/Candlewick Grant*
Sunday, January 27, 8:30–11:30 a.m.

Newbery Award Committee (2013)*
Friday, January 25, 8 a.m.–10 p.m.
Saturday, January 26, 8 a.m.–10 p.m.
Sunday, January 27, 8–10 a.m.

Newbery Award Committee (2014)
Saturday, January 26, 1–4 p.m.

Notable Children's Books Committee
Friday, January 25, 1:30–4:30 p.m.
Saturday, January 26, 1:30–4:30 p.m.
Sunday, January 27, 1:30–4:30 p.m.
Monday, January 28, 1:30–4:30 p.m.
Tuesday, January 29, 8 a.m.–12 noon

Notable Children's Recordings Committee
Friday, January 25, 9 a.m.–5:30 p.m.
Saturday, January 26, 9 a.m.–5:30 p.m.
Sunday, January 27, 1:30–9 p.m.

Odyssey Award Committee (2013)*
Friday, January 25, 8:30 a.m.–8:30 p.m.
Saturday, January 26, 10:30 a.m.–8:30 p.m.
Sunday, January 27, 8:30–11:30 a.m.

Odyssey Award Committee (2014)
Saturday, January 26, 4:30–6:30 p.m.

Past Presidents' Breakfast
Saturday, January 26, 7–9 a.m.

Priority Group Consultants
Saturday, January 26, 7–8:30 a.m.

Sibert Award Committee (2013)*
Friday, January 25, 8 a.m.–10 p.m.
Saturday, January 26, 8 a.m.–10 p.m.
Sunday, January 27, 8–10 a.m.

Sibert Award Committee (2014)
Sunday, January 27, 4:30–6:30 p.m.

Special Collections & Bechtel Fellowship Committee*
Sunday, January 27, 8 a.m.–12 noon

Speed Networking
Friday, January 25, 7:30–9 p.m.

Storytelling Discussion Group
Monday, January 28, 8–10 p.m.

Summer Reading Update (ALSC, PLA, YALSA)
Sunday, January 27, 10:30–11:30 a.m.

Wilder Award Committee (2013)*
Saturday, January 26, 8 a.m.–5 p.m.
Sunday, January 27, 8–10 a.m.

For an up-to-date list of ALSC meetings, visit www.ala.org/alsc and click on "Con-ferences & Events." Always consult your *Conference Program Book* and supplement onsite for any late changes.

2013 Slate of Candidates

Vice-President/President-Elect
Ellen Riordan, Enoch Pratt Free Library, Baltimore, Md.
Rhonda Gould, Lakeshores Library System, Waterford, Wis.

Fiscal Officer
Bryan McCormick, Hedberg Public Library, Janesville, Wis.
Diane Foote, Dominican University, River Forest, Ill.

Board of Directors
Megan Schliesman, University of Wisconsin-Madison
Alison O'Reilly, Cutchogue New Suffolk (N.Y.) Free Library

New-to-ALSC Board Member
Gretchen Caserotti, Darien (Conn.) Library
Meagan Albright, Alvin Sherman Library, Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.

Caldecott Committee, 2015
Shilo Pearson, Chicago Public Library
Dianna Burt, Hessen Cassel Branch Library, Fort Wayne, Ind.
Jonathan Hunt, Modesto (Calif.) City Schools
Lucia Acosta, Princeton (N.J.) Public Library
Bradley Debrick, Johnson County Library, Shawnee Mission, Kan.
Barbara Klipper, Ferguson Library, Stamford, Conn.
Amy Lilien-Harper, Ferguson Library, Stamford, Conn.
Susan Kusel, Dream on Books, Arlington, Va.
Angela Reynolds, Annapolis Valley Regional Library, Bridgetown, NS, Canada
Charlene McKenzie, Rondo Community Outreach Library, Saint Paul, Minn.
Jennifer Smith, Suffern (N.Y.) Free Library
Adrienne Furness, Webster (N.Y.) Public Library
Kay Evey, Tukwila (Wash.) Elementary School
Brenda Dales, Miami University, Oxford, Ohio

Lindsay Huth, Arlington Heights (Ill.) Memorial Library
Mike Rogalla, Champaign (Ill.) Public Library

Newbery Committee, 2015
Lucinda Whitehurst, St. Christopher's School, Richmond, Va.
Sondra Eklund, Fairfax County (Va.) Public Library
Beth Rosania, Bellevue (Wash.) Public Library
Abby Johnson, New Albany-Floyd County (Ind.) Public Library
Rachael Vilmar, Eastern Shore Regional Library, Salisbury, Md.
Stan Steiner, Boise (Idaho) State University
Janet Thompson, Chicago Public Library
Sharon Haupt, San Luis Coastal Unified School District, San Luis Obispo, Calif.
Armin Arethna, Berkeley (Calif.) Public Library
Kay Webster, Greene County Public Library, Xenia, Ohio
Jennifer Longee, Durham (N.C.) Academy Middle School
Lolly Gepson, Northbrook (Ill.) Public Library
Stephanie Bange, Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio
Jennifer Brown, Shelf Awareness, New York
Sabrina Carnesi, Crittenden Middle School, Newport News, Va.
Sarah Prielipp, Saginaw Chippewa Tribal College, Mount Pleasant, Mich.

Sibert Committee, 2015
Dona Helmer, College Gate Elementary School, Anchorage, Alaska
Maria Pontillas, Tacoma (Wash.) Public Library
Krista Britton, Prince William County Schools, Manassas, Va.
Ann Carlson, Oak Park & River Forest (Ill.) High School
Sam Bloom, Blue Ash Library, Cincinnati
Beth Olshewsky, Tulane County Office of Education, Visalia, Calif.
Kendra Jones, Fort Vancouver (Wash.) Regional Library
Erlene Killeen, Stoughton (Wis.) Area School District
Christopher Lassen, Astoria, N.Y.
One candidate TBA ✍

Children and Libraries

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Prepared by Judith Reading

Sp12=No. 1 Spring 2012
Su12=No. 2 Summer/Fall 2012
W12=No. 3 Winter 2012

The Fun of "Found Poetry"

Travis Jonker

For kids, *heck, for anyone*, writing poetry can be tricky. The ambiguousness of the genre has a way of causing fits. The more concrete-thinking or self-conscious among us can spend a lot of time fretting over the concept of capturing some sort of emotion on the page.

Enter the book spine cento. It's a form of poetry that's easy to try, easy to be successful, and offers a challenge that will hook kids who consider traditional poetry daunting.

In other words, it's tailor-made for your next poetry program.

It was more than three years ago when I happened upon the book spine cento. During my online wanderings, I arrived at the site of artist Nina Katchadourian, who has a gallery of her book spine poems. This sort of "found poetry" was fascinating. Stacking books, titles showing, to create something brand new excited me. I had to try it myself, especially with April, National Poetry Month, just around the corner. After creating a few poems of my own, I decided to try it with the students at my school library, to great success.

The results were a lovely sight to see. After some trial and error, here are my tips I offer kids for creating a book spine cento of their own:

- Check out other book spine poems for inspiration. I usu-ally send them to the gallery on my blog, *100 Scope Notes* (100scopenotes.com) to get the gears turning.
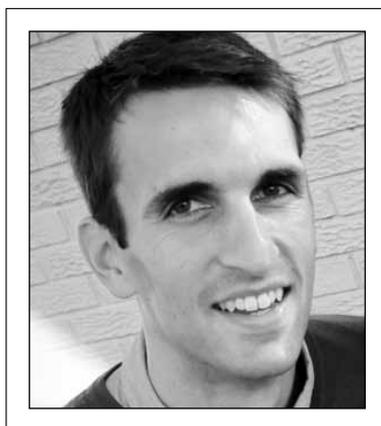
- Get to a place with plenty of books. Naturally, a library works nicely.

- Start looking at titles, and see what strikes you. Arrange and rearrange in your head. The best part of this type of poetry is the fact that you don't know where you'll end up.

- It can be long, it can be short—the choice is up to you.

- Have a pencil and paper with you to write down titles that stand out—you can refer back to them later.

- Don't be afraid to use the library catalog to look up titles with specific words or phrases that fit.

Although poetry can be intimidating, this is a form that just about any kid can get into. The book spine cento is a simple way to celebrate National Poetry Month, or poetry year-round.

Travis Jonker is an elementary school librarian for Wayland (Mich.) Union Schools. He is a member of the American Library Association, reviews books and digital resources for School Library Journal, *and writes about children's literature at his blog* 100 Scope Notes.

Photos by Travis Jonker

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.