

Children & Libraries

the journal of the Association for
Library Service to Children

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The PLAY issue: **P**lay, **L**iteracy, and **Y**outh

Sendak, Riordan, Joyce: Read More About 'Em!

Making Mentoring Work

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ON THE COVER: Puppets poke out of the "P is for Purple Puppet Theatre," designed by the Burgeon Group. Photo by Jason Doiy taken at the San Francisco Public Library.



Editor's Note Power of Play

By Sharon Verbeten

When I was a child, I never considered that my play time was actually teaching me something. I was just having too much fun to notice.

But now, as a parent and librarian, I'm well aware that every puzzle my daughter puts together, every play dinner she serves me, and every pulse she pretends to take are all part of one of the five vital early literacy practices. Play is a stepping stone to learning more about the world around her.

And, as few people could say it better, Mr. Rogers noted, "Play gives children a chance to practice what they are learning."

Several practitioners in this issue share with our readers how they've incorporated play into their library environments, and how children and families are responding. Each practitioner may approach play in his or her own way, with whatever resources are available, but the takeaway should be clear: allow children the opportunity and freedom to play, and, to paraphrase Dr. Seuss, "Oh, the places they'll go!"

Icon Denotes Peer-Reviewed Articles

Readers will notice a new feature this issue: a star icon (pictured) to indicate those articles that are peer-reviewed (refereed).

Children and Libraries (CAL) has always appealed to a wide audience, including public and school librarians but also academic faculty and college students. Researchers who publish in *CAL* will now be assured that their articles will "count" as peer-reviewed (a double-blind process), and students may cite these articles in their papers when required to use peer-reviewed articles. *CAL* also will continue to publish interviews, feature columns, essays, ALSC News, award acceptance speeches, and more.

Caldecott to Mark Anniversary

Next year, 2013, will mark the 75th anniversary of the Randolph Caldecott Medal. Quick, without looking—do you know what book won the 1938 medal? It was *Animals of the Bible, a Picture Book*, illustrated by Dorothy P. Lathrop with text selected by Helen Dean Fish.

You may not remember the book or the year, but ALSC is looking forward to honoring the longevity of the medal with a special issue of *Children and Libraries*, set to publish in May 2013.

It may seem like a long way off, but we're well underway with the planning for editorial features, photos, and maybe a few surprises. Watch the journal and our ALSC website, blog, and Facebook page for updates as the year goes on.

Children & Libraries

the journal of the Association for
Library Service to Children

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Statement of Purpose

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

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We Play Here!

Bringing the Power of Play into Children's Libraries

BETSY DIAMANT-COHEN, TESS PRENDERGAST, CHRISTY ESTROVITZ, CARRIE BANKS, AND KIM VAN DER VEEN



"Play is the child's natural medium of self-expression."

Picture a child serving up a pretend cup of tea to her teddy bears. Picture a child getting messy in the sandbox, this time with a real-life friend. Picture a child pretending to be his favorite animal and gleefully chasing his mom, roaring all the while.

As light-hearted and whimsical these may be, while we conjure these images of children playing, we should also consider that play is the *work* of childhood. Children take play seriously, and so should we. For children, and especially young children, play is the process of building knowledge of the world and their place in it. A child's brain adapts to the environments in which they are nurtured and in which they play.

While play may seem to be a natural part of childhood, many children in our communities face barriers to playtime that can have detrimental effects on their long-term health and development. Many families living in poverty are unable to access opportunities for their children to explore and play. Safety concerns in some neighborhoods lead to children staying

home for long stretches of time with fewer opportunities to learn new words, make friends, or have extended periods of free play outdoors.

Research in this area has determined that children living in chronic poverty tend to demonstrate lags in language, cognitive, social, and physical development as compared to their age peers who are not impoverished.²

Somewhat ironically, affluent children are often rushed from one "enriching activity" to the next, with little time left for free play. Children with disabilities have the added barrier of multiple therapy and medical appointments that eat into time that could otherwise be spent playing. Also, anecdotal evidence from families suggests that environmental and social barriers to inclusion persist in many settings.³

This article attempts to explain both the developmental benefits of play for *all* children while offering concrete and practical examples of ways that children's librarians can promote, provide, and support play experiences while working with children and their families. Play is essential, and much of

Dr. Betsy Diamant-Cohen is a children's programming consultant and trainer who has worked in children's museums and public libraries for more than thirty years. She has an MLS and a doctorate in communications design. **Tess Prendergast**, a children's librarian at Vancouver (B.C.) Public Library for fifteen years, has just begun working on her PhD in early literacy at the University of British Columbia. **Christy Estrovitz** is the Early Literacy Specialist with the San Francisco Public Library and member of the Every Child Ready to Read Oversight Committee. **Carrie Banks** is the librarian in charge of The Child's Place for Children with Special Needs and Kismobile at the Brooklyn (N.Y.) Public Library. She has been working with children with disabilities for more than thirty-five years, long before she got her BA in Developmental Psychology or her MLS. **Kim van der Veen** combined her love of libraries (she was the Administrative Manager, Phoenix (Ariz.) Public Library), and informal learning (she was Executive Director, Children's Museum of Phoenix), to start the Burgeon Group.



At a San Francisco Public Library Branch, a young patron plays with a toy that measures height and asks about reading habits too. Photo by Jason Doiy.

what we do in our work both inside and outside of the library can support the revival of playtime in the lives of children.

What the research tells us:

- A recent study reports that children age eight to eighteen spend an average of seven hours and thirty-eight minutes in front of at least one media screen per day.⁴
- Less than half of American children have a playground within walking distance of their home.⁵
- Parents often bring work home, spending time on work-related tasks that could be spent with their children.⁶

In “The Vital Role of Play in Early Childhood Education,” author Joan Almon documents the demise of play in the United States.⁷ A recent *New York Times* article by Hilary Stout repeated her concerns.⁸ These pieces present compelling evidence that children participating in too many organized and structured activities demonstrate diminished imagination, children under pressure to complete homework in their earliest years of life experience heightened stress levels, and childhood obesity is still a major health concern because sedentary activities have replaced active play.

For example, around the country, many preschools have replaced free play and recess with academics, expecting children under five to spend their time sitting in seats and memorizing information. Schools might try to improve math test scores by having young students take practice math tests instead of providing the children with more developmentally appropriate and hands-on experience with manipulatives, thereby building the children’s concepts of quantity.

In these settings, building with blocks, playing outdoors, and creating “delicious desserts” out of sand are no longer standard staples of preschool life. It is no wonder that more young children are obese and exhibit signs of depression.

The passage of No Child Left Behind has created a situation in U.S. schools in which teachers must prepare even very young students for standardized tests, leaving less time for creative and more playful (but still educational!) pursuits. This pressure to perform well on standardized tests (dire consequences await teachers and schools whose students perform poorly) also seems to have trickled down to some segments of the early childhood community.⁹

Many early childhood educators, however, recognize the importance of cognitive skills developing in harmony with social and emotional skills. For instance, in Maryland, early childhood educators assess children’s skills, behaviors, and knowledge using the Work Sampling system of the MMSR (Maryland Model for School Readiness). These assessments help teachers pinpoint what their students know, are able to do on their own, and what skills are still emerging.

The focus is not just on academic learning, however; there also is a focus on social and personal development, the arts, and physical development. This all-encompassing definition for school readiness, demonstrated by this particular assessment, seems to be the exception rather than the rule, as much of the discourse around school-readiness includes more academic skills such as early reading, writing, and math knowledge. In this paradigm, early learning is in serious danger of being seen as a product, not a process, and the end result may be that children miss out on the benefits of simply learning through play.

Scientists, psychologists, other medical professionals, and educators say that “most of the social and intellectual skills one needs to succeed in life and work are first developed through childhood play.”¹⁰ In *Ghosts from the Nursery: Tracing the Roots of Violence*, authors Robin Karr-Morse and Meredith S. Wiley discuss the lack of playful, loving connections with an adult in the first three years of life as one factor leading to violent behavior in adults.¹¹

Research conducted by Stuart Brown, founder of the National Institute of Play, showed that violent individuals *all* had severe play deprivation in their childhoods. His research concluded that when children do not play, they demonstrate social, emotional, and cognitive narrowing. They are less able to handle stress and experience higher rates of depression.¹²

Play, then, is a catalyst for positive socialization; when children are not given the opportunity to play, the long-term consequences can be severe.

While we understand that play has a powerful influence on children’s development, we also are faced with the truth that children’s play often is marginalized and undervalued in our society. To counteract this situation, a growing movement seeks to restore play to the lives of children. As children’s librarians,

we believe we have a vital role to play in this restoration of play as the prime activity of childhood.

Even in their youngest years, children benefit from play. Watch a three-month-old child explore her environment. She is concentrating every sense on this moment. She will feel, listen, look, smell, and most assuredly taste everything that comes her way.

Spontaneous play opportunities can abound in children's early years, and they harness these experiences to maximize their own learning and development. Far from needing structure and an ever-ticking activity clock, young children benefit most from extended opportunities to play in environments suited to their development.

Lev Vygotsky, a Russian child psychologist and educational pioneer, conceptualized something he called “the zone of proximal development” in the early part of the twentieth century. This zone ranges from what a child is able to accomplish independently all the way to what he or she is unable to do without support from an adult or more experienced peer. The child's development, assisted by others, through the zone of proximal development has been described as “scaffolding,” or “scaffolded learning.”¹³

When it comes to play, children with disabilities are more like children without disabilities than not. They experience the same benefits and also have a difficult time finding the opportunity to play. In fact, for children with disabilities, play is even more important. In general, play helps the child with a disability “express herself, develop a positive image of herself, and learn to interact with the rest of the world.”¹⁴ It is an opportunity to develop new social, communication, and physical skills and a motivation to practice these skills in a “normal” environment. These are the skills they will eventually need in school, the community, and the workplace.¹⁵

Children with and without disabilities share in the benefits of inclusive play. Both sets of children develop friendships and an appreciation for diversity, increase their acceptance of individual difference, and experience an increase in empathy and social cognition.¹⁶ Additionally, Vygotsky emphasized the importance of providing children with disabilities with the same kinds of learning opportunities to advance their development as their nondisabled peers.¹⁷

So, play is an important factor in the development of *all* children. Not only does play encourage imagination, we are beginning to understand that it also helps children develop important lifelong skills such as emotional control, social competency, personal resiliency, and continuing curiosity about the world.

Children's Librarians' Role in the Revival of Play

Play is so important that the recently revised Every Child Ready to Read® @ your library now includes play as one of the five elements essential to the development of early literacy skills.¹⁸ In this way, practitioners and parents are encouraged to utilize the rich learning opportunities that talking, singing,

How Babies' Play Experiences Help Them Learn

- Interaction with adults by smiling, cooing, and imitating sounds helps develop communication skills.
- Exploring the properties of objects—how they feel and taste, what they do when shaken, how something might change if it is wet or frozen—is the beginning of observation and scientific exploration.
- Sensory exploration—feeling different textures and touching and holding things—is a precursor to writing.

Young children are thoroughly engrossed in the absorption of new information. Their interactions with people, objects, and events construct their new knowledge. Furthermore, children are attracted to activities that correspond to their current developmental needs. For example, young children delight in playing peek-a-boo as they develop the concept of *object permanence*, which is the understanding that objects continue to exist even when they are out of sight.* Through play, they are learning about the names of things and concepts, ways of interacting with others, their role in the world, and they are developing their own sense of self.

*Jean Piaget, Howard E. Gruber, and J. Jacques Vonèche, *The Essential Piaget: An Interpretive Reference and Guide*. (Northvale, N.J.: J. Aronson, 1995).

reading, writing, and playing offer young children. (For more information, visit www.everychildreadytoread.org).

With the enhancements to Every Child Ready to Read @ your library, play has now been embraced as part of the public library's mission to support children in their early years and their families. Many public libraries have already begun incorporating play into programs and spaces, and we encourage readers to gain inspiration from these examples.

The later development of abstract processing requires first the development of language and literacy skills. We must build the ability to talk about, record, and recall the universe we are discovering. The library is the center of this aspect of play. Play in the library involves learning about the world, telling and hearing stories, and the transition to the world of abstract learning. For the young child, the early steps in these activities are rooted in play.

Here are some ways you may see play enacted in your libraries (in other words, you are already supporting play!)

- Playing with musical instruments gives children the opportunity to express themselves nonverbally. Learning what happens when a maraca is shaken or a bell is rung encourages scientific exploration through experimentation with cause and effect. Playing along to music strengthens

More Benefits of Play for the Young Child

- Language skills by talking with others during play and looking at books.
- Social skills, such as sharing while playing with toys and patience while waiting for a turn.
- Self-control, such as learning to stop through freeze games and knowing how to “use words and not hands” to solve an argument.
- Creativity through imagination and role-playing games.
- Problem-solving skills by solving puzzles and following rules.
- Understanding of symbols by using pretend play to imagine that one object really is something else. (For more information, visit <http://zerotothree.org/child-development/play/power-of-play-learning.html>.)

listening skills and fine motor coordination. You do not have to present an entire program on music. Rather, incorporate five minutes of musical instruments into your already existing programs and see how much richer they become.

- Participating in arts-and-crafts activities helps children build fine motor skills while cutting, pasting, or coloring. Exposure to a wide variety of art materials encourages creativity, and learning how to look at art enhances visual literacy.
- Using colored scarves sparks the imagination, inspires free-form body movements, provides librarians with opportunities to talk about colors, and exposes children to unusual textures. Play recorded music for a few minutes during a program, and move along with the scarves.
- Puppet play in storytime helps children explore ways to communicate ideas and feelings. By using a puppet as a mouthpiece, even very shy children can be encouraged to attempt independent learning experiences. Puppets can illustrate new vocabulary words, create a bond with storytime children by giving frequent hugs or kisses (which a human librarian could not do), and capture the attention of easily distractible children.
- Baby programs encourage playful bonding between parents and their children. Songs, rhymes, and fingerplays are presented that can be replicated at home. Librarians use playful rhymes and games to help children learn school readiness skills. They model playful behavior for parents and can talk about the importance of play.
- Playing around with picturebooks, such as showing animal illustrations in Eric Carle’s *The Very Busy Spider* and singing a song about the sounds the animals make rather than reading

the book aloud, instills a love of books, which can lead to improved language and literacy skills and more positive associations with reading in general.

More Playful Examples from the Field

Mother Goose on the Loose®

Mother Goose on the Loose is a parent/baby program used in public libraries throughout the United States. With nursery rhymes as the basis, this program seamlessly integrates book reading, singing, looking at book illustrations, playing musical instruments, reciting rhymes, waving colored scarves, puppet play, and interacting playfully with one’s caregiver. It intrinsically incorporates activities that help children build self-confidence and self-regulation skills such as sharing, taking turns, showing appreciation to others, following directions, and receiving positive reinforcement.

San Francisco Public Library

Baby Rhyme Time

Children’s services staff members at the San Francisco Public Library (SFPL) believe that libraries are natural gathering places for new parents, and that the library is uniquely positioned to offer playful programs and spaces. In response to noticing that the greatest need in serving young children was actually serving new parents, the literacy-based Baby Rhyme Time was expanded by introducing a playtime segment to support the emotional and social needs of caregivers and their babies. The pilot program at the Mission Branch Library received instant praise and popularity. Playtimes quickly became an integral early literacy service.

Components of a successful playtime are simple: a safe programmable space, staff to manage books, toys, and time. By expanding the storytime with playtime, caregivers relax after a hurried trip, mingle with other caregivers, connect as a community, observe other babies, and actually enjoy their child in the library setting. New parents crave and, more importantly, need these opportunities and outings.

Benefits of playtime include:

- supporting the social and emotional needs of babies and caregivers;
- creating an inviting environment for exploration;
- fostering new relationships; and
- positioning the library as the early literacy resource for families.

Here Come the Toys!

Start with an attractive collection of board books and hearty stock of bubbles. Build your program with balls, sorting toys, discovery boxes, scarves, bells, shakers, rattles, linking toys,

exploration tunnel, toys with mirrors, and creative dramatic toys. Young ones discover the world through their senses, especially taste. Be prepared to clean the toys before the next session. For cleaning, use soap and warm water or Clorox Green Works Compostable Wipes. Allow to dry overnight, and toys are ready for the next program.

On a shoestring budget, simply pass out board books, articulate how books are a child's first toy, turn on the tunes, and blow bubbles. At SFPL, some staff members incorporate a ritual by singing an opening and closing song.

Amy Perry, SFPL children's librarian, uses playtimes as an informal opportunity to get to know the community. With a warm smile, she walks around the room and speaks with each pair, especially new attendees. Perry sparks a conversation by asking open-ended questions, sharing an observation from the storytime, mentioning an upcoming program, or commenting on what the child is doing. These friendly chats cultivate a supportive community for new parents and welcoming environment for all. Also, she says, when in doubt, blow bubbles and turn on music, such as The Beatles, Putamayo Kids' Latin Playground, Frances England, or any cheerful tunes. Playtimes hold intrinsic value of providing families with an opportunity to play, socialize, and enjoy this special time. Friendships and playgroups form during playtimes.

Brooklyn Public Library

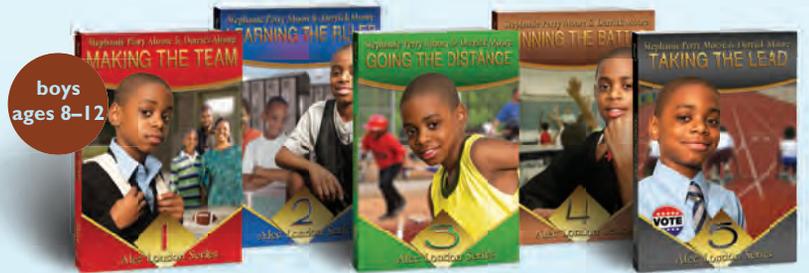
Including children with disabilities in these kinds of play opportunities is easier than you might think: it starts with the environment. Program spaces should be accessible to children with physical disabilities. Supportive chairs, such as cube chairs, and large foam blocks for support during floor play allow children to be on the same level. The area should be stimulating, but not overwhelming. Many typically developing young children, as well as those with autism or sensory processing dysfunction, are easily overwhelmed by too much sensory input. For that reason, background noise, such as music playing on a CD throughout the playtime, may prove to be a barrier for some children.

EDUCATIONAL, ENCOURAGING, AND ENTERTAINING



girls
ages 7-9

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The Morgan Love Series (written for girls, 7-9 years old) and the Alec London Series (written for boys, 8-12 years old) are chapter book series that provide moral lessons to aid in character development. These series will also help youth develop their vocabulary, English, and math skills as they read through the stories and complete the entertaining and educational exercises provided at the end of each chapter and in the back of the book.

You may purchase these series through your favorite library distributor or contact Moody Publishers customer service directly at 1-800-678-8812.





Two children collaborate to play their own invented music on the Magic Music Box in Vancouver (Wash.) Community Library.

The Child's Place for Children with Special Needs at the Brooklyn Public Library hosts inclusive playtimes. The toys and learning materials make up another essential element of inclusive play. They should appeal to multiple senses. For example, alphabet blocks with Braille are both visually and tactilely appealing. Try to have multiple varieties of the same toy: wooden trains, Lego trains, and remote-control trains will accommodate children with a wide range of physical and intellectual abilities.

There should be activities for children with divergent abilities. For example, puzzles with large knobs and texture appeal to young children, children with physical disabilities, children with developmental delays, and children who are blind. Smaller, more complex puzzles may prove attractive to children engaging in social play, older children, strong mathematical learners, and some children on the autism spectrum.

Finally, the materials in your collections, whether they are toys or literature, must reflect the children you work with. Dolls reflecting the variety of heritages seen in your community are important, as are dolls that use wheelchairs, mobility canes, hearing aids, and assistive animals. Toys designed for children with disabilities, and commercially available ones, should both be part of your collections and available to all children. The National Lekotek Center (www.lekotek.org) is a good resource for information on adaptive toys.

Playtime Tips

Inclusive play depends on communication in all its forms. Children may use speech, sign language, picture symbols, or computer-generated speech, so you should normalize these communication modalities. Have a set of picture symbols for basic words and learn some basic signs. Twenty or so words will get you started.

Model your acceptance of communication boards and communication apps found on a variety of devices. And talk about talking! At a gardening program we conducted several years ago, Anthony (a child with autism) communicated with picture symbols pointing to “yes,” “no,” “want,” etc. There was also a Spanish-speaking family in this same program, so I began a discussion about what language we use at home, which led to the children teaching each other words in their language, including sign language (me) and picture symbols (Anthony). We all went home knowing new words that day. These important inclusive conversations can take place naturally and informally in the course of playtimes.

Vancouver Public Library

In a partnership program targeted to children with speech-language delays, facilitators have witnessed previously silent children burst into speech and action while they reinvent segments of the story they have just learned with toys and other props (such as felt board stories).

Unhindered by any structure or routine, children are free to explore story elements in ways that make sense to them, and they are able to use multi-sensory avenues to experience the story. As children with disabilities and children without disabilities are more alike than different, we believe that these same opportunities for language and literacy learning during playtime after storytime can easily be made available for *all* children.

Playtime Tips

After storytime, leave out your props, puppets, and felt board stories and invite children to play with them, move them around, talk about them, talk to them, talk to others, and reenact the stories they have just heard or invent totally new ones. This simple addition to already existing programs takes a bit of extra time; it's best to stay in the room to facilitate the play and be on hand to talk to parents and caregivers. This added playtime sends a message to parents that unstructured literacy-based play is valuable. At the same time, librarians can model and encourage this kind of literacy play at home by drawing attention to story elements that can easily be reenacted with toys of all kinds. For example, it is easy to act out various versions of Nicola Smee's wonderful *Clip Clop* with just a handful of stuffed animals, with either the child or adult playing the part of the horse. Provide picture books that encourage playful reenactments, and let young imaginations soar.

Other Examples

- Vancouver (Wash.) Community Library opened the largest early literacy space in the nation in July 2011. In more than 4,500 square feet, zones are designed to meet state standards in early learning while enticing parents to play with their children. Filled with library materials and prompts for playing, singing, reading, and talking, more than twenty sculptures and activity pods fill five unique zones. From the River Zone

Twenty-Five Playful Picturebooks

These books have been selected because of the ease in which they can be adapted to open-ended play scenarios. For example, many can be acted out with a few stuffed toys or household items. Others have elements that can easily be incorporated into dramatic or fantasy play. Encourage children to adapt the story they know to create their own unique interpretations together. Your own library shelves are filled with many more playful picture books!

Allen, Pamela. *Who Sank the Boat?* Illus. by the author. Coward-McCann, 1983. 32p.

Beaumont, Karen. *Move Over, Rover.* Illus. by Jane Dyer. Harcourt, 2006. 40p.

Bloom, Suzanne. *The Bus for Us.* Illus. by the author. Boyds Mills, 2001. 32p.

Brett, Jan. *The Mitten: A Ukrainian Folktale.* Illus. by the author. Putnam, 1989. 32p.

Burningham, John. *Mr. Gumpy's Outing.* Illus. by the author. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970. 32p.

Campbell, Rod. *Dear Zoo.* Illus. by the author. Four Winds, 1982. 18p.

Christelow, Eileen. *Five Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed.* Illus. by the author. Clarion, 1989. 32p.

Dodd, Emma. *Dog's Colorful Day: A Messy Story about Colors and Counting.* Illus. by the author. Dutton, 2001. 32p.

Dunbar, Polly. *Penguin.* Illus. by the author. Candlewick, 2007. 40p.

Faulkner, Keith. *The Wide-Mouthed Frog: A Pop-Up Book.* Illus. by Jonathan Lambert. Dial, 1996. 16p.

Feiffer, Jules. *Bark, George.* Illus. by the author. HarperCollins, 1999. 32p.

Finn, Isobel. *The Very Lazy Ladybug.* Illus. by Jack Tickle. Scholastic, 2001. 32p.

Hacohen, Dean. *Tuck Me In!* Illus. by Sherry Scharschmidt. Candlewick, 2010. 40p.

Harris, Robie H. *Maybe a Bear Ate It!* Illus. by Michael Emberley. Orchard, 2008. 40p.

Hort, Lenny. *The Seals on the Bus.* Illus. by G. Brian Karas. Henry Holt, 2000. 32p.

Lillegard, Dee. *Sitting in My Box.* Illus. by Jon Agee. Marshall Cavendish, 2010. 32p.

Litwin, Eric. *Pete the Cat: I Love My White Shoes.* Illus. by James Dean. HarperCollins, 2010. 40p.

Numeroff, Laura Joffe. *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie.* Illus. by Felicia Bond. Harper & Row, 1985. 32p.

Rosen, Michael. *We're Going on a Bear Hunt.* Illus. by Helen Oxenbury. Margaret K. McElderry, 1989. 40p.

Slobodkina, Esphyr. *Caps for Sale; A Tale of a Peddler, Some Monkeys & Their Monkey Business.* Illus. by the author. W. R. Scott, 1947. 42p.

Smee, Nicola. *Clip-Clap.* Illus. by the author. Boxer, 2006. 28p.

Taylor, Thomas. *Little Mouse and the Big Cupcake.* Illus. by Jill Barton. Boxer, 2010. 32p.

Waddell, Martin. *Owl Babies.* Illus. by Patrick Benson. Candlewick, 1992. 32p.

Williams, Sue. *I Went Walking.* Illus. by Julie Vivas. Harcourt, 1990. 32p.

Wood, Audrey. *The Napping House.* Illus. by Don Wood. Harcourt, 1984. 32p.

to the Land of Imagination, the Light Tower Zone, and the Mechanical Artworks, more than half of the activities and toys were invented for the space. Imaginative play takes center stage with structures like a Spy Craft, Pretend Garden Café, and Weather Wind, while children and parents alike learn to play with brand new activities like the Magic Music Box.

- In Maryland, Storyville is located inside two Baltimore County Public Libraries. These interactive early literacy and learning centers are “child-sized villages that include developmentally appropriate books and activities” (bcplstoryville.org/storyville_about.html). Designed to provide a safe, educational, and fun environment that supports parents’ roles as their child’s

first and best teachers, each village provides opportunities for children with their caregivers to read, play, and learn together in a literacy-rich environment. In addition to the physical space, regularly scheduled learning parties for caregivers and their children are led by librarians.

- The Waukegan (Ill.) Public Library has an Early Learning Center in the Children’s Department that includes an art studio, music hall, nature and play center, crawl space, theater, and math and science lab (www.waukeganpl.org/kids/elc).
- Little Heights is a special PLAYroom in the Cleveland Heights–University Heights (Ohio) Library that has carefully

chosen play materials to help children “learn the art of counting, sorting, matching, and much more.” Free drop-in sessions are held throughout the year. This dedicated space within the library is open to the public three days a week (www.familyconnections1.org/facilities/littleheights.php).

- The Farmington Community Library in Michigan has an indoor percussion playground on one side of the children's room. Careful construction and soundproofing allow children to experiment with sound and play a variety of percussion instruments without disturbing other library visitors.
- Laramie County Public Library in Cheyenne, Wyoming, has a large-scale “book factory” with conveyor belts, a twenty-foot-long Bookmobile, and animation kiosks with more than one hundred activities for young children and their families (www.lclsonline.org/children).
- In Ohio, the “Librainium” in Lakewood Public Library has a life-sized paper boat covered with local news, book reviews, songs, and fishy tales for young children, families, and caregivers. Their several hundred activities include a letter factory and an alphabet whirligig to entice families to visit and play at the library regularly (www.lkwdpl.org/art).

Inviting and Encouraging Play

Most adults have developed the ability to focus their attention. A young child will pay attention nearly equally to all of her sensory inputs. Through a process referred to as sensory integration, children learn to connect sensory inputs by source, and then to focus their attention to specific sources of sensory inputs. The later development of abstract processing requires first the development of language and literacy skills.

Through experiences, we build the ability to talk about (via multiple communication modes), record, and recall the universe we are discovering. The library is the ideal champion and destination for aspects of play that support the development of language and literacy development. Play in the library involves learning about the world, telling and hearing stories, and the transition to the world of abstract learning. For the young child, the early steps in these activities are rooted in play.

Several decades ago, it was unusual to find community spaces intended for children outside of parks, schools, children's museums, or entertainment centers like Disney's theme parks. Even in public libraries, the physical world was primarily designed for adults, with perhaps some child-sized furnishings.

More recently, library designers have looked to parks, schools, children's museums, and Disney World as inspiration for ways to make their children's areas more inviting.

But what if libraries were to reinvent the notion of play at the library? How would library play look and feel different from play at home, in a preschool, in a park, or in a children's museum? If the nature of a child's environment has a profound impact

on how a child plays and grows, why not make a different play environment at the library? How can libraries, in other words, make unique learning environments that are distinct from these other play and learning models?

How do libraries engage children and families as a critical and necessary destination for all ages? Libraries have materials and resources that are not available elsewhere, so how do we integrate books, materials, and other media into how we think about play in spaces?

One simple model is to identify toys and manipulatives that relate to your special collections, like color, alphabet, numbers, and shapes, and then create integrated materials and activity tabletops, kiosks, or spaces that reflect the content of those collections.

In the Vancouver (Wash.) Community Library, a series of special collections were identified and used as a springboard for more than twenty large-scale play structures in five learning zones. One structure, the Magic Music Box, is a creative, collaborative, large-scale replica of sheet music, which allows children to add wooden notes (balls) on a conveyor belt and have them make music by turning the handle and having the notes fall off onto a xylophone. It requires the collaboration of at least three participants exploring through play how the toy works and taking turns at different stations to make the music work. This piece is accompanied by a collection of music books for inspiration, to take home, to learn more, or to match patterns to hear sheet music revealed. This toy is creative, open-ended, collaborative, and evolves as participants learn more about how it works.

Like music itself, there are endless variations for learning about melody, chords, harmony, and tempo. Because caregivers have never seen it before, and are often puzzled about how it works, children often become the explorers, showing their parents how to play. Hidden along the side of the music box are messages and hints for play for parents to prompt their child, evoking Vygotsky's concept of the proximal zone of development with questions like, “What does a triangle sound like?” “What does a letter sound like?” “What happens if . . . ?”¹⁹

Although an elaborate example, the same basic principle of providing collaborative play opportunities can be successfully applied in any library. Create a literacy café! With a simple set of dishes, a table, and some graphics taped down (burner, grill, etc.), you will soon see dramatic play blossom. Add in a menu of play for parents (with suggestions for how to interact at various ages and with a few jokes for good measure), and you'll have a bustle of play right next to a collection of books selected for the experience. Soon you'll see a child consult a “cookbook” in dramatic play, use a book as a serving platter, and even ask a parent to choose from board book menu of fruit shapes.

Since play is truly how children learn, the time is ripe to explore how that play relates to collections, programs, space, and how play can be integrated into the library.

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The Preschool Literacy And You (PLAY) Room

Creating an Early Literacy Play Area in Your Library

CONSTANCE DICKERSON



When we learned our library had been awarded a Museum and Library Services (LSTA) Grant from the State Library of Ohio, it couldn't have come at a more opportune time. We were renovating the branch that we'd identified as recipient for the grant to create a preschool literacy PLAYroom, which we call the Preschool Literacy and You (PLAY) room.

The space intended for our story room quickly morphed into a PLAYroom; we thought we could hold storytimes in our meeting room or in the general children's area by moving a few tables back. The opportunity to outfit a designated 24-by-18-foot space was a dream come true.

For those of you who do not have the good fortune of devoting a separate room to early literacy play, it is my goal to demonstrate how you can achieve some of the same objectives by adapting your current space with a limited budget.

We were inspired by our earlier collaboration with Family Connections, a local agency dedicated to parent education. We partnered with them in 2003 to win a grant to create an early literacy PLAYroom in a newly acquired building adjoining our main library. As with our recent grant, the timing coincided with a building renovation. The resulting program, Little Heights, is extremely successful, drawing several thousand attendees per year.

Little Heights, staffed by Family Connections, operates three times weekly. It was our desire to build on the success and the demonstrated need in the community to open an early literacy PLAYroom in a branch at the opposite end of our service area.

This portion of our service area borders on East Cleveland, where three library branches have closed in the past few years, and it is in an area of Cleveland Heights that Cleveland Heights–University Heights School System has identified as one where children are the least prepared in the district to attend kindergarten.

We also wanted to have a PLAYroom that could be open many more hours than the limited hours of Little Heights. By locating our PLAYroom adjacent to the children's department, separated by a half wall and in close proximity to our children's reference and circulation desk, we were able to create a room that would be open and supervised during the library's open hours.

In our grant application, we identified learning and play centers for which we would purchase materials and produce guides containing literacy-rich activities. These centers include a post office, doll house, construction zone, "around town," doctor's office, market, laundry/cleaning center, puppet theater, and kitchen. We also purchased items to create a baby station where prewalkers can enjoy soft, interactive containment while playing with toys especially designed for babies. Additionally, we purchased a teepee for cozy reading and play, a self-contained



Constance Dickerson is Branch Manager, Noble Neighborhood Library, Cleveland Heights–University Heights (Ohio) Public Library.

Table 1. Purchases and Vendors

Purchase	Vendor
Kinder seating and table Vinyl loveseats Gressco HABA® interactive tree panel Decofoam Globulos soft seat (caterpillars & whales)	Brodart Library Supplies and Furnishing www.shopbrodart.com
Interactive wall panels	Burgeon Group www.burgeongroup.com
Book house displayer	Gaylord www.gaylord.com
Whitney Brothers multimedia carousel	Today's Classroom www.todaysclassroom.com
Tap-It	SmartEd Services teachsmart.org
AWE Early Literacy Stations	AWE www.awe-net.com
Indoor sandbox	Buddy Systems 216-932-3727
Two- and three-bin storage paloozas Workbench Play food TeePee	Land of Nod www.landofnod.com
Puppets	Puppet.com www.puppet.com
Puzzles and toys	Lakeshore Learning www.lakeshorelearning.com
Toys, mailbox, magnetic/dry erase board, lily pad cushions	Kaplan Early Learning Company www.kaplanco.com
Toys	Montessori Services montessoriservices.com
Toys for Around Town Stations, vehicles, play mats Service station Doll house, dolls Kitchen island Puppets and puzzles	U.S. Toy/Constructive Playthings www.cptoy.com
Baby station toys/playmat Pillows	Hatch www.hatchearlychildhood.com
Wall mount magazine (literature) racks	Display2go www.display2go.com
Custom word banners	Quote the Walls www.quotethewalls.com
Puppets	Folkmanis www.folkmanis.com
Puppet theater	Beka www.bekainc.com
Washing machine	Little Colorado www.littlecolorado.com

indoor sandbox, a magnetic dry erase wall board, and a set of soft interlocking stepping stones.

In addition to our play stations, we also wanted dedicated early literacy computer stations and listening and viewing stations to play CDs and DVDs. The Advanced Workstation in Education (AWE) Early Literacy Stations fit our first priority; these come preloaded with dozens of programs devoted to development of literacy for children aged two through eleven.

We chose monitors with touch screens so the youngest users could activate commands. There also are mice for kids who prefer them, and the keyboard is attractively color-coded for functions, numbers, symbols, and letters. We continue to be impressed with the content and child-friendliness of these stations.

For our listening and viewing needs, we opted to purchase a Tap-It mobile SmartBoard. Not only do we have listening and viewing options when our laptop is connected, but this is a great resource for posting storytime rhymes and games and prerecording program content. Because of its mobility and maneuverability, the Tap-It was a great choice for interactive activities, especially for children with special needs. The screen can tilt from vertical to horizontal and be raised and lowered. The potential for acquiring these with grant money is great, and there are opportunities for developing special-needs programming in the library.

Wall panels that enhance the décor of the PLAYroom double as literacy enhancers. A six-foot tree inspires children to create stories as they move ladybugs up and down its trunk, while a hedgehog and rabbit peek through a hole and can be moved back and forth around the base of the tree. Five colorful wall panels created by Burgeon Group grace one wall at toddler level.

Spin a Story has two roller games with the theme of Baby's Birthday Party. In the first, the user spins for who brings it, what type of present, what's inside, and how the present makes baby feel. There are four possible outcomes for each category. The second game shows items that can be matched by color, shape, or object, and each picture has its name printed below. A clock panel allows children to change the hands as a mouse moves around the perimeter in which the classic rhyme is noted. There is a panel of different textures to feel and shapes to fit. Colored mirrors for the looking make up another panel. The fifth panel offers a sequencing game fitted into a house—The House that Jack Built.

Another branch library is purchasing a different set of Burgeon panels that we can easily trade between the buildings. The walls are further adorned with custom banners for the practices "talking," "playing," "singing," "writing," and "reading"—the five core principles of ALSC and the Public Library Association's Every Child Ready to Read initiative. These banners were inexpensive (\$27 each) and had many color and font options.

As for furniture, two sectional couches, a couple of storage bins for toys and puzzles, and two child-sized shelving units are the constants in the room. The shelving units are small and visually interesting. One is shaped like a house, and one is a circular,

three-tiered carousel—just right for board books. A small table with chairs offers a place for working puzzles or serving “meals.”

After a fruitless search for benches that could hold both a parent and a child at a child-friendly height, we commissioned one of our buildings department staff to build benches to our specifications. We ordered two literature holders to hold guides to the play station activities and other literacy information. The couches we chose are of a high-quality vinyl that we preferred for durability as well as easy cleaning. We completed the room with soft vinyl seating shaped like caterpillars and whales, with curves perfect for child seats; they are light enough to be moved easily around the room. A set of vinyl lily pads (the evolved version of carpet squares) is perfect for storytimes and special programs when we have a crowd to seat.

We chose the lily pads and other patterns and colors to complement the department theme. The architects wanted to convey a sense of entering a glen filled with forest and water elements. Murals of Denise Fleming’s *In the Small, Small Pond* (Henry Holt, 1993) and *In the Tall, Tall Grass* (Henry Holt, 1991), used with permission, accent the walls leading to the Children’s Department. The carpet, desk, chairs, and flooring are in blues and greens, and the focal point of the department is a seven-foot wooden tree with branches that reach eight feet in all directions. Dappled “sunlight” shines through the canopy.

In the main areas of the department, and in outfitting the PLAYroom, we selected natural materials as much as possible. These selections also keep with the library’s objective of preferring environmentally sound options.

Some of our furniture selections, books, and audiovisual materials were covered by the library’s matching fund responsibility in the amount of \$12,375 to offset the total amount of the grant, \$35,652. We purchased board books and parenting books to

reside in the PLAYroom. We also bought a collection of Playaway Views, self-contained video players preloaded with 90 to 120 minutes of preschool programming.

Part of our plan was that toys, play stations, and materials including books and puppets would be rotated every few weeks to keep the room fresh. For our purposes, it was important to have a significant storage area nearby, and this should certainly be a consideration in planning your own purchases.

We had continued good fortune in being selected as a local company’s service day project, so when it came time to assemble and unpack toys, we had many extra hands. It is always a challenge to implement a grant project in addition to staff’s regular responsibilities. Certainly it is an advantage to make use of volunteers. The realization that we would need volunteer support was apparent early in our planning. Keeping toys clean adds significant work to our daily routine.

We also hoped that volunteers would be able to interact with children and caregivers, giving suggestions on how to increase literacy aspects of play, to encourage general room cleanliness, and to create word labels. While volunteers can fill gaps in what staff are able to do, keep in mind that recruiting, training, supervising, and assessing volunteers adds another layer to staff responsibilities.

One of the duties we gave to volunteers was creating word labels. With Little Heights as a model, we considered labeling furniture and implements as they do, to enrich the environment with letter identification and awareness. We decided to take this one step further and include languages that are spoken in our service area. With the help of a volunteer, staff created thematic word rings (laminated cards held together with rings). For example, the ring to accompany the workbench has cards for screwdriver, hammer, wrench, nails, and saw in English, Arabic, Spanish, Russian, French, Hebrew, and Nepali. We also plan to



Playing and learning in the PLAYroom with mail, the Tap-It, and puppets.



A master builder at work.

create “word magnets” for each play station on the floor and have those available to use on our magnetic wall board.

Children’s staff created an activity sheet to be used with each play area. These are arranged by entries under the five literacy skill builders: talking, playing, singing, writing, and reading. Booklists, rhymes, activities, and conversation starters are included so children and caregivers can use the sheets to structure their play in the library and take ideas home to extend the play.

Literacy activity guides can be created to highlight any library’s programs or materials. With a bulletin board, a children’s department can choose one of our themes, provide activity sheets to go, and inexpensively create games and activities to be utilized in the library.

For example, if your theme is construction:

- Decorate the bulletin board or area with “caution” tape.
- Make a sign that says “hardhat area.”
- Have a display of related books.
- Create matching games using construction words and pictures or a sequencing game of a building site.
- Encourage bilingual literacy with words in the language spoken in your service area.
- Build vocabulary by laminating pictures of tools with their names in a variety of languages and attach them to rings like we did.
- Offer a related storytime.

We planned programs to highlight individual play areas. Our first focused on food, with the typical storytime complement of stories,

rhymes, and songs; then we retired to the PLAYroom to make some meals. We donned aprons, washed fruits and vegetables, put them in pots and pans on the stove, put cookies on a sheet in the oven, set the table, and served. Don’t have the stuff? Make a pot of pretend soup by bringing a ladle from home, marking off a yarn circle and asking each child to add an “ingredient” to the pot. Start the process off with your own pantomimed contribution. Make sure you stir after each addition, taking turns with the children. Then, party in the soup acting out Laurie Berkner’s recording, “I Feel Crazy, So I Jump in the Soup,” from the *Victor Vito* CD. Offer parents a handout that extends the theme with suggestions for more literacy building exercises to try at home.

The activities on our wall panels also can be reproduced quite easily and cheaply with some time. Simple mazes are available free online. The “what present does whom bring and how does it make baby feel” game can be made using laminated cards for each category: who, which present, what’s inside, and how does it make baby feel. Cards can be drawn and placed on the tabletop to create different scenarios enhancing print awareness and narrative skills. Alternate versions are limitless. Games for matching colors, shapes, and objects can be replicated in the same way. A prop to grow clock literacy can be as simple as the old brads holding “hands” on a paper plate face. Children can help make texture boards or boxes and enrich vocabularies with the adjectives that arise.

We can stock our indoor sandbox with a variety of objects to inspire stories. One time there may be a toy car, a dinosaur, a key, a ball, a lion, and a small bowl. Imagine the plotlines. Our indoor sandbox is self-contained and has two holes with “sleeves” for children to put their arms through, reach in and play, so it’s easy to contain the sand. An inexpensive substitute for our sandbox might be a bin with shredded paper, which would make spills easier to clean up than using sand.

Our interconnecting hard plastic “stepping stones” attach to each other puzzle-style in endless variations. We have considered attaching letters to the tops so that children can arrange them in alphabetical order or to spell out words, another activity that could be recreated on a shoestring budget using cardboard or poster board. Invite children to go on a letter hike.

We chose not to label furniture in the way that our model Little Heights PLAYroom does, but that is something that can easily be done. Also, a little paint and a steady hand can add words like the early literacy practices to walls if appliquéés are outside of your budget.

Magnetic and dry erase wall boards aren’t very expensive, and you can create your own word magnets with laminated cardstock and a roll of magnetic tape. If you have limited wall space and your library can spring for a rolling room divider, it can be used to mount your magnetic board and as a felt board and bulletin board and roll out of sight when it’s not needed.

You may not have the money to purchase AWE Stations for your library, but you might consider dedicating at least one computer

The **PLAY**room develops early literacy skills for children ages 0-6 through play and materials that will fuel your child's excitement for literacy and love of reading, such as:

- Dramatic play opportunities in our learning areas: bake cookies in the kitchen, shop at the store, play with the doll house, put on a puppet show, take a trip to the post office or doctor's office, and use tools on the work bench.
- Touch-screen early literacy computer stations, preloaded with educational software perfect for children ages 2-12.
- Interactive wall panels to help children create stories, experience textures, and recite nursery rhymes.
- A comfortable couch with a nest of pillows for cozy reading with our specially selected books.
- Word labels on **PLAY**room items in a variety of languages.

We're always changing, so come back often and see what's new!

Groups Welcome

Daycare providers and preschool teachers will also find the **PLAY**room to be a perfect place to bring children. If you are bringing a larger group it is helpful to call the library immediately beforehand to make sure another large group isn't already using the space.

The **PLAY**room at the Noble Neighborhood Library
2800 Noble Road
Cleveland Heights, Ohio
is open during regular library hours:

Monday: 1 – 9 p.m.
Tuesday: 1 – 9 p.m.
Wednesday: 9 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.
Thursday: 1 – 9 p.m.
Friday: 9 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.
Saturday: 9 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.

PLAY: Preschool Literacy And You!

www.heightslibrary.org




Opening Doors, Opening Minds

Visit the **PLAY**room
at the Noble Neighborhood
Library
**Preschool
Literacy And You!**



English: oven Arabic: (foorn) Spanish: horno Russian: печь French: le four Hebrew: Nepali: (bar)	
English: grapes Arabic: (anba) Spanish: uva Russian: непец French: raisins Hebrew: Nepali: (angood)	
English: celery Arabic: (korfas) Spanish: apio Russian: сельдерей French: céleri Hebrew:	
English: market Arabic: (sooq) Spanish: mercado Russian: рынок French: marché Hebrew: Nepali: (bhojar)	

Left to right: The PLAYroom brochure, sample pages from a bilingual word ring.

to early literacy by creating a homepage with links to early-literacy information, activities, and games for caregivers and children. Consider subscribing to a database like Book Flix, a great read-along resource with a large library of children's books. Also, recognize the role that music plays in fostering literacy and have musical moments in your library, especially during storytimes.

In conjunction with the opening of our PLAYroom, we plan to offer a series of programs for early childhood educators, parents, and caregivers. Our first will feature Deforia Lane, a local professor of music therapy who developed a program called Toddler Rock, which fosters literacy through musical activities. The program is offered for Cleveland-area preschoolers at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum and at a local preschool. Tap the experts in your own service areas. Dedicated professionals often are available inexpensively or at a reduced cost for libraries.

Children's librarians are well known for their creativity, their skills in garnering donations, and their craftiness in doing more with less. By thinking of what we do on a regular basis and framing those activities in the context of early literacy skills, we are able to devise ways of sharing strategies to educate the adults in the lives of the children we serve and move toward our goal of getting every child ready to read.

The PLAYroom has been open since May and feedback has been very positive. We have received comments asking if we can be open additional mornings. Users are pleased with the variety represented by our purchases and how we alternate play stations to keep things fresh.

The AWE early literacy computers receive many favorable comments, too; caregivers appreciate knowing that everything a child accesses on these is about learning. The PLAYroom has become a regular field trip destination for preschools, day care centers, and kindergarten classes. Mornings, evenings, and Saturdays have become popular one-on-one times for children and caregivers. We hoped to provide more interaction between staff or volunteers and caregivers with children than we have been able to do because of our staffing limitations.

As far as loss and breakage, we've naturally experienced some. We were able to get multiple sets of some things like kitchenware and dolls for the dollhouse, but in years to come, we hope to be supported by our Friends of the Library to replace broken items. We were perhaps idealistic in our preference for natural, sustainable materials and admit that plastics are probably more durable. ☺

Photos by Sheryl Banks.

A Museum in a Library?

Science, Literacy Blossom at Children's Library Discovery Center

SHARON COX



Exploration plaza.

Upon entering the Children's Library Discovery Center, one is greeted with an interactive map featuring all the locations of libraries in Queens. One cannot help but be drawn in by the map, which features Queens neighborhoods and landmarks. Step on the piano icon on the motion-activated floor map and hear the strains of a Steinway piano, or loyal fans cheering for the Mets as you stand on the coveted Mets icon, and so it goes on as you make your way along the path. Directly ahead is the Interactive Diversity wall onto which words are projected in Spanish, French, Russian, Mandarin, and Korean—reflecting the diversity of Queen's County.

With sunshine streaming through the tall windows, strategically placed reading tables, and welcoming chairs, the Discovery Center offers a relaxing environment in which children can learn, explore, experiment, and be inspired.

The Helen M. Marshall Children's Library Discovery Center is an exciting and engaging 14,000 square-foot, state-of-the-art library with two discovery plazas, which include interactive tabletop science exhibits similar to those found in a science museum. Interspersed among the discovery plazas are book displays related to the exhibits to pique the curiosity and interest of children visiting the Discovery Center.

Some of the exhibits include a bug viewer, where children can examine and distinguish differences in insects. The Color House encourages children to experiment with mixing colors,



Sharon Cox is Manager of the Children's Library Discovery Center at Queens Library in Jamaica, New York.

and the Touch Theatre allows children to use their sense of touch to identify objects. These exhibits were designed and developed by the San Francisco Exploratorium in collaboration with Queens Library staff, the New York Hall of Science, and the Brooklyn Children's Museum.

The Discovery Center also boasts an early childhood center for our youngest visitors. Entering under an impressive wave, they are greeted by a large mural featuring numbers, letters, and shapes, and overhead mobiles to engage their imagination. Literacy is the capstone of the Discovery Center, and the books, interactive exhibits, web resources, and other learning materials in every area of this library reinforce our visitors' literacy skills, turning them into lifelong learners.

Along with traditional library programming for children, the Discovery Center also brings to life a hands-on interactive learning environment with a science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) programming element. Children also have access to the latest technology, such as smart boards, Alienware laptops, iPads, and e-readers—all enhancing their multimodal learning experiences.

Led by Interactive Exhibits Supervisor Susan Cole, our science programming is facilitated by specially trained teenagers, known as the Discovery Team. The team conducts Saturday science labs and discovery cart activities, which help the children experience and learn science concepts in a fun and interactive environment. This new element of programming also allows our librarians to incorporate science into our traditional library programming, such as Toddler Learning Center, Timeless Tales, and Mother Goose.

Programming with STEM content allows us to expand our reach and bring new customers into the library. It also allows library staff to gain new skills by using inquiry-based methods in their interaction with children while using the exhibits in the exploration



The early childhood area.

plazas. This also allows the children to ask questions, investigate, and communicate their observations regarding the science-themed exhibits, which we hope will foster an interest in further research and exploration into other areas of the library.

With this center, we have integrated traditional library resources and programming into a more modern cultural and institutional environment, in this instance libraries and museums. This hybrid learning environment brings new users to both institutions. Customers using the library expect to find books and other traditional library resources, but they don't expect to see exhibits usually found in a museum setting.

The collaboration between Queens Library and our museum partners—the San Francisco Exploratorium, the New York Hall of Science, and the Brooklyn Children's Museum—allows us to share and capitalize on our expertise in our respective fields, leading to an incredible learning environment. This collaboration is a definite plus for both communities. More of these collaborations between cultural institutions can only lead to growth and appreciation for what we do in our respective fields. Collaboration also allows for funding opportunities, particularly to develop and enhance the services we offer our end users, creating a pathway and a resource for our future generations. 📖

Photos courtesy of Queens Library.

The Children's Library Discovery Center is supported by a grant from the National Science Foundation. To see more about the Children's Library Discovery Center, watch the short video at www.youtube.com/watch?v=4uXQMLa9ty.

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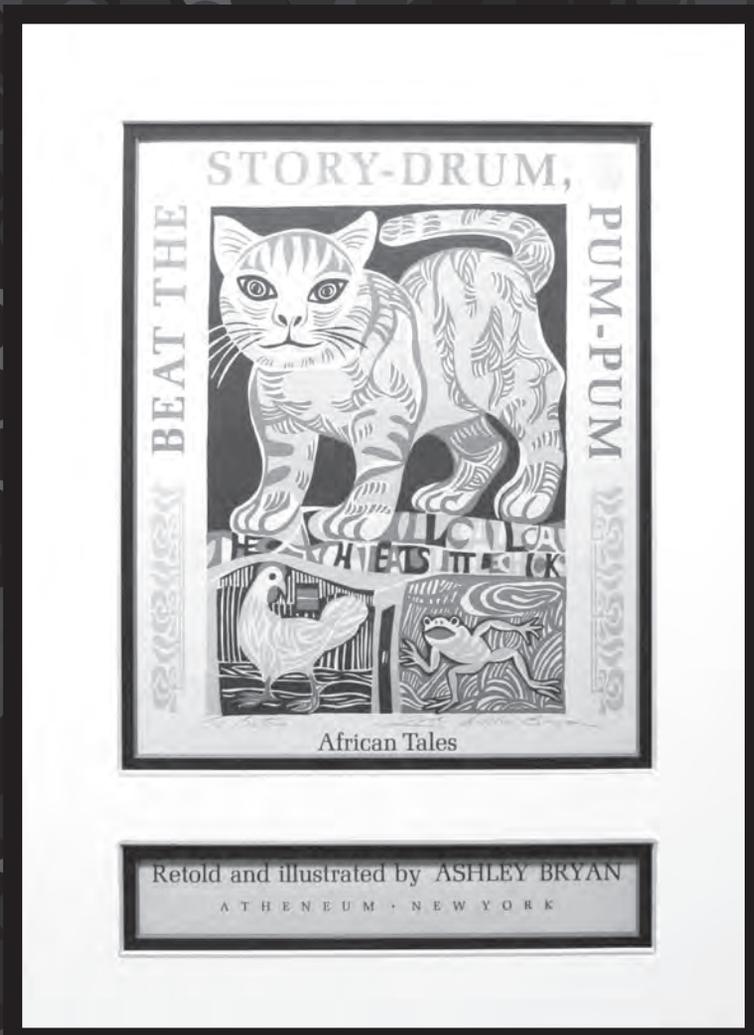
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Broward County Library Celebrates Ten Years of the Ashley Bryan Art Series

ERIC GÓMEZ



Some of Ashley Bryan's artwork on display.



Left to Right: Librarian Eric Gómez, Ashley Bryan, and Dr. Henrietta Smith.

It was ten years ago that the Broward County Library reached out to Ashley Bryan through the help of Henrietta M. Smith, Professor Emerita on the faculty of the School of Library and Information Science, University of South Florida.

Smith worked with Bryan to establish a children's book author and illustrator art series at the African-American Research Library and Cultural Center (AARLCC) in Fort Lauderdale. The goal was for Bryan to contribute eight original art pieces to the library to serve as the core of the art collection, but the series quickly evolved beyond bringing award-winning Coretta Scott King writers and illustrators of children's books to Fort Lauderdale.

The cultural impact of the Ashley Bryan Art Series on the community has been long-lasting—it has brought children and families into the library and engaged youth with children's book art and illustrations. The programs have included cultural performances, video conferencing, author and illustrator school visits, literacy workshops, and introduction to African-centered art forms. During these last ten years, more than 1,500 children have received a free autographed copy of a visiting children's illustrator.

Eventually, the Youth Services section at the AARLCC pursued other Coretta Scott King Award-winning authors and illustrators whose work reflected African American culture—including Pat Cummings, Jerry Pinkney, Bryan Collier, Kadir Nelson, James E. Ransome, Tonya Bolden, Shadra Strickland, and Floyd Cooper.

As this is the tenth anniversary of the series and the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Broward County Library Conference on Children's Literature, Bryan himself will be the featured artist this year. It comes at the appropriate time: Bryan was just honored with receiving the Coretta Scott King—Virginia

Hamilton Award for Lifetime Achievement from the American Library Association.

Throughout the ten years, a planning committee met to coordinate the series. The committee members have endured staff changes due to library personnel budget cuts and have kept the original goal alive for the Ashley Bryan Art Series—to reach as many children and families as possible.

Much of the financial support has come from the community through Friends of the Broward County Library, the Broward County Library Foundation, and the Friends of the AARLCC. During the last several years of deep cuts in library programming, staff reductions, and school outreach visits, the planning committee has formed strong community partnerships, especially with the Caribbean Bar Association, in seeking alternate sources of funding for library programming during these tough economic times.

Despite the sometimes rocky road, the legacy of the Ashley Bryan Art Series remained constant—to increase children's interest in and appreciation of literature and art, promote family literacy, provide a role model for children, and encourage the use of the library as an active part of life in the community. ☺

Eric Gómez is Head of Youth Services at the Broward County African-American Research Library and Cultural Center in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. He is the REFORMA member on the 2010–12 ALSC Quick List Consulting Committee and the 2010–12 ALSC Liaison with National Organizations Serving Children and Youth Committee. He was a member of the 2009 Newbery Medal Committee.

At Poseidon's Fish Market

Winning an Author Event with Rick Riordan

JOELLA PETERSON

At first I didn't want to try. You hear about a contest or application for something big—bigger than you could even dream of. You really want to go for it, but you worry about your chances of winning.

That's exactly how I felt when I saw the Olympian Week contest, author Rick Riordan's promotional tour for *The Son of Neptune's* release. After I saw the contest requirement in three different places my coworkers convinced me to apply. I retrieved the application from the recycle bin (where I had thrown it for the third time) and decided to go for it.

The application was challenging. Each applicant had to base her proposed event on a specific Greek god or goddess (Aphrodite, Athena, Hades, Hephaestus, Ares, Poseidon, or Zeus). Each space had to have the capacity to hold about 750 people. I started calling schools and community centers to check the seating capacity of their auditoriums.

After a weekend of networking, the Olympia Visitor's Bureau pointed us to the Olympia Port Plaza (which could accommodate thousands because it was located outside) in a neighboring city. The Plaza was located on the water with a



Author Rick Riordan at the Tumwater (Wash.) library event.

stage, a tower, and a landing dock for visitors arriving by boat. The venue had such a strong water element that I decided to build the proposal around Poseidon, god of the sea, and the unique water resources in our community.

I needed a dynamite proposal. I called local community organizations (the Olympia Yacht Club, Orca Books, the local water education groups, and school librarians) to explain my vision and set up tentative partnerships. I begged some graphic designers I knew to help me craft the proposal so it would look like a professional, nautical-themed document.

I took scads of pictures of the venue, and the graphic designers took my proposal, photos, and ideas and made it look like a nautical presentation, complete with a logo. I wrapped the whole thing with fishing line, tied it with a lure, and sent it in.

In early August I learned I had won one of seven author visits of the Olympian Week Tour! I had guessed that with all the splashy Poseidon-themed details (like having the author arrive by yacht or including more than two dozen "fish market stalls") and the large number of participants that would be able to come (more than their 750 person requirement) that I would have a good chance of winning. But that didn't stop me from jumping up and down for a full fifteen minutes after I received the phone call—until reality hit me. And the reality was that now I had less than two months before the October book release date to pull everything together.

I first needed to determine how to publicize not only the event, but also a call for volunteers, donations, and support. Fortunately, every organization that worked with the library



Joella Peterson is Youth Services Librarian at the Tumwater (Wash.) Timberland Regional Library.

started to spread the word (company newsletters, staff meetings, word-of-mouth). I e-mailed and called other organizations to share the excitement and ask for help (time, money, discounts, and borrowing supplies). Not counting volunteer time or items borrowed, various organizations donated or provided discounts for more than \$6,000. Our very generous library district paid for the staff time and more than \$2,000.

School librarians were vital to the publicity success. With their help, teachers, students, and parents soon learned of the exciting news—many volunteers were recruited. The library sent publicity announcements to various media outlets from Seattle to Portland. Official publicity on Disney's and Riordan's websites also helped spread the word.

I also talked about the event—everywhere. When I went into the community I talked about the event, and I even recruited a few new organizations to donate materials. The rest of the library staff did the same thing. Soon, we not only had enough help and support to make the event happen, we had new community partners requesting to contribute. For example, a new graphic design company donated their work to build their company portfolio. The printing and rental companies gave us large discounts. The week before the event, a community youth group even asked if they could provide free shuttle service to and from the parking lot.

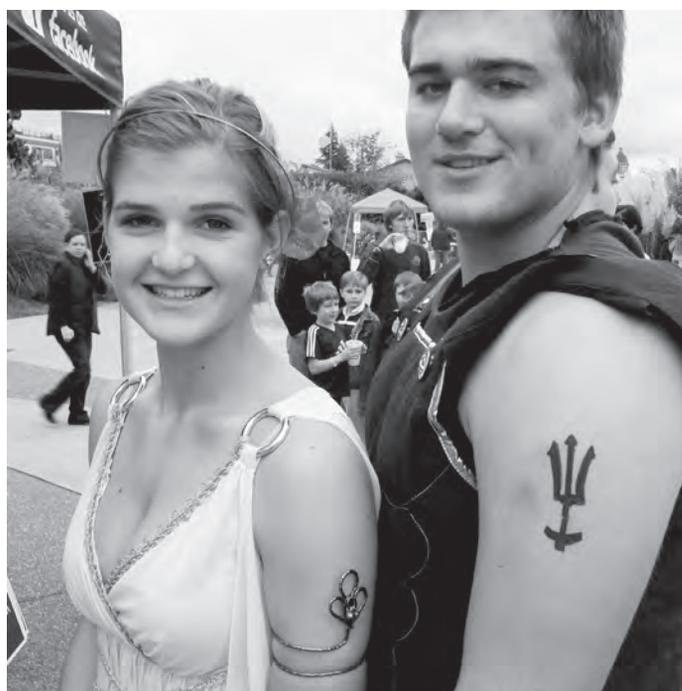
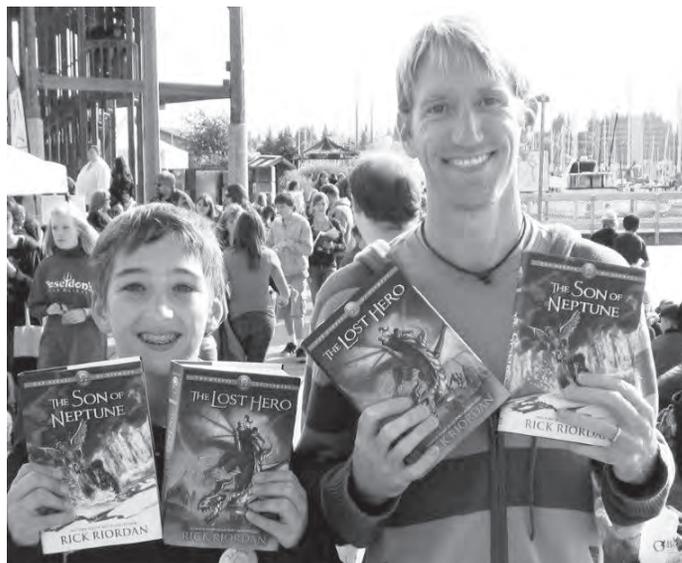
With so many organizations working together, it became a community event rather than just a library event. When we gave out more than 2,500 tickets (at the library and at the Port Plaza on the day of the event), we asked people how they had heard about it; most said word-of-mouth.

This event became the highlight of our library programming for the year. More than 3,500 people attended Poseidon's Fish Market. People came from Canada, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Oregon, California, Utah, Ireland, and, of course, all over the state of Washington. (Thankfully, we had twenty-seven staff members from our library district and forty-six volunteers.)

Riordan arrived by yacht and spoke for twenty minutes before going to the Signing Tsunami booth to sign books. We had a sea-life touch tank, community partner booths, spots for photo ops, a "fishing" booth, craft booths, and activity booths with everything from a costume contest to a volleyball game with beach balls.

I believe we set a record for the number of "thank you" and "I love our library" comments we received. I also had a number of organizations say to call them if we did another program like this because they would love to be community partners.

Despite the masses of people, and thanks to careful planning, we smoothed out most potential hiccups—such as how to keep thousands of people happy while waiting to hear Riordan speak and get their books signed, all within three hours. To curtail the frustrations that come with waiting in line, we gave out tickets in color groups of one hundred. Ticket holders could only get in line once their color had been called.



Top: A family of readers; photo by Martin Stark. *Center:* Teen volunteers dress up to promote Poseidon's Fish Market; photo by Richard S. Park. *Bottom:* Librarian Joella Peterson, third from left, with Rick Riordan and Disney Publishing representatives; photo by Richard S. Park.

As a result, most groups did activities in the Fish Stalls, while only one hundred stood in line. Musical groups performed, and the local Kiwanis group sold concessions. Trivia questions were posted throughout the signing line to keep people entertained while they waited.

While a few problems cropped up (at one point a few teens thought it would be a good idea to throw garbage off the tower), we had our library security guard on duty to help calm the masses (which was especially helpful when the crowd all wanted to rush to meet the author as he stepped off the boat). We also had an organizational structure in place so that if staff needed assistance, we had a chain of people to respond to problems—ending with a member of the library district management team.

I was able to meet and thank Riordan when he was signing four hundred books at the Orca Book Store before the event. As a librarian who has struggled to overcome learning disabilities and dyslexia, I can't tell you how incredible it was to meet the author of such amazing dyslexic and ADD/ADHD heroes like Percy Jackson. Even though I could hardly talk with such a huge grin plastered to my face, Riordan and the Disney representatives in turn expressed their gratitude for our efforts in putting the event together.

Riordan was kind to everyone (not just the gushing librarian) and took time to ask questions as well as answer them. One eight-year-old patron especially liked his interaction: Riordan asked which Greek god or goddess he would want for a parent. When the answer of "Poseidon" was given, Riordan said, "Of course, the god of the sea. That would be awesome. You could surf really well, breathe underwater, make toilets explode. It would be great!" The patron laughed over that answer for weeks afterward.

This was an amazing event with a great author. We dreamed big and then made it bigger.

So for all you librarians who see that application for an award or contest—don't throw it out—apply! Be sure to showcase the local aspects that make your library and community unique. Pull the community together to make the visit as big as the author.

Riordan was amazing to work with, and I suspect that many authors are just as excited to meet their fans as their fans are to meet them.

Finally, involve those fanatic readers. I can't stress how helpful it was to have volunteers that were excited about the event. When they bring that enthusiasm, the event is sure to become legendary. 🐙

Call for Referees

To make *Children and Libraries* a truly interactive publication, we're looking for ALSC members to serve as volunteer referees for journal articles. Unsolicited articles and those of a scholarly nature must be submitted to at least two referees to judge the submissions on accuracy, style, impact, importance, and interest. Specialists in particular genres (such as technology, literature, intellectual freedom, programming, and so on) are especially needed.

Referees make recommendations to the editor on whether or not manuscripts should be accepted for publication. Interested librarians should contact *Children and Libraries* Editor Sharon Korbeck Verbeten at CALeditor@yahoo.com for more information on the referee process.

The Forgotten Characters of Childhood

The Rise of William Joyce's *The Guardians* and *The Leaf Men*

STEPHANIE BANGE

In his 1997 autobiography *The World of William Joyce Scrapbook* (HarperCollins), then-40-year-old children's author and illustrator William Joyce wrote that he was working on a book called *The Man in the Moon and the Guardians of Childhood*.

It's time for Joyce fans to rejoice because the long wait for this new book is over—well, almost. The first three titles in the Guardians of Childhood series (*The Man in the Moon*, *Nicholas St. North and the Battle of the Nightmare King*, and *E. Aster Bunnymund and the Warrior Eggs at the Earth's Core*, all published by Atheneum/Simon & Schuster) are out, with additional titles in the pipeline.

The series concept is simple: picturebooks will give the mythology and background for the characters in the series, visually exploring how they came to be, who they are, and how they found their roles in life. The novels will carry the story of their adventures and the action forward. Fans will want to be sure to read the picturebooks to gain a deeper understanding of what's behind the plot of the novels.

When he became a father, Joyce realized that every parent “has their tenure in becoming the oracle of the Tooth Fairy, the Easter Bunny, and Santa Claus.” He felt unsatisfied with the vague explanations given to him as a child. Since no defined backstory or mythology for these mythological characters of childhood has evolved, he decided to fill in the blanks.

It just seemed such a gap in our culture that we have very specific mythologies for Spiderman, Superman, and Batman, but we don't have one for the group of characters that we actually believed in as kids. I felt like some of them were



William Joyce, photo by Tony Reans.

starting to fade. I don't hear kids talk about the Man in the Moon the way they did when I was a kid. I don't hear them talk about Jack Frost or the Sandman.

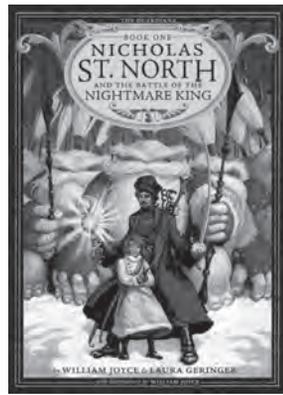
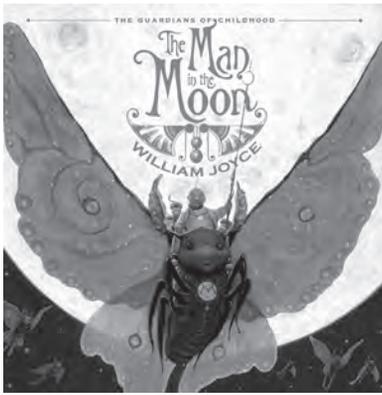
For the first picturebook in the series, *The Man in the Moon*, Joyce used computer illustration for the first time, which he describes as “very liberating.”

“At this late date in my career, I essentially went back to school,” he said. “My teachers were people who were sometimes half my age. But, it's great! They keep you young. I've got all this theory and experience and they've got all this new technology. We're very compatible.”

To create the art, first he did a rough color study on the computer rather than a traditional sketch. After experimenting with color and light on the digitized illustration, he painted the image in oils or in oil over acrylic. Again, the image was scanned and details were added using the computer—a process new to Joyce. He pointed out that a few illustrations in the book are completely painted with a paintbrush, as he enjoys this process. So, the illustrations in the book are truly “mixed media”—some are done in oil paint, some digitally, and some a hybrid of the two.



Stephanie Bange is Director of the Educational Resource Center at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio. Bange interviewed author William Joyce via Skype in August 2011 exclusively for Children and Libraries.



Joyce approached the process of writing the first novel of the series (and his first novel), *Nicholas St. North and the Battle of the Nightmare King*, differently from *The Man in the Moon*. He chose to write as if he was painting word pictures. Drawing from the broad story arc he had developed for the five novels evolved over the years, Joyce fleshed out the book after sketching the plot structure with his editor, Laura Geringer, who is credited as coauthor.

According to Joyce, the story had been in his head so long, the words just flowed onto paper. He remarked that he is enjoying watching the characters evolve into the Guardian they will become. Readers will find that each chapter has an intriguing title; this is Joyce's nod to eighteenth-century author Henry Fielding, whose books appeared in a serialized format with delightful chapter titles.

About the same time the books came under contract, Joyce struck a deal with DreamWorks Studio to develop and codirect an animated feature film based on the characters from the series. With DreamWorks on board, fans should note that this probably won't be strictly a "kids' film."

As of early 2012, all Joyce would reveal is that the Man in the Moon (Tsar Lunar) is a very spectral presence. The casting includes the vocal talents of Chris Pine as Jack Frost, Alec Baldwin as Nicholas St. North, Hugh Jackman as E. Aster Bunnymund, Jude Law as Pitch, and Isla Fisher as the Tooth Fairy. The release date for *Rise of the Guardians* is November 21, 2012.

Joyce is currently extending venues for storytelling through the use of technology to reach today's young readers, including the development of creative, interactive websites and storybook apps by the studio he cofounded, Moonbot Studios.

Located in his hometown of Shreveport, La., Moonbot is responsible for creating the Academy Award-winning *The Fantastic Flying Books of Mr. Morris Lessmore*—the film, the website, and the iPad app. Their creative talents also developed *The Guardians'* website (www.theguardiansofchildhoodbooks.com). Joyce describes it as largely "pretend science, history as we wish it had been, and the future we hope will be."

Building on the lessons learned in creating the book app for *The Fantastic Flying*, Joyce is looking forward to adding

that component to *The Guardians'* mix of myth-building and storytelling vehicles.

Not one to sit still, William Joyce has another picturebook-related feature film on the horizon. Several years ago, he received a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts to adapt his picturebook *The Leaf Men and the Brave Good Bugs* (HarperCollins, 1996) into play form. It became, in his words, "a behemoth. We had a cast of one hundred. It was crazy! It was the most mad effort I'd ever embarked on!"

Joyce's friend, film director Chris Webb (*Robots*, 2005), saw the play and loved it. Combining their mutual love for the 1938 classic Errol Flynn film *Robin Hood*, the two decided to develop *The Leaf Men* further into their own swashbuckler of a film. Joyce hinted that the premise of the film is a world where "these little men—as little warriors—live in the forest, just outside your window. People don't even know that these men—the size of small plastic army toys—are fighting titanic battles."

As writer, producer, and production designer for the film, Joyce has created a whole mythology for the Leaf Men and their evil nemesis, including details such as good guys riding hummingbirds and bad guys riding bats. Seven years later, Webb and Joyce are currently in production on the film, *The Leaf Men and the Brave Good Bugs*, produced by Blue Sky Studios, with a release date of May 17, 2013. "It's beautiful and stirring and thrilling and it's much more complex than the picturebook. I've started doing novels that will set up the film much in the same way I'm doing novels to set up *The Guardians*."

Joyce feels very fortunate at this point in his career. He has set himself up to be in control of the content of his books and the film adaptations of them. He is able to keep the details of the stories straight, keep the storyline moving forward, and stay true to his vision.

So here is William Joyce—author; illustrator; New Yorker cover artist; three-time Emmy Award winner (for the animated Rolie Polie Olie series); a leader in the digital animation industry as screenwriter, producer, executive producer, production designer, set designer, conceptual character creator, and codirector; 2008 Louisiana Author of the Year; one of *Newsweek's* one hundred People to Watch in the New Millennium; and a participant in the 2011 National Book Festival.

When I asked him if there was anything he couldn't do, Joyce laughed and modestly responded,

I really, really despise doing taxes. I'm horrendous at math, pretty bad at programming my phone. I'm a very distracted driver; in fact, I'm a danger behind the wheel because I am always thinking of these stories. That's how I do my best thinking . . . when I'm driving.

I'm not sure about you, but I'll be on the lookout for William Joyce—both on the road and off! 🐛

Photos published with permission of Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing. ©2011 by William Joyce.

Instruction, a First Aid Kit, and Communication

Necessary Components in the Mentoring Relationship

MEG SMITH

"Knowledge advances by steps, and not by leaps."
—Lord Macaulay

For youth services staffers without mentors, entering the professional world of librarianship is comparable to taking a giant leap into the great unknown. For staffers who may be new professionals, work as the sole youth services advocate for their entire system, or simply desire to increase their skills, a mentor can serve as a lifeline for mentees as they gain knowledge to take each step into their work as a youth services librarian.

In North Carolina, those steps are easily taken in the first year of the North Carolina Youth Services Mentor Program, sponsored by the State Library of North Carolina. This visionary program formally trained fourteen youth services mentors across the state in 2011. Led by Lori Special, library consultant in Youth Services for the State Library of North Carolina, this initiative focuses on developing training leaders and pairs interested mentees, many in rural libraries without formal library training, with veterans in the field selected for their years of experience and expertise. After the completion of a three-day workshop, mentoring librarians began their work.

Focusing on collaboration, the youth services mentors attended trainings highlighting adult learning styles, current technologies, communication skills, and the importance of fostering a positive mentoring mentality. These mentors will serve as training leaders throughout North Carolina. To successfully provide these trainings, the attendees participated in hands-on teachable moments by modeling training styles



During a training exercise, mentors taught their fellow mentors with a nonlibrary related skill. Here, youth services mentor Tanika Martin demonstrates training techniques on Jason Rogers, North Carolina adult master trainer and reference librarian with Wake County.

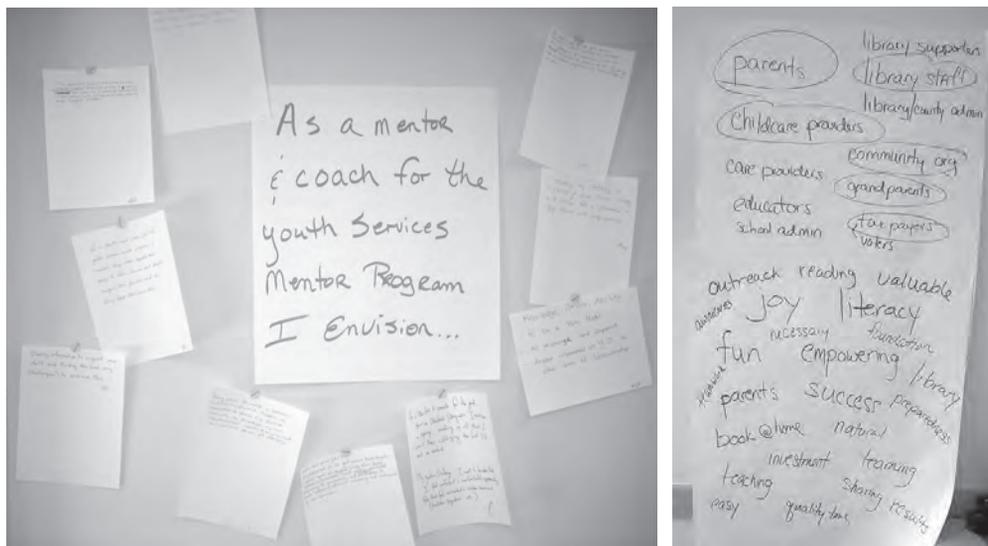
and brainstorming with their colleagues. These mentors are now prepared to serve as youth services trainers, focusing in part on updating staffers on the information available in the second edition of ALSC and PLA's Every Child Ready to Read program. These trainers also will reach beyond teaching staff in the library to directly serving the customers walking through the doors as the mentors share these resources with teen parents, a group often underserved in public libraries.

Special, in addition to her leadership in training initiatives, pairs mentors with individual mentees. These pairs will meet regularly, communicating the goals necessary to facilitate the mentee's professional growth. Haglund explains that successful mentoring relationships rely on many factors, including "having a clearly defined purpose and goals; having coordinator or committee support; mentors who are accessible, have interpersonal skills, and an interest in the development of others; training in mentoring skills; regular meeting of the participants."²

These traits may best be divided into three categories: instruction, a "first aid kit," and communication. With these



Meg Smith is Branch Manager of the Hope Mills Branch of the Cumberland County Public Library and Information Center in North Carolina.



Youth Services mentors brainstormed their goals for the program and the intended audience for their library workshops.

traits a mentee may step confidently into the professional work of librarianship.

The mentor serves as the instructor in the relationship, providing the mentee with the training tools necessary to build youth services skills. Formalized instruction through electronic or in-person workshops provides a structured experience to gain knowledge; this training, according to the authors of *Outstanding Library Service to Children: Putting the Core Competencies to Work*, rests on the mentor serving in a leadership role. The training relationship may include “a written plan, allow flexibility and experimentation (since we often learn the most from mistakes), and pass on not only specific methodologies but also the joy of working with children and a serious commitment to personally directed professional growth.”³

This plan requires that mentors and mentees provide concrete goals and an assessment of their abilities to ensure mentees reach their milestones.

Trainings also must be built into individual meetings between mentor and mentee. Lee asserts that it is critical for the mentor to remain available and approachable to his or her mentee to allow for opportunities for spontaneous training.⁴ Frequent interactions between mentor and mentee ensure that these unstructured teachable moments provide another forum for mentor and mentee to connect. Both print and electronic resources provide tangible support to the mentor in leading training opportunities.

While instruction provides the foundation, the mentee’s professional “first aid kit” provides both the concrete and intangible resources required for emergency on-the-job training. Its contents will vary from mentee to mentee; tools may range from tried-and-true storytime props to a copy of the staffer’s most cherished book on professional development. Tailoring the mentee’s first aid kit depends on the staffer’s individual skills and abilities.

Just as the need for specific professional tools evolves, so does the shifting framework of both the mentor’s and mentee’s experiences. Lee explains that “mentoring can change and develop as the mentor acquires individual skills after mentoring a variety of individuals.”⁵ The contents of the first aid kit must adapt to the individual’s growing knowledge.

This first aid kit also houses those building blocks of information the mentee gains, often received through shadowing experiences. Purposeful shadowing provides the mentee with the hands-on experiences that form a central component of the mentee’s first aid kit.

Metz’s *Coaching in the Library: A Management Strategy for Achieving Excellence* defines the traits of superior coaching, elements easily adaptable to shadowing opportunities in the mentor–mentee relationship: “The coach assesses the situation, determines an appropriate level of coaching, and plans for the coaching by understanding and effectively applying the observation, diagnosis, prognosis, and treatment process through the initial, content, and wrap-up stages of the coaching interaction.”⁶

The mentor’s observations, fully obtained during the shadowing process, reveal gaps in knowledge so the mentor may determine appropriate goals.

In addition to a developed first aid kit to hold professional tools and experiences, a successful mentoring relationship requires frequent communication.

An introductory conversation begins the groundwork for the mentor–mentee relationship. What are the expectations for growth? What skills and abilities does the mentee already bring to the table? Hass and White explain that “communication involves active listening, paraphrasing, clarifying, and feedback.”⁷ These traits encourage nonjudgmental communication and allow both mentor and mentee to determine the purpose of their relationship, documenting the growth achieved by their interactions.

Communication must be frequent, and flexibility is the mindset necessary to foster this open communication. Smith and English explain that adaptability deepens the trust possible between supervisor and employee, a trait applicable to the mentor–mentee dynamic: “Youth services managers must convey this flexible mindset by maintaining open communication and encouraging regular opportunities for dialogue.”⁸ Flexibility ensures the mentor successfully alters the mentee’s goals when

continued on page 43

Beyond Library Walls

Improving Kindergarten Readiness in At-Risk Communities

KIM SNELL

Outreach services are nothing new for libraries. Neither is Every Child Ready to Read. But at Columbus (Ohio) Metropolitan Library (CML), two concepts have combined into an innovative initiative that takes teams of staff out of the library and into the most at-risk neighborhoods to help parents and caregivers learn how to be their child's first teacher. This is our Ready to Read Corps—the full-time job of fifteen dedicated staff members. Some of these staff members are librarians, others have master's degrees or strong backgrounds in education, public service, or another related field, but all have the unique skills to make this program successful. All of them are full-time staff members who spend the majority of their time outside of the library, although office time is needed for planning, training, event scheduling, and program evaluations.

The Ready to Read Corps' primary focus is to seek out parents and caregivers of children ages zero to five who don't come to the library, to organize trainings and to conduct impromptu sessions that focus on prereading skills necessary for early literacy and kindergarten readiness. They also check out books and sign up children and adults for library cards during trainings.

There are six Ready to Read Corps teams of two, and each team focuses on specific communities or neighborhoods. They work with Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) offices, food pantries, churches, hospitals, and benefits offices to engage parents and caregivers in places they already visit. Teams even go to Laundromats and hair salons. During trainings, parents and caregivers receive a take-home kit that includes board books, finger puppets, crayons, and literature about prereading skills.

"We have learned that another great way to get more parents and caregivers to participate is to offer a home party option," said Sarah Mackey, Ready to Read Corps program manager. "Many stay-at-home parents and home daycare providers



The Ready to Read Corps Bookmobile was generously donated by the Nationwide Insurance Foundation.

are not able leave their homes during the day. We offer to come to their homes to train them, their families, friends, and neighbors. It has been very successful."

The Corps also has its own bookmobile, thanks to the generosity of the Nationwide Insurance Foundation. The bookmobile is parked at apartment complexes, parks, or other community gathering spaces and is open to anyone who wants to come on board. The bookmobile also visits home daycare providers to serve as a library on wheels.

Planning and Research

The Ready to Read Corps concept was born of CML's desire to be an agent of change for at-risk children and their parents and caregivers. Focusing on children ages zero to five, team members performed extensive research beginning in 2008, including the following:

- A review of school readiness and early-learning research.
- A focused discussion with representatives from Action for Children, Columbus Urban League Head Start, and the Ohio Children's Foundation.



Kim Snell has been the Media Relations Strategist for Columbus Metropolitan Library since 2007. She earned her master's degree in Marketing and Communications from Franklin University and her bachelor's degree in Public Relations from Kent State University.

- An environmental scan of thirty-seven agencies providing early learning programs and services.
- A review of Ohio Department of Education data.
- A review of the Ohio Department of Education's School Readiness Solutions Group Strategies.
- An analysis of 2000 Census data, specifically factors that contribute to a lack of school readiness.
- An analysis of ten school districts' Kindergarten Readiness Assessment-Literacy scores (KRA-L, a required test created by the Ohio Department of Education for all children entering kindergarten in Ohio).

Analysis

We found a scarcity of programs and services in Franklin County (our service area) that provide literacy or school-readiness information designed to help parents and caregivers understand their role in preparing their child for school. We also learned that about 40 percent of children entering kindergarten here are not adequately prepared to succeed in school, according to the Ohio Department of Education's KRA-L results.

Funding

Since we needed significant financial support, we approached businesses and foundations that fit into these categories: library supporters, early childhood education supporters, and community-focused donors. Our goal was to raise enough money to fund materials and operations for one team for one year, approximately \$120,000. This money goes toward staff salaries,



Abby Kiracofe, right, shares Ready to Read literature with a caregiver in the Weinland Park community.

laptops, printed materials, vehicles, and the take-home kits for parents and caregivers.

To date, we've raised \$1.5 million to fund the Corps through donations by United Way of Central Ohio, the Siemer Family Foundation, JPMorganChase, Nationwide Insurance Foundation, and the Columbus Metropolitan Library Foundation. While we will continue to aggressively seek funds for this program, we began shifting some of the costs to run this program to our own library budget when we passed our levy in 2010.

Community Outreach

We worked with a local outside organization, M2 Consulting, which specializes in data gathering and compilation, to develop an extensive database of social service agencies, churches, food pantries, hospitals, and other community touchpoints that would be appropriate for this service. We started calling these organizations and talked about the program's goals and the importance of early learning. Some organizations were a little hesitant in the beginning. They were understandably cautious about giving anyone access to their clients. Most organizations, however, were eager to participate in this kind of program, especially one being offered by our library system. Now that we have strong support from donors and several reputable organizations in the community, more doors continue to open and participation continues to increase.

"People are surprised the library is doing this," said Mackey. "They are almost always receptive, and I am amazed at the number of customers and community groups who thank us for what we are doing. The public library offers several services, and this is the new work of the public library."

The People Who Make it Work

This is a unique job—librarian, social worker, community advocate, and teacher all rolled into one. Our Ready to Read Corps staff has unique skills and experiences that make them ideal for the work they do in the community.

"I was part of the first Ready to Read Corps team that was developed," said Abby Kiracofe, program leader of the Weinland Park/Parsons Avenue team. "My experience providing community outreach during my seven years here at CML was a solid foundation for my role in this program."

Due to the diverse population we serve in central Ohio, it was critical for us to offer this training to first-generation immigrants—team members offer training in Spanish and Somali, as well as English.

"By speaking to parents in their native language, they are more comfortable with the information you present and they are also more likely to ask questions," said Magaly Vázquez, team member and native Spanish speaker. "I love conveying the message to people that it is the little things you do with your children that get



Left: Little Atticus is thrilled with his new book that was part of the Corps' take home kit for his mother. *Right:* The Ready to Read Corps provides training in the homes of Somali parents and caregivers.

them ready for school. And once people understand what to do, they are very enthusiastic to get started.”

Partners in the community also are critical. One valuable partnership is with Columbus City Schools. In September 2011, they began giving us contact information for the parents of children on the waiting list to enter the pre-K program. We invite the parents to participate in our training sessions and give them the tools they need to begin preparing their child for school.

Beyond the Corps, we also have trained some of our community partners to reach the people who most need the service.

“We developed the concept of train-the-trainer for the Corps with the first group of the Nurse Family Partnership operating out of Nationwide Children’s Hospital,” said Kiracofe. “This group now offers our Ready to Read information to their young moms via in-home visits. Our program has also rolled out to Help Me Grow, Family Ties, Columbus Literacy Council, and more.”

Measuring Success

Measurement is the key to determining our success. Our goal is to help raise kindergarten readiness levels to 90 percent, but we know it will take several years to see that level of impact.

We are working with the Voinovich Group at Ohio University to measure our program’s success. We have developed an extensive database that tracks every visit, workshop, community meeting, and one-on-one meeting and records attendance statistics, demographic information, and post-workshop evaluation.

We also have developed an evaluation plan that tracks the kindergarten readiness of a sample group of three- and four-

year-olds with the kindergarten readiness assessment used in Ohio. We received the first round of results in January 2012 and we are encouraged by the data. Since 2009, the Ready to Read Corps has reached 6,366 parents and caregivers of 8,296 children. In just two years of operation, this initiative has reached over 14,500 people in our community. We also learned that we are reaching the intended population of the economically disadvantaged. At the time of intervention, 67% of parents reported they plan to use the literacy kit every day and 89% plan to use it at least three times per week.

“There are both benefits and challenges to being the first program of our kind,” said Mackey. “On one hand, we have no map to follow. We have no other organization to look to and ask, ‘How did you do it?’ On the other hand, we get to make our own way. We get to experiment and learn firsthand what works and what doesn’t.”

What Have We Learned?

We’ve learned that

- flexibility is key;
- evaluation is critical;
- building trust and partnerships takes time and patience; and
- perseverance is important.

And most of all, we’ve learned we’re providing an invaluable service to parents, caregivers, and children in our community. The challenges we face are well worth our efforts to transform the lives of those who benefit most—our children. ☺

Newbies and Newberys

Reflections from First-Time Newbery Honor Authors

SANDRA IMDIEKE



Left to Right: Jennifer Holm, Kirby Larson, and Ingrid Law.

The content of this article has been edited and adapted from the June 2011 session “Newbies and Newberys: Three Authors Talk About the Wows and Woes of Winning the Newbery Honor with First Books.” Sandra Imdieke moderated the session.

What happens when an author receives a Newbery Honor for her first published novel for children?

Jennifer Holm, Kirby Larson, and Ingrid Law, authors who share this distinction, revealed their personal moments of “wow and woe” in June 2011 at the American Library Association Annual Conference.

Their reflections included their thoughts at the time their book was first accepted for publication, the subsequent experience of learning their book had been selected for an award, and the experience of working through the process of publishing

subsequent books. This article recounts the stories each author told in that session, revealing insights and ideas that can be shared with children by librarians and teachers.

- Holm received her 2000 Newbery Honor for *Our Only May Amelia*, her first novel, published by HarperCollins Children’s Books. *May Amelia* has seven older brothers, and life with them is not easy in a Finnish family farm growing up in Naselle, Washington, in 1899.
- Larson received her 2007 Newbery Honor for *Hattie Big Sky*, her first novel, published by Delacorte/Random House. In this historical-fiction novel set in 1918, sixteen-year-old orphan Hattie Brooks inherits 320 acres in Montana and she has ten months to “prove” her claim by homesteading.
- Law received her 2009 Newbery Honor for *Savvy*, her first novel, published by Dial Books, in partnership with Walden



Sandra Imdieke is a professor in the School of Education at Northern Michigan University, where she teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in children’s literature. She served as Priority Consultant for Group V Awards from 2009 to 2011, and she is the chair of the 2013 Caldecott Committee.

Media. Mibs is a member of a unique family who each receive his or her savvy when they turn thirteen. Since her brother is able to cause hurricanes, and her grandfather can move mountains, Mibs wonders what her gift will be.

“Wow” Question 1: How did your first novel come to be accepted for publication?

Larson: I had gotten to know editor Michelle Poploff when Random House published the paperback editions of my early reader chapter books. As any struggling new writer would, I made a point of staying in touch with her. In 2003 or 2004, we were both presenting at a writers’ conference on Whidbey Island, Washington. Michelle invited me to join her for dinner and over pasta we got caught up.

She asked me what I was working on and I remember saying, “Oh, nothing you’d be interested in. It’s just a historical novel about a young girl who homesteads by herself in eastern Montana in 1918.” Michelle said, “Well, I like historical fiction. Send it to me.” So when I felt it was ready, I sent it. Ten days later, the phone rang and it was Michelle.

I had just gone through a seven-year publishing drought, and the only reason I could imagine her calling was to let me down gently over the phone. So it took me a few beats into the conversation to realize she was offering to publish the book! I don’t remember much from our chat but I do remember that after hanging up, I actually fell to my knees, sobbing. I was overcome with emotions because that book had been written while I was losing my beloved grandmother to Alzheimer’s, and I considered it my love letter to her. Though she died before the book came out, I’m confident Grandma knew about it and, in fact, I have always felt a little guilty because I suspect she was up there working on the Newbery committee that year. More than anything else, Michelle’s faith in my book gave me the faith to keep writing.

Law: For me, *Savvy* was my second try to find representation. I spent about six months sending out another middle-grade manuscript over and over and over again, and I got forty-five rejections. But a few people said, “We really like your writing; we just don’t like this book. Send us whatever you write next.” I was so excited I immediately started on *Savvy*.

I wrote very quickly, finishing *Savvy* in about four or five months. I sent it out two days after I finished it. Two weeks later, and two revisions later, my agent sent it to thirteen publishers. That was on a Monday morning. My future editor e-mailed my agent at two o’clock the following morning.

I’d worked for the government for sixteen years. I was a single mom. And I was living in a mobile home in Boulder, Colorado, because that was the only place in town that I could afford and still have a yard and room for my daughter to grow. When my agent forwarded that e-mail, I fell off my chair at work.

Thirty days after accepting an offer from Dial Books for Young Readers, partnering with Walden Media, I also had a film option from Walden. It was indescribable. I think of it as putting a little

paper boat on a wading pool then having the whole pool picked up by a tidal wave.

Holm: I cannot top that story. I was working in advertising on products that you all know and love like Dove Soap and Tagamet and Huggies baby diapers. I enjoyed advertising a lot and, for the record, it is like the TV show “Mad Men.”

But one thing about advertising that really helped me get published is that people yell at you a lot and tell you “no” and tell you that you are wrong. “That logo is too big, that baby’s diaper is wrong.” You obsess about the baby crawling away from camera so that the diaper is perfectly placed on their fat little legs. If you got anything wrong, everyone was very quick to criticize you. So I got used to taking criticism as just part of my daily life.

I wrote *Our Only May Amelia* over several years while I was working in advertising, and then I started to send it out. It was in the days before e-mail, so it cost \$3.50 in postage. I would just send it out and about fourteen rejections later a lovely agent said, “Yes!” I continued to work in advertising for a couple years, but getting published changed my life.

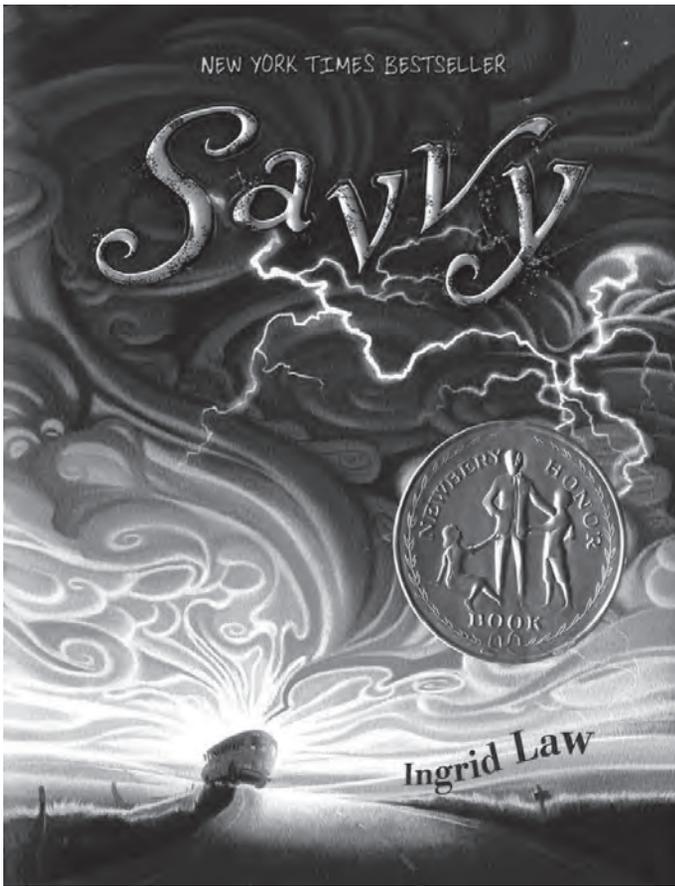
“Wow” Question 2: The big moment comes—you get “the call” from the Newbery Committee Chair. What was that like?

Law: As I mentioned, my life changed very fast. Right after *Savvy* was accepted for publication, the fine people at Dial Books, Penguin Young Readers Group, and Walden Media started talking about Newbery potential. For a brand new author, that was both exciting and intimidating, but I also knew that the Newbery Awards cannot actually be predicted. There are no finalists, and there are so many great books published every year.

About a week before the call, my head was in a bit of a strange place because *Savvy* had been on some mock Newbery lists. There was a lot of buzz about it. People would say to me, “Oh, we shouldn’t talk about it. We don’t want to jinx it.” But so many people began to say something like this to me that I began to think, “Oh my gosh, do I actually have a shot at this?”

I was working on my second book, already pulling out my hair to try to make it good, and I said to a friend, “I don’t know if I want to get a Newbery honor because if I did—oh my goodness, talk about the pressure!” I was also afraid of the attention I would get from such a prestigious award because I have always been a shy person. It used to be, when I was talking to groups this size, I would always ask people to turn and face the wall because it was so intimidating. I thought if I got a Newbery award or honor everyone would be “staring” at me.

I wasn’t getting any writing done at this point because I was obsessing more than a little bit about the upcoming award announcements. So my friend said, “You need to go to your favorite place in the world. You need to sit down and decide what you actually want. It doesn’t mean you will get what you want, but it would be nice if you put that thought away so you can get back to your writing.” So I went out to my favorite crooked path by my house in Colorado. I sat on a bench with my



favorite notebook, and I wrote and thought about it. “Do I want to get the gold sticker?” I asked myself. No, too much pressure. So, after some thought, I wrote in my notebook, “I want to win the Newbery honor award, silver.” I thought that silver sticker would look good on the book’s cover, too.

This sounds like I have a huge ego, and I don’t want you to think that. I just needed to get the distraction of thinking about the award out of my system. My friend had told me that after I wrote down what I really, truly wanted on a slip of paper, I should bury it. So there I was, at a pond, sneaking around looking for a rock under which to bury this note of hope I’d written. As you know, the Newbery awards are announced in January. In Colorado, the week before the Newbery conference, the day I buried the note was a beautiful sunny day. On the day of the announcement, it was eleven degrees and the stones were frozen to the earth, but I’d told myself when I’d buried the note that, when I heard either way—yes or no—I was going to go back to the pond and unearth my note so that nobody could find it. It’s not like I put my name on it or anything, but I was a little paranoid.

Doing that helped for the week. The conference was held in Denver, so on the morning of the call, I was in the same time zone. When the phone rang I thought, “Oh, please don’t let that be my mother!” But it was the Newbery committee. My daughter told me that my reaction to the call was very embarrassing. The rest of the day was fabulous.

Holm: When *Our Only May Amelia* was published, I was unaware of how any of this worked. I didn’t understand that

they called you, and in fact the weekend of the award, my father was quite sick, and my whole family was actually in Pennsylvania at the hospital. He was in the cardiac ward, and you weren’t allowed to have cell phones there.

Monday was a long boring day in the hospital, and around three in the afternoon, they took my father to get a procedure done. My mom and I were just sitting in the room, and I said, “I’m just going to go out to the lobby and call and check my voice mails and stuff.”

I called in to work, and there were thirteen voice mails. I was still working in advertising, and I had a lovely boss at the time who always said, “Anytime you need to go help out with the family just go. It is just commercials. Just go.”

So I was kind of annoyed that people were leaving me all these work messages. I started to listen to them, and the first message was from my publicist at Harper who said, “Oh! I am so excited for you,” and just hung up. I thought, “She is excited my dad is in the hospital?”

And then the second call was this very Southern voice saying, “Hello, this is Caroline Brodie, and I am calling from the Newbery committee to let you know that *Our Only May Amelia* has won the Newbery honor.” And I thought “What?” I ran back into the hospital room and I said, “Mom, Mom, May Amelia got a Newbery honor!”

And she said, I kid you not, “I’m sure you didn’t honey, maybe it was just nominated or something.” My mother didn’t believe me, and so I had to go take her out of the room and play the message for her over the phone. So when you see her you can tell her that you know the real story.

Larson: I was not a blog reader and knew nothing about mock Newberys. I was blissfully unaware that there would be any discussion like that. I wrote an ordinary book that even my lovely editor said, “You know, this is a quiet book.”

So I really had no idea. People like Karen Cushman win the Newbery award, not Kirby Larson. Monday night, I had been at a Random House celebration for the *Cat in the Hat* anniversary, since ALA happened to be in Seattle that year, where I live. We had rich cake and ice cream, and I didn’t feel well and wasn’t able to get to sleep until four in the morning. At 6:15 or 6:30 a.m., the phone rings, and this woman says, “Is this Kirby Larson?”

I was thinking that it was really early to be calling but I said, “Yes.”

“The Kirby Larson who wrote *Hattie Big Sky*?” and I said, “Yes.”

And she said, “Well I am calling from the Newbery committee to tell you *Hattie Big Sky* has won an honor award.”

I gasped, and my husband didn’t know what was going on and he was ready to dial 911. I have no idea what I said on the phone. My husband assures me I said, “Thank you.” When I hung up, I burst into tears. Thirty seconds went by and then I said, “What if it is a joke?”

At the end of the phone call, the Newbery chair had said that since I live in Seattle, I should come to the press conference just to see it myself. If you know anything about Seattle morning traffic, it is hideous. There is no way you can get from our house to downtown in less than an hour, and I was still in my pajamas. But my husband knows all the back ways, so we got there.

I sat in the back because I still wasn't sure if it was true or not. They were showing the covers of each of the award-winning books on this enormous screen and, after they showed *Penny from Heaven* (Jennifer Holm's book), I saw that corner of blue from the cover of my book, and I burst into tears. The librarians sitting near me must have been thinking, "What is wrong with this woman?"

Because ALA was in my hometown and so many librarian, bookseller, and writer friends of mine were attending the press conference, a cheer rose up. I have never been good at athletics, so I never knew what it felt like to score the winning basket, but that moment helped me imagine it. I will treasure that day for the rest of my life.

"Wow" Question 3: Once you knew you had been chosen for an honor award, was there a time during that year when the realization of the significance of the honor truly "hit you?" Did you have a "Newbery moment?"

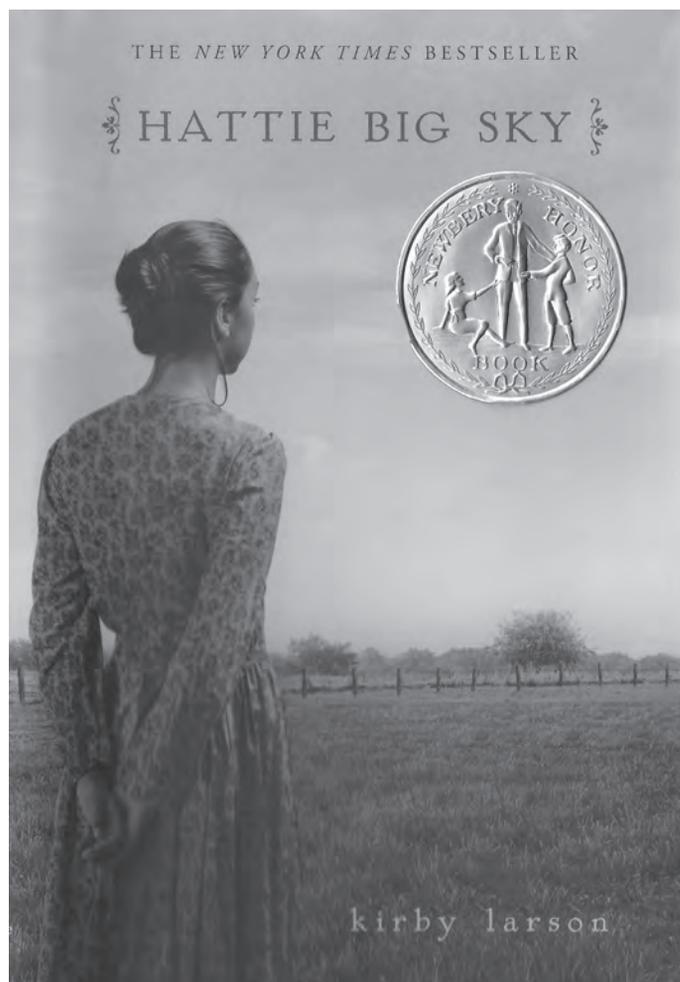
Holm: No one in my family ever thought I would be a writer. I wanted to be an archaeologist, an actor, and an artist, but most of all, when I was little, I wanted to be a ballerina. I was fired from the ballet at the young age of five because I would stop dancing during the performances. I loved reading as a kid, but mostly my childhood was marked with bad haircuts such as my Dorothy Hamill and the evil perm, which a lot of us have had.

And I didn't show a lot of promise on my report cards. In fact, I did have a fair amount of notes from the guidance office, which my mother kept for some reason. She also kept notes I passed in class. I kid you not, this is a note she kept for me. It says, "Hi Jen! How is it going? Did you ask him to the party yet? He will say yes, most likely if you ask him. I am in Spanish and we have a stupid substitute, Mrs. Emory. It looks like she has a wig on! Without the wig, with the wig, I better go before she sees this."

I did have a little literary brush with some guy named Lloyd Alexander. I was a crazy, psychotic Lloyd Alexander fan, so I sent him a gushing package with a sample of my writing when I was ten or eleven. I came home from school and my mom said, kind of disapprovingly, "There is some guy on the phone for you, Mr. Alexander."

I thought he was calling to tell me what a brilliant writer I was, but he was calling to get my address because when I wrote him a fan letter, I had just given my phone number, and since I had the same area code, he knew I was a local kid. He was just calling to get my address. Talking to him on the phone was my brush with fame.

Eventually, I started writing, and my dad was my main inspiration. He had grown up in a strangely interesting place called Naselle, Washington, which was populated by a lot of my



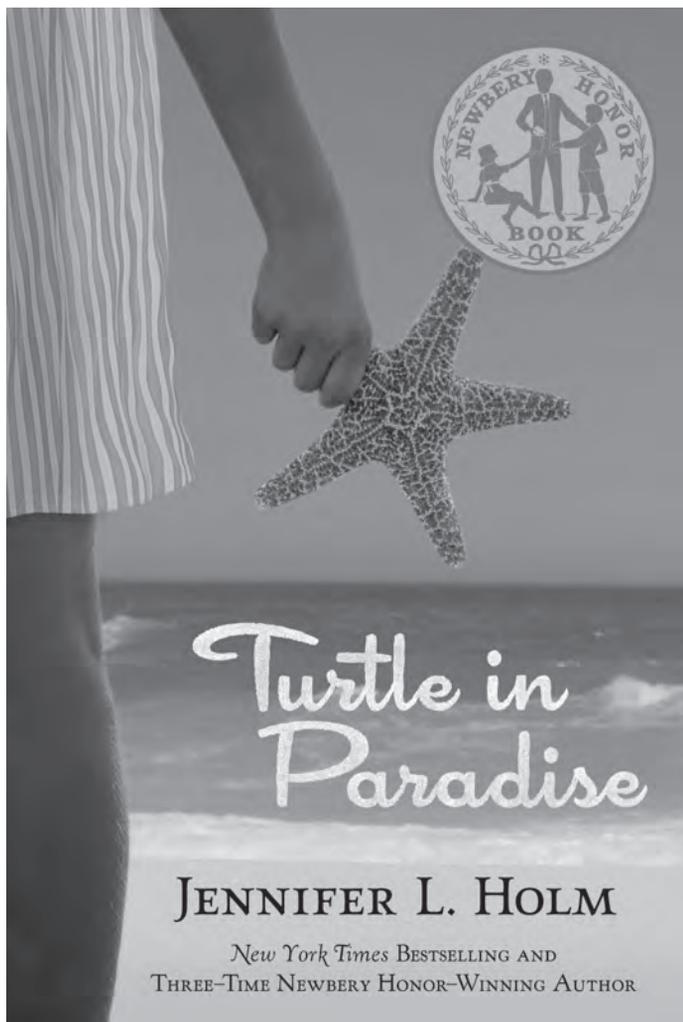
family and a lot of scary Finnish grandfathers and immigrants, so his family story is the basis for Amelia.

I would just like to say for the record that I have been writing about Scandinavians before that Stieg Larsson guy. I mean, come on. So the Newbery committee called, and I obviously missed the call because I was at the hospital. But the first moment where I was starting to get the sense that this was a really amazing thing and a sense of the power of the Newbery was in the hospital.

My mom didn't believe me about the call, but my dad told every single nurse in the ward, and after that they responded to the call button really fast. So that was our first moment, and he milked it.

Naselle, Washington, is a town you can drive through and you won't even know you have been there. The population is three hundred, and we are not exactly a hard family to find. We even have our own lane, Holm Lane.

Our farm was a working dairy ranch when my dad was a kid. Until pretty recently, it was a working cattle ranch, and my uncle and aunt still live on the farm. I get a call from my aunt one day, and she said this kid had just showed up on the farm looking for May Amelia! He was a fourth grader named Jack whose teacher had read the book to the class. He lived in Seattle, so it was a good three-hour drive, but he was on spring break and he begged his grandparents to take him to Naselle to go find May Amelia.



He got to town and stopped at the gas station and started asking people where she lived. They said that the Holms live down the road, and somebody pointed them to the farm. He showed up on the farm and asked to meet May Amelia.

My aunt had to tell him that she didn't really exist. My uncle actually gave him a ride around the farm, took him on the tractor and showed him the diary. This has actually happened a lot since then. The other thing I learned is if you write a book about your father's side of the family, you better write a book about your mother's side of the family.

Law: The power of the Newbery honor was demonstrated to me in one way by the difference between my 2008 ALA experience, after *Savvy* had just come out, and my 2009 ALA experience, when I was there for the Newbery banquet. Both conferences were fabulous, but in 2008, I did a lot of thumb-twiddling and desperate smiling at passersby before someone would stop to ask me what my book was about. But in 2009, the line for my book-signing wrapped around the booth and away into the distance.

Another unforgettable Newbery moment was when my hometown dedicated our local Read Across America Day celebration to me that year, and I was honored by the town council.

Larson: I think it is a process really, not a moment, and I think it continues to be. I am still in awe. You can tell by the way I remember it. I think the best thing is to win a silver, really, because you get to dress up, but you don't have to give a speech. I just feel blessed that I am on the same list as E. B. White because he won the honor for *Charlotte's Web*. What can be better than that when you are a writer? So I think it is a continual, joyful blessing and a tiny bit of a curse, which I think we are going to talk about next.

“Wow” Questions: *Subsequently you have all been successfully published again, but in between, what were the challenges? Were expectations a factor? What about research and revision?*

Law: The issues I had around “expectation” were huge. And I felt I'd only compounded these issues, and other people's expectations, by choosing to write my second book in the same family and the same story world as *Savvy*.

I was even more nervous about other people's reactions because I chose to write *Scumble* from a brand new character's point of view. Since *Savvy* is a coming-of-age story and the book's main character, Mibs, learns what she needs to learn by the end the book, I thought that if I just took Mibs and threw her into a new adventure, it would somehow dishonor her character.

I wanted Mibs's story to stand alone. And I wanted to continue exploring the idea that we don't always get what we want when we grow up, but we often get what we need. A “savvy” is really just a metaphor for growing up, and I wanted to look at a savvy birthday from a whole new point of view, a boy's point of view.

In a way, as I was writing that second book, I was growing up again, too; I was growing up to be an author. I was entering a new and mysterious world filled with various publishing demands—speaking publicly, doing school visits, and being interviewed for newspapers, radio, and television. So I was trying to write a second book while doing all of these things I had never done before, while trying to adjust to my new life. And still there was that expectation . . . that fear. Everyone loved *Savvy* so much. I kept asking myself: What if I fail? What if I come out with my second book and no one likes it?

I wrote the first draft of *Savvy* in four and a half months, and we edited it fast. The whole process took from January to mid October of 2007, whereas *Scumble* took about two years for the entire process. I was very pleased with it in the end, but there were moments when it was a crazy, crazy kind of endeavor that pulled me to pieces before putting me back together again.

I thought it was kind of funny that I would have to talk about research because both Kirby and Jenny write historical novels. One might ask, how much research does one have to do for a fantasy book?

When I was writing *Savvy*, I was about halfway through the book, and my daughter and I decided to take the entire road trip that the kids in the book take. The book starts with a storm, and on the day we drove into Kansas for my research trip, there

were eighty-four tornadoes from North Dakota to Texas, and we drove right into one. That was an interesting beginning!

But it was very helpful to take the trip. Even though I write fantasy, I set my stories in the United States—in the real world—and I wanted to know the truth about the places and the things I was writing about before I added my own fiction.

My daughter was also very helpful. When we visited the world's largest porch swing, in Nebraska, she made the comment, "How can this be a porch swing if there is no porch?" I stole that line and gave it to my main character.

Holm: For me, everyone wanted to have a sequel right away. I didn't have an idea for a sequel, so I decided to make things easier by doing historical research for the Boston Jane series, which is set in the 1850s. This started me down my dark path of historical fiction research. I am a little obsessive-compulsive in real life, so doing historical fiction just kind of magnifies that bad personality trait.

The book is about Jane, a girl who moved from Philadelphia to the West Coast. It is like a little story of self discovery and a love interest. So when I started research for Jane, I would get bogged down by all of these technical historical details, like how many days exactly would it take for her to get there? Did she travel by ship? Should she go over the mountains?

In the process, I figured out that there is somebody out there who knows everything. So I did a lot of these calls where I called the New Bedford Whaling Museum and I asked, "How long would it take to go around the cape in a ship this size? How many crew members? What would they eat?" And it was as if the museum librarian had been waiting for somebody her whole life to call and ask her that.

That process has continued with me, and I think I have spoken with every unique archivist. For *Penny from Heaven*, there is a scene where Penny gets her arm stuck in a washing machine, a wringer. I became obsessed with wringer washing machines. There is a guy in the Midwest who owns the official Wringer Washing Machine Museum. He spent three hours on the phone with me, sent me a book, and invited me to visit the museum. So what changed the most for me is I became even more OCD in my research.

Larson: A research trip some years back found me digging around in the basement of the Montana Historical Society, where I found a photo of a girl and an exquisite and life-sized Japanese doll. How did this doll end up with this little girl in Podunk, Montana? And *why* did this happen?

Answering those questions took a few more years of poking around, during which time I learned that there had been fifty-eight of these dolls originally sent to children in the United States from children in Japan in hopes of improving relationships between our two countries. The dolls visited more than four hundred cities coast to coast, and after a year of traveling, were sent to various museums in each of the then forty-eight states. At the time I started exploring the topic, there were fourteen dolls yet unaccounted for.

After I shared my interest with my editor, Michelle, she suggested looking for a way to connect a contemporary reader with this story. I was intrigued by the notion of the still-missing dolls and planned to weave in a mystery. And I liked the idea of a boy main character because it was unexpected and because boys like my nephew, Christopher, and my neighbor, Mason, don't often get a chance to see themselves reflected in kids' books.

These quiet, artistic, and sensitive boys play with dolls as easily as they play catch. So, with a main character named Mason, I dove in, creating a book I called *Seal's Secret*. I worked hard on that puppy, revising it a dozen or more times. By April 2009, I had a version I thought was worthy of showing Michelle and so, right before I took off on a three week trip to Qatar, Lebanon, and Egypt, I sent it to her.

Now, mind you, I'd never stopped to chat with my editor about what she'd meant by connecting a contemporary kid with these historical events. I had never even showed her any of the drafts. I was just so relieved to have completed the "Dreaded Second Novel" after winning a Newbery honor for my first novel that I went blithely off on my trip, eager to enjoy what I imagined to be a several month break from the manuscript.

Editors are supposed to take eons to get back to writers. Michelle's editorial letter was waiting for me when I returned home. After reading the editorial letter, I picked myself up off the floor. I may have cried. I definitely had a hard time breathing.

I read through that letter many, many times. I wish I could say that I realized instantly that I'd been kidding myself about the manuscript and that I knew deep down it didn't work. But I thought I'd done a good job with the story.

So I set up a time for us to talk. Michelle, and her assistant, Rebecca, knew I could do better. They pointed out to me that the strongest parts of the story—the parts I myself liked best—were written from a historical perspective. Something someone said during the conversation etched itself in my brain. The dolls' story takes place, for the most part, during the Great Depression. My wise counselors pointed out that, once again, our country was going through hard times and suggested that perhaps the connection to the contemporary reader would come through sharing that hard-time experience with the story's main characters.

The more we talked, the more excited I got. If you haven't figured it out already, I love poking around in history. I finally saw this turn-down as a fresh start, a chance to more fully explore those years before World War II. I could even see the doll being one of the viewpoint characters in the book. Not a sticky sweet baby doll, but a self-important doll, puffed up with pride at having been created to be an ambassador, a doll that has as much use for a child as a dog does for a flea.

Here is what I wrote to Michelle after our conversation:

I want to say how much I appreciate your support and encouragement. Writing this novel after Hattie was a huge obstacle for me, and simply completing a draft I felt good

about sending to you was a major accomplishment. I really appreciate, too, feeling freed up to approach the story in a new way, one that sparks my interest in history and speaks to my heart.

I spent some time “moodling,” to steal a phrase from Zora Neale Hurston, over possible story lines and that moodling included more research about the Depression. For example, I discovered that Eleanor Roosevelt had received hundreds of thousands of letters as First Lady, and I was caught by those letters which said things like, “I am writing to you for some of your old soiled dresses, if you have any;” and “I am sending this letter with the pennie [sic] I get to take to Sunday school.”¹

This time of exploration got my storytelling juices flowing, and I began to envision this book taking place in different parts of the country. I put *Seal's Secret* aside. There were a few scenes I could keep, and two characters remained though they got tweaked dramatically, but otherwise I started over from scratch.

By the time all was said and done, I had five historical viewpoint characters, including the master doll maker who created Miss Kanagawa, a contemporary kid—a boy!—and an uppity doll—six key characters in all. Of course, this re-visioned book outgrew its original title. I came up with a few suggestions, but Michelle felt confident that *The Friendship Doll* was the best choice.

As charged up as I was about this new version of the book, as time went on, it seemed to pale in comparison to Hattie. I was still battling that Dreaded Second Novel Syndrome. One day I was walking our dog, Winston, with my husband and I told him—my husband, not the dog—about what I was feeling. He bluntly reminded me that I'd thought the first drafts of Hattie were horrible, too.

I had no such memory, so I came straight home and read the very first draft of *Hattie Big Sky*. My husband was right—it was awful! I couldn't have been happier! I figured if I could fix up a rotten manuscript once, I could probably do it again. But I will let you all be the judge of that.

What has inspired your writing?

Holm: For *Penny from Heaven*, I had a real moment of inspiration. My mother's mom had a very Italian-American family. My grandmother was a nurse, and my grandfather was a doctor. They got married, but my grandfather died when she was pregnant, a huge tragedy for my family.

My mom was raised by her maternal family, and everyone always called her Penny, which is not a typical nickname for her real name, Beverly.

She had always said that she thought that was because her father's favorite song was *Pennies from Heaven*, and it was

his family's way of honoring him. But at my grandfather's brother's death bed, my uncle grabbed me and said that she was named Penny because my grandfather knew he was dying. My grandfather called her Penny because she was a lost penny he could never hold. I could not let that story leave me because it was so sweet and dark, something you can't make up.

Larson: I was one of the caregivers for my grandmother in her last years. She told me one day that the only time her mom (Hattie) was ever afraid was in the winter when the wild horses stampeded. We live in Seattle, and there aren't too many wild horses, even in the winter. In addition, my great grandmother was four-feet-eleven inches, probably weighed eighty-five pounds, and had thick bifocals. I couldn't envision her anywhere near wild horses.

In trying to figure out the truth in my grandma's comment, I learned that tiny little Hattie did go to Eastern Montana to homestead by herself, which I thought was an amazing story. I further learned that, during World War I, many women with limited options headed west to homestead. The story was too compelling to leave behind.

Law: I had just given up on submitting the book nobody wanted, and I said to myself one day, “OK, I am going to sit down and write the craziest sentence I can think of, and I'm not going to edit it or judge it.”

Without putting any thought into the process beyond that, I wrote, “When my brother Fish turned thirteen, we moved to the deepest part of inland because of the hurricane, and, of course, the fact that he'd caused it.” It is still the first line of *Savvy*.

The purpose of this session was to explore the “wow” of the accomplishment of receiving a Newbery Honor for a first published novel, as well as some of the challenges, or “woes,” that sometimes come along after the celebrations are over. The recollections of these authors provide us with behind the scenes insights. Perhaps these are stories we can share with aspiring writers who visit our libraries or sit in our classrooms, and who need our encouragement or inspiration to keep writing. ☺

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Inside Over There!

Sendak Soars in Skokie

Photos by Ruth Sinker, provided by Skokie (Ill.) Public Library.

This winter, Skokie (Ill.) Public Library hosted an exhibit exploring the push and pull of the New World and the Old World in Caldecott Medal winner Maurice Sendak's works, following how his artistic journey led him deeper into his own family's history and his Jewish identity. The Youth Services Department even held a "Reading Rumpus" as part of a Sendak Sunday event to involve families in reading and exploring the exhibit.

The exhibit was organized by the Rosenbach Museum and

Library of Philadelphia and developed by Nextbook, a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting Jewish literature, culture, and ideas, in conjunction with the American Library Association Public Programs Office.

The national tour of the exhibit was made possible by grants from the Charles H. Revson Foundation, the Righteous Persons Foundation, the David Berg Foundation, and an anonymous donor, with additional support from *Tablet Magazine: A New Read on Jewish Life*. &



An Exploratory Study of Children's Views of Censorship

NATASHA ISAJLOVIC-TERRY AND LYNNE (E.F.) MCKECHNIE

"I don't think they should stop you." —Emily (age nine)

While much literature exists about children, intellectual freedom, and censorship, very little is known about what children themselves think about this topic.

To explore this topic, we conducted a focus-group interview with six children ages nine to twelve. The results indicate that children have and can articulate opinions about censorship, that these perspectives vary between children and from those of adults, agree that some materials may be inappropriate for children of particular ages, feel that adults have the right to restrict access to materials but also are adept at finding ways to acquire and read, view, or listen to restricted materials. Children's voices need to be considered in the further development of policies and practices related to intellectual freedom and their access to materials for pleasure reading and information.

Censorship and intellectual freedom are central issues to the field of librarianship. Oppenheim and Smith claim that "the relationship between librarians and censorship is and has been a troubled one. Information professionals typically feel that they should provide access to information regardless of content

or conflict with their personal points-of-view."¹ From a library perspective, intellectual freedom should be protected at every opportunity. However, this tenet often contradicts the interests of many parents who choose to control and monitor the material their children read and watch. Occasionally, parents bring formal challenges into the library when they find material they experience as objectionable.

The *Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom* defines a challenge as "a formal, written complaint, filed with a library or school, requesting that materials be removed because of content or appropriateness."² Not surprisingly, and perhaps because of their age, we were unable to find evidence of challenges to collections initiated by children. In fact, there appears to be little written about children's perspectives on intellectual freedom and censorship, particularly when it applies to material of interest to them.

Literature Review

A large body of literature exists focusing on the issue of censorship. Much of the literature consists of policy statements,³ descriptions of how libraries should and do deal with censorship,⁴ lists and discussions of which materials are



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being challenged,⁵ and explanations of why those books are being challenged.⁶

Most of this literature presents adult perspectives. Viewpoints of younger people appear rarely, usually involve teens rather than children, and present adult interpretations of children's opinions rather than children's direct voices. For example, in "One Teen's Stand against Censorship," Hall describes the lawsuit filed by high school student Emma Rood against the U.S. government over the Children's Internet Protection Act (2000) and includes Rood's comments and opinions.⁷

As teens are very different from children, this brief article provides no insights about children's views. In a regular column in the *Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom*, which describes successful defenses of challenges against materials, it is reported that school librarian "Victoria Foster . . . explained that she filed an objection [to Joyce Carol Oates's *Sexy*] after a student brought the book to her attention, directing her to chapter seven 'and that the f-word came up quite a bit.'" Foster also complained about sexually explicit passages in the novel.⁸

Also included in the report are the responses of a teacher, the school principal, and even the author of the book, who had been contacted by a student via email. Even though that student clearly had an opinion, it was not represented in the article. This example is typical of a literature in which children's views about censorship are simply not or are only indirectly explored and presented.

The dominant concern expressed when it comes to questionable material is how it might affect children and whether it is suitable for the intended audience and age group. For instance, the most challenged book of 2006, 2007, 2008, and 2010, according to the American Library Association's (ALA) Office of Intellectual Freedom, was Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell's 2005 children's picture book *And Tango Makes Three*.⁹

One of the reasons given in many of the challenges is that it is "unsuited to age group."¹⁰ This indicates that the parties challenging this work are concerned that children age four to eight may be adversely affected by reading a story about two male penguins that hatch an egg together and proceed to raise it.

While many adults seek to protect children from "inappropriate" materials, others, in the hope of protecting children from censorship, fight challenges to children's materials. Librarians and library and information science (LIS) scholars are prominent within this group. For example, Anne Curry reports on the results of two studies examining whether or not librarians were moving controversial materials for children and teens to adult sections in public libraries and the most common reasons presented for challenging materials for reading. Curry ends her article with the following statement:

"Books that deal openly with controversial subjects are the ones young people like the best. . . . One of the most important responsibilities we assume as librarians is to make sure older children and young adults get these lifelines. We need to provide them with challenging books, including controversial

ones, in the areas of the library where they can most easily find them—the children's/young adult shelves."¹¹

As evident in this very brief overview of a very large literature concerning children and censorship, the voices of children themselves are seldom heard. To address this gap in understanding, we undertook an exploratory study to answer the following research question: What do children think about censorship of materials that have been developed for or are of interest to them?

Method

To investigate, we conducted a focus-group interview with six children ages nine to twelve. Long established as an appropriate method for exploring opinions,¹² the focus group interview has been used extensively in library and information science (LIS).¹³ This method is included in several research-methods texts regularly used in master's and doctoral LIS programs throughout North America.¹⁴

Although few in number, there are some published reports of focus-group studies conducted with children in LIS. Waters conducted a focus group with nine children ages six to nine about their experience of the public library.¹⁵ Dresang, Gross, and Holt used surveys, observations, and focus groups to investigate the use of computers in a public library by children in grades four to eight.¹⁶ Lushington used focus groups with children and teens to aid in planning a new children's library space.¹⁷

Of particular interest are three articles that, in addition to reporting the results of studies, provide extensive information about the research design process—what worked and what didn't when using focus groups with children: Large and Beheshti's work on children and web-based portal design;¹⁸ Harris and McKenzie's study of barriers faced by children in using public libraries;¹⁹ and Meyers, Fisher, and Marcoux's work on the information behavior of tweens.²⁰ These articles, as well as a selection of texts devoted to doing research with children,²¹ informed the design for this study.

Focus groups are appropriate for this study for several reasons. Krueger and Casey note the usefulness of the method for exploring topics about which little is known.²² Greenbaum asserts the ability of the focus group to increase what is shared by participants through their interaction with each other.²³ Green and Hogan note that "focus groups create a safe peer environment and replicate the type of small group settings that children are familiar with from their classroom work."²⁴ Freeman and Mathison claim focus groups "engage children because they diminish the effects of adult power."²⁵ Most importantly, according to Christiansen and James, by focusing on the children's own speech as the main source of data, focus groups position "children as central informants of their own life worlds."²⁶

Our focus-group size of six in this exploratory study appeared to work well; it was small enough so all could participate and large enough to generate significant interaction between the

children. Four of the participants were girls (Celia, age nine; Emily, age nine; Julie, age ten; and Sarah, age twelve) and two were boys (Billy, age ten; and Anthony, age eleven).²⁷

Although it is usually recommended that girls and boys not participate in the same focus group, a mixed group seem appropriate in this case because the children were relatively young (this is a more serious consideration for teens) and the topic was not deemed to be gender sensitive.

Our convenience sample of participants was recruited through flyers posted throughout the university; e-mail messages sent to faculty, staff, students, and acquaintances; and through word-of-mouth. We did not collect sociodemographic information about the participants, but the children did represent a variety of backgrounds.

One was the child of a faculty member; others had parents who worked in professional, entrepreneurial, technical, and clerical positions. In addition, children of dual- and single-parent families were represented. The children lived both in the city where the study was conducted and in surrounding rural areas. As with any exploratory study with a limited-size convenience sample, care must be taken in generalizing or transferring the results to other groups.

The focus group took place in a university meeting room. The interior was visible through windows in both doors. In case a child might need support or comfort (a situation that did not arise), participants' parents sat outside in a nearby lounge. The focus group, held in the early evening on a mid-week day during the school year, lasted about one hour.

As the children arrived, they were given name tags and were introduced to the researchers. The logistics of the focus group were described to the participants, and they were encouraged to ask questions. At this point, we allowed the children to tell the rest of the group their names and an interesting fact about themselves. This served as an icebreaker and helped to stimulate participation.

The focus group was audio-recorded and then transcribed the following week. One of us served as the moderator, and the other as a support person who attended to any special needs of the children and to the equipment and made brief observation notes. Healthy snacks were distributed after the formal focus group ended.

The focus-group transcript was analyzed using Corbin and Strauss's grounded theory approach to identify themes related to the research question.²⁸

Findings

Varying Views of Censorship

The participants held varying opinions about censorship. Some felt censorship was negative, but that there were some instances when it should be practiced. For example, Sarah (age twelve)

expressed the following when the group was asked whether they felt parents should limit what their children read and see. "Um, I don't think it's a good idea 'cause, I think reading, like, is good for people and you should be able to read whatever you want. Unless it's inappropriate, like really inappropriate."

Although Sarah felt her parents should not be able to tell her what she could not read, she recognized there were certain limits to what was appropriate. Sarah also felt that some literature should be reserved for older children. When discussing *Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark*, Sarah said, "I think that . . . they should limit it to like older kids," but she also indicated the book should not be removed from the library even though it might frighten some children.

Emily (age nine) felt parents should not control children's reading. "I don't think they should stop you," she said. When discussing a specific instance of censorship, Emily said, "I still think they should let it [the book] out because I think kids should be able to read whatever they want and believe in whatever they feel like believing in."

Julie (age ten) responded, "I think they should maybe stop you if it was really, like a bad book, if there was . . . I don't know, killing in it and it was school."

Similarly, Billy (age ten) said he did not think parents and teachers should limit what children read "unless it's really bad."

While all participants felt that censorship was not a favorable practice, some articulated that it sometimes might be necessary. These children were able to identify examples or contexts where this might be so.

Some Things are Worse than Others

One participant thought different types of material warranted different treatments. When asked whether she had read or seen something that she later felt was inappropriate, Sarah responded, "I think it's just magazines 'cause there's a lot of inappropriate stuff in them. Well, some of them." Sarah also felt that "a lot of video games have like, negative and violence. And movies too."

Yet she had stated earlier that parents should not limit what children read. When asked directly if her parents should be able to restrict negative and violent content, Sarah responded, "Well, in movies and like video games mostly, not in books as much." These responses indicated that Sarah felt the type of material affects the impact on the user and that a child would be more negatively affected by violent images in video games and movies than by similar content in a book.

What's Inappropriate?

What constitutes inappropriate content varies between book challenges. Although *And Tango Makes Three* is a frequently challenged book, the focus-group participants did not mention

that book or label content involving same-sex relationships as “inappropriate.”

Instead, the participants focused on violent and scary content. For example, Julie said her “teachers limit it. We read a book called *Pig Boy*, and some guy got killed by a pig shredder.” Anthony (age eleven) said “the author Shane Peacock should stop writing his books. . . . Two of his newest books—murder!”

When discussing *Twilight*, the participants did not find paranormal content controversial. Instead, they agreed the book was meant for older kids because of the violent aspects. Emily said, “My friend told me at the end of *Twilight*, someone's head gets sliced off.”

Anthony thought *Twilight* was controversial because “Bella does not deserve to get pregnant with a vampire.” This was the first and only allusion throughout the focus group to sexual content and the idea that it might be inappropriate for children.

The very popular Harry Potter series also was described as controversial. Billy did not understand why, saying “probably a four-year-old would like it,” and that he did not understand why some people thought it was bad. Julie said, “I don't like Harry Potter” but then agreed that even though she did not like it, other kids should have the choice to read it.

While children and adults seem to share the feeling that violent and frightening content might be offensive, they disagreed about other types of content. These children, unlike many adults, were not concerned about homosexuality, sex, the paranormal, and witchcraft and wizardry in children's books. They also showed sensitivity to the idea that the perception of inappropriate content is subjective, understanding that what one person finds controversial or offensive can be enjoyed by many others.

Who Decides?

At Celia's (age nine) school, teachers and the school librarian were able to limit what is read and by whom. “They don't let me take out too mature books. You have to be a certain age to take them out . . . because, um, our librarian thinks that it might be too inappropriate for us.”

While all the children thought teachers have the right to limit what their students read at school, they felt that control did not extend outside of school. Billy said, “If it's the teacher . . . unless you're at school, they can't really limit what you do. . . . 'Cause at school they're like your parents, but when you're in your own house, your parents are the parents.”

We found it very interesting that the participants were so accepting of their roles as children. They were not angry about being told what they could and could not read. They seemed to acknowledge that some content is reserved for older people regardless of how they themselves might feel about that. Ironically, these same children were easily able to get access to materials they knew had been restricted.

Finding a Way to Get What You Want

The children in this focus group did not seem to hesitate and used a variety of methods to get restricted materials. When asked what he would do if his teacher said he could not read *Twilight*, Billy said, “Um, I wouldn't really care, 'cause I would just take it out secretly and then just read it at my house.”

When asked whether she would read or watch something she was told not to, Julie said, “I don't tell my mom and dad what I read. I just read it.” She described one of her methods for acquiring restricted materials: “If your library's open . . . ah . . . once you leave, you can just take it out.”

When asked whether or not he was allowed to watch *South Park*, Anthony stated, “No. I do anyway.” When asked what she would do if someone told her she could not read Harry Potter, Sarah said, “You probably could just probably like try like to get it or like ask an older sibling to get it for you, if you have one, or something. Or like some older friend or something.”

These responses demonstrate the participants acted with independent agency. They felt that they were able to identify what was inappropriate. Although they knew that parents had the right to limit what they read and watch, they ultimately felt that they could decide for themselves and act to get those materials.

Location, Location, Location

As evident in the following interaction, the participants recognized that some items, although they are available to everyone in the library, are placed in certain areas of the library to discourage younger children from borrowing them.

Emily (age nine) said, “In my school, they, well the library, they organize it and then one section it has like, a lot of books that probably older kids would read.”

Billy responded, “Yeah [the] back. In my school it's like the back of the library.” The children recognized that area, although not labeled as such, was for the older kids at their school. Billy thought placing materials in specified areas made sense. He stated, “*Pirates of the Caribbean* for example, and they put it in the kindergarten library . . . and they [the kindergarteners] wouldn't be allowed to take it out. That would be kind of stupid.”

Julie responded, “Yeah, why would they put it there?” Anthony said, “They won't even let us take that out.” Billy recognized the futility in placing materials suited to older children in the kindergarten area. He also accepted that this material was intended for older children.

Billy had a lot to say about the placement of materials within his school library. He seemed concerned that a fiction book with a questionable image on the front cover was placed “basically a few steps away from the kindergarten area.” He thought that a solution to this problem would be to “replace the fiction with the non-fiction, like move them around. Because

the non-fiction's on the opposite side of the library from the kindergartens. So, it should be moved."

Ultimately, he thought "they shouldn't put the books in the library if they don't want the kids to read them."

Sarah agreed with Billy. She said, "I think for the books that aren't for everybody they should put like, like under a desk or something, cause if the little kids see it and find out they can't read it, they might want it even more."

They Want Them Even More

Sarah mentioned twice during the focus group that children would probably want things more once they were restricted. When asked whether they felt this was true, Billy and Julie agreed that they would want something more if it was restricted.

This idea is not unique to this group of children. In an article by Stewart about a recent controversy surrounding Stephanie Meyer's *Breaking Dawn*, it is reported that a school representative stated, "Book bans serve only to shame children and heighten their curiosity."²⁹

Intellectual freedom advocates share this viewpoint. The responses from both the children and the adult experts point to a paradox arising from the act of restricting access to materials. Items are restricted to prevent children from reading, viewing, or listening to them, but the restrictions ultimately increase children's curiosity and desire for the restricted material.

Discussion

With only one small focus group, the results of this exploratory study are not definitive and cannot be generalized to a population. However, because it evoked the voices of real children, it has made a substantial contribution to the literature on children, intellectual freedom, and censorship.

The thoughts of the children who participated in this focus group are notable in several ways. First, it is clear that children of this age are able to think about censorship and do have opinions about it. Further, it seems that these opinions not only vary between children, but in some ways are significantly different from those of adults.

The children agreed that some materials are inappropriate for different age groups and were readily able to provide examples. At the same time, they wisely noted that such designations were largely subjective and that something that might offend one person would be fine for another.

As librarians with a strong professional commitment to intellectual freedom, we were surprised to learn the children felt that adults, in particular parents and teachers, had the right to restrict children's access to materials. And we were delighted to hear them describe how they circumvented these restrictions to get what they wanted.

We hope this small study will inspire others to further explore children's views of censorship. We also hope that practicing children's librarians will work to ensure that children's voices will be considered in the future development of policies and practices concerning their access to information, pleasure reading, and other materials.

The children who participated in this study had a good idea of their own tastes, but also of their limitations—what they could and could not handle at a certain age. Children should be seen as trusted and knowledgeable partners when it comes to deciding what is and what is not appropriate for them to read. ☺

Note: An earlier version of this paper won an Honorable Mention in the 2011 ALISE/Library Media Connection Paper Award competition.

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this open communication reveals the mentee's training plan has veered off course.

Through instruction, professional resources and experiences, and frequent open communication, mentees receive the tools necessary to thrive. These mentees, through being part of a productive mentoring relationship, become equipped with the skills to "pay it forward" and to become mentors themselves. Lee explains that "frequently, the trainee will provide this gift to others by becoming a mentor, thus providing the experience for someone else."⁹

The North Carolina Youth Services Mentor Program created an online village of mentoring professionals with the training, resources, and support necessary for them to mentor staffers across North Carolina. This village ensures that youth services staffers without mentors readily available to them receive the tools required to confidently step into the professional work of youth services. What a village, indeed. ☺

Photos by Melissa Lang.

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The Power of Story

The Role of Bibliotherapy for the Library

JAMES R. ALLEN, SANDRA F. ALLEN, KATHY H. LATROBE, MICHAEL BRAND, BETTY PFEFFERBAUM, BRENDA ELLEDGE, TRACEY BURTON, AND MATTHEW GUFFEY

Work with victims of disaster has moved from traditional psychiatric models of individual psychopathology to models of people as participating in and constituted by their interactions with others and within their communities and its institution. It involves struggles to calm and contain, to reclaim control, to make meaning, and to connect and reconnect.

Even the roles of professional mental health workers have changed. Rather than seeing themselves as having definitive answers and knowledge, they are now more likely to emphasize a willingness to listen, witness, and offer what information they have. For survivors, it may be helpful to ask even unanswerable, existential questions in the presence of a nonjudgmental person who can tolerate ambivalence and uncertainty.¹

Librarians are quite cognizant that they are not therapists. However, libraries can offer a safe place for children to express their concerns, to have their experiences, thoughts, feelings, and actions validated, and to explore ways to feel better. In this process, brief bibliotherapy may have an important role.

With the simple words, “Come, sit down. Let me tell you a story,” the librarian invites the child into a human relationship. Long after the latest therapy fads and catchphrases are history, people will still be telling stories, joining their characters in imagination, and finding models for how to change their lives.

We experience stories. Such experiences shape us in ways that abstractions cannot, for they appeal to all of what we are as human beings—feeling and meaning-making beings with

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bodies, not just reasoning. This phenomenon underlies David Lawrence's claim: "Being a novelist, I consider myself superior to the saint, the scientist, the philosopher, and the poet who are great masters of different parts of man alive, but never get the whole hog."²

Bibliotherapy

There are varying and inconsistent definitions of the term *bibliotherapy*; it is really a generic term for a continuum of activities that offer potential for growth, self-understanding, and healing through the use of literature or film. Literature, as John Pardeck and Jean Pardeck have pointed out, provides models of how to understand and handle dilemmas and real-life situations.³ Within the movement of story and storytelling lie answers to the perennial questions, "Who am I? Why am I here? Who are you? What happens to people like me in this world?"

In their review of the literature, David Russell and Caroline Shrodes define bibliotherapy as a process of dynamic interaction between the reader and literature—interaction that may be utilized for personality assessment or for adjustment, preparation, healing, and growth.⁴ We suggest librarians can provide such brief acute intervention in the wake of a disaster.

While contradictory, the bibliotherapy literature does present a consensus on several points. First, bibliotherapy is not meant to be psychotherapy. Teachers and librarians are not therapists. They do not intend to deal with psychopathology or offer what is more appropriate in the office of some therapist or counselor.

Second, bibliotherapy has traditionally been conceptualized as facilitating three processes: identification, catharsis, and problem-solving.⁵ *Identification* is affiliation with a character in the story. You join him or her on the adventure. After all, we all are characters, bundles of values and understandings in action, involved in some significant action over time. Identification is especially useful if the character solves a problem successfully and so can be a model for hope.

Catharsis is the release of tension experienced by the reader who lives through the character's situation, sharing his or her motivations and conflicts, and the story's climax, surprises, and resolution. Insight is the gaining of some awareness of one's motivations or the motivations of another. In discussing solutions to a character's problems, participants have opportunities to utilize interpersonal problem-solving strategies, explore alternative responses,⁶ and develop the ability to mentalize—that is, to understand both themselves and others as motivated by internal states, a characteristic now shown as an important factor in resilience.⁷

However, the involvement in stories that a library can provide during or after a disaster can serve many other functions:

- A place of safety.
- An opportunity to do something active rather than be a passive victim. Metaphorically, the story that will be heard

probably contains the message that both past and future are determined by active choice.

- An atmosphere of calmness.
- An opportunity to limit negative emotions through concepts, words, and emotional containment.
- Validation of the child's experience, thoughts, feelings, and actions. The truth of events for each of us is found not just in what happened, but also in how we felt and thought about it then, how we feel and think about it now, and the reactions of significant others.
- Reinforcement of related assumptions such as, adults can soothe and help and that there is goodness in the world.
- Support for such developmentally appropriate efforts as social referencing (checking with an adult) to appraise and address external dangers.
- Addressing of factual inaccuracies and misattributions of accountability.
- Reinforcement of narrative coherence, the ability to organize events into a sequence of beginning, middle, and end, rather than to experience them as a series of unrelated random events. Such a sequencing offers the possibility of change. Without that, stories have little interest.
- Scaffolding for co-constructing context and meaning. Every action is an episode in a possible history.⁸
- Support of the preschool and school-age tasks of cooperation and sharing.
- An opportunity for vicarious problem-solving and for elaborating alternative solutions. If people cannot imagine themselves doing something, they are unlikely to do it. We need our heroes, models, and mentors.
- Prevention of pathogenic expectations of future helplessness, lack of safety and security, or failure of protection.
- Shaping of the child's subsequent experiences through priming. Stories help determine what we are likely to perceive or ignore.
- Promotion of mentalizing, the understanding of both self and others as motivated by internal states and therefore predictable and potentially changeable.

In the immediate aftermath of a disaster, the librarian can be of help just by being a comforting presence and offering a calm, safe environment; providing useful words and concepts; offering missing information; correcting factual misunderstandings; and supporting problem-solving. For example, Bessel Van der Kolk, J. Christopher Perry, and Judith Herman importantly noted that following trauma, the capacity

Table 1.

Crisis Bibliotherapy	Traditional Bibliotherapy
Format: Very time-limited (1 or 2 sessions)	Format: Several sessions or self-help
Aims: Provision of safe environment, time-structuring, emotional containment, and examples of problem-solving	Aims: Personality modification, change in disturbed behavior, or mastery of developmental tasks
Framework: Normal response to abnormal event	Framework: Psychopathology or developmental distortions
Technique: Keeps discussion on story characters and situation	Technique: Uses story as springboard to delve deeply into reactions

to derive comfort from the presence of another person eventually was a more powerful predictor of improvement than the trauma itself.⁹

Because of developmental limitations, young children are prone egocentrically to attribute what happened to their own actions or to magical thinking and so suffer unnecessary guilt and shame. Having appropriate concepts and words can surround negative emotions with boundaries and limits, transforming them into something that can be managed.

Normally in their fourth or fifth year, children begin to appreciate that different people may perceive events differently, that they themselves felt differently in the past than they do now, and that things may not be what they appear to be. For example, a child can now understand that because he or she has been treated badly, it does not automatically mean he or she is bad. This provides opportunities to look at alternative perspectives on their experiences.

Problem-solving involves several steps:

1. Delineating and describing the problem.
2. Brainstorming possible solutions.
3. Guessing the consequences of different actions.
4. Choosing the best solution.

The ease of the process depends on the child's developmental level, intelligence, anxiety or other emotional inferences, and the framework an adult can provide. Younger children may have trouble even defining the problem, and the problems older children highlight may not be the problem the adult sees. Usually, the connection between goals and actions do not become clear until about age five. Four-year-olds may have trouble understanding that small steps can lead to a goal. Under stress, older children may regress to these earlier levels of functioning. The librarian can help all of them by providing necessary scaffolding.

It should be noted that what we are proposing is not debriefing. At least in adults, some of the few controlled studies that have examined debriefing's preventive effects following exposure to a traumatic event have suggested a poorer outcome than no intervention at all.¹⁰ What we are suggesting is that the librarians do what they know how to do well: offer children a place to listen to and to discuss a story.

Crisis Bibliotherapy vs. Other Types

There has been concern in the bibliotherapy literature as to the boundary between discussion and psychotherapy and, therefore, the appropriate role of the librarian.¹¹ Quite apart from the issues of turf and politics inherent in such discussions, these issues are largely irrelevant to what we are proposing—one or two story and discussion groups in the aftermath of a disaster.

Although oversimplified, Table 1 provides a list of differences between traditional and crisis bibliotherapy.¹²

Narrative and the Experienced Self

Our individual self is a center of experience and agency. It becomes more complex and integrated as we mature.¹³ At about age three, the young child usually has elaborated some kind of concept of self, as demonstrated in the use of the pronoun "I."

By age four or so, they are able to conceptualize themselves over an extended period and can form an autobiographical self involving a story of who they are, what will become of them, and their relationship to the world. Whether it is a fireman, princess, or a superhero, kids try on many roles and personalities. This also is the time when kids engage in pretend play *par excellence*. In this mode, correspondence to reality is not examined. The child knows that play and fantasy may not reflect external reality, but this is considered as having no implications for the external world.¹⁴ Such pretense offers opportunities for the expression of unconscious conflicts and surprising competencies. Imagination provides possibilities to create new realities.

We live in a storied world. Hearing or seeing stories provides children with models of how experience can be shaped into meaningful patterns. In play and drawing, they even create stories of their own, with or without an audience.

Stories bring together our experiences, making sense of them and integrating them into something meaningful. They typically offer a carnival of interpretive possibilities, but we may get stuck in one version and live it out. For example, some posttraumatic symptoms seem to result from problems in integrating the trauma into one's life story as an unfortunate event belonging to the past. Rather, the sufferer's narrative does not contain it, contains it too rigidly, or is overwhelmed by it. Through storytelling and the discussion of stories, the librarian can offer models of more useful and less pathogenic story structures.

At any given age, particular stories or at least particular interpretations seem especially attractive. These generally

embody themes appropriate to the child's stage of development or situation—in this case a disaster, a sudden event that is out of the ordinary. Some stories may have metaphoric correspondence to the child's inner reality. However, stories also have a distancing effect. It is out there, just pretend.

By introducing potential alternative understandings and reactions, story discussions may help children correct their own story of what happened. Sometimes, they may provide a different perspective or indexing scheme; the same events can be interpreted differently depending on the genre or story skeleton. Alternatively, a story may highlight or downplay certain phenomenon, helping the listener retrieve neglected aspects or contextualize and formulate them differently. This allows for different possibilities to emerge. Such processes can open a space between experience and response, freeing the listener somewhat from being embedding in his or her external or internal worlds. These processes also can help the listener better contain his or her experience in narratives, or at least in less rigid ones. Sometimes this may amount to a reauthoring of the listener's story and, thereby, his or her sense of self.¹⁵ In a certain sense, we *are* our stories. If we had different stories, for example, we would be someone else.

Summarizing several thousand studies on the construct of self, Timothy Judge et al. concluded that locus of control, self-esteem, and self-efficacy combine to form a core self.¹⁶ All three phenomena, however, are closely linked.¹⁷ Locus of control—one of the most studied variables in psychology—is the extent to which people believe their life circumstances are a function of their own actions (internal locus) as opposed to external factors.¹⁸ Being treated as having intention supports the child's sense of self both as subject and as agency. People's belief in their abilities to mobilize the resources they need to succeed exerts a strong influence on their behavior and resilience. Albert Bandura has called this self-sufficiency.¹⁹ The librarian leading a discussion response can support all these in the child participants.

Research in Bibliotherapy

The use of bibliotherapy expanded greatly in the second half of the nineteenth century. In the United States, this coincided with the period of long-term psychiatric hospitalizations. More recently, however, in the United Kingdom Neil Frude set up an ambitious program that has successfully treated thousands of outpatients in the National Health Service.²⁰ Every day, it is used by classroom teachers.²¹

Several studies have reported promising results, but good research studies are few. Arguably one of the best studies showed greater reductions in depressive symptomatology in a bibliotherapy group than in an assessment-only control group and significantly lower risk for major depression in a six-month followup.²² However, the book utilized for the bibliotherapy was a self-help book on cognitive therapy.

Indeed, in his 1987 review and analysis of the field, Ronald Lenkowsky concluded that results of the approach were

conflicting because of serious experimental flaws and a plethora of confounding factors.²³ However, none of this literature is particularly relevant to what we are proposing: the use of stories and their discussion as a brief intervention at the time of a disaster.

Future Needs

There is a need for the experimental study of the use of specific stories for children at specific developmental levels. They need to consider specific conflicts and life situations, utilize controlled and before-and-after designs, and avoid confounding factors. Then, it might be possible to look at the idiosyncratic ways particular children respond as well as the effects of different facilitator styles.

At that point, it would be possible to compare the usefulness of stories that openly deal with specific topics, such as death or divorce, as opposed to stories that are less obviously a fit or parallel at a superficial level but which may better reflect the child's internal world.²⁴ Operating through metaphor stories may have considerable power to bypass conscious resistance and thereby be more therapeutically useful.

Reader Response Theory

Traditional literary analyses offer useful information on how authors achieve effects through narrative style, technique, and manipulation of point of view. However, these are only potential, and their effects are subject to modification by the reader.²⁵ Close observation of five adult readers of William Faulkner, for example, led Norma Holland to conclude that each reader's comments reflected his or her personal psychological preoccupations.²⁶ This highlights how important it is to consider children's responses in terms of their development age and immediate concerns.

For example, F. André Favat, has described the correspondence between thinking processes of young children and fairytale discourses, thereby explaining their enduring popularity,²⁷ and Perry Nodelman has delineated the appeal of ever-popular superheroes.²⁸ Children, however, will hear and remember a story differently than how it is read to make it better fit their needs. Many great stories can be read at many stages in life, and the reader may find something meaningful, but different, each time.

Potential Dangers

For the Child

Until this point, we have considered the positive effects of stories in general, and bibliotherapy in particular. However, we all can probably think of examples of children frightened, if not entranced, by scary stories and stories that shocked or stirred up emotions a child could not contain. There are people who

are retraumatized in telling the story of their own trauma. There are children who have intense emotional reactions to fictional plots that resonate too closely with their painful memories. However, these dangers can be reduced if the librarian is sensitive to containing the children's emotions, directing the discussion to the story, and highlighting self-efficacy, that is, what the protagonist (or child) did to help himself.

For the Librarian

Work with victims of disaster has both positive and negative effects on the caregiver. Compassion satisfaction can be found in the work, but so can compassion fatigue, secondary (vicarious) trauma, and the hopelessness and difficulty in doing ones job well that characterizes burnout.²⁹

Suggestions

In the aftermath of a disaster, the most important things for librarians to consider are the following:

- Offering the child a caring, soothing relationship in a calm, safe environment; the companionship of the narrating transaction; and the narcotic effect of narrative on pain.
- Facilitating a sense of group and community support and care, showing the child that there is goodness in the world.
- Providing time-structuring when perhaps no one knows what to do but feels the need do something.
- Taking advantage of a very human interest in stories, our human need that life mean something, and perhaps even the brain's tendency to process experience in narrative form.
- Offering concepts and words that can contain feelings, a framework to understand what happened, and scaffolding for problem-solving and hope.

For many children, hearing or reading a story may re-create an experience of comfort and emotional closeness, and activate the calming rituals associated with bedtime. Safe attachment is the primary way that children learn to regulate internal states, and we all tend to feel closer to those with whom we share stories.

For some children, stories will provide a distraction from overwhelming immediate concerns. For some, stories will offer a sense that they are not alone—others have faced similar problems and survived. For others, a story may offer a way of making sense of their experience, a model for future behavior, and the groundwork for problem-solving.

At the least, stories may limit and bind un verbalized fears with concepts and words. Un verbalized fears know no bounds. For other children, the story may permit some sort of vicarious handling of problems. All this occurs in a displaced manner. After all, the story is just pretend.

Remember, you are not offering therapy. You are discussing the human responses that all of us know and that good stories make explicit: stress reduction and relaxation, grief and loss, fear and uncertainty, the problems of moving, and the helplessness of not knowing what to do.

For the existential questions that arise in the context of a disaster, there may be no answer. However, just being able to ask them and share them in the presence of a calm, nonjudgmental person is a comfort and a gift.

If the child begins to move from the story to speak about himself, displacement is breaking down and you are moving close to slipping into therapy or counseling. If you become uncomfortable or feel that this is beyond your expertise, validate their feelings and what they did to help themselves, then gently guide them back to the story.³⁰

Perhaps you might have them retell the story, explore and generalize the consequences of certain behaviors, evaluate the helpfulness of different alternatives, or have them select the characters they most admire.

Remember, working with trauma is draining for the caregiver. Make sure you get adequate rest, exercise, food, and relaxation.

Seeing our lives as a story interacting with other stories gives us a sense of being part of a sequence of meaningful events and a sense of meaning in our lives. In these stories, we are both characters and cocreators. The stories you and your charges are now cocreating may offer them healing and come to define you both.

Stories help create and bind a community. Without them, we know neither who we are nor what we should do. ☺

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Digital Storytelling

More than the Sum of Its Parts

Larence Wawro

“Hey kids! Want to read a story?”

If that doesn't get kids' attention, how about, “Hey kids! Want to *tell* a story?”

In this increasingly technological world, keeping kids interested in both reading, writing, and the processes of storytelling can sometimes use a bit of an upgrade. Why not incorporate digital storytelling at your library?

Last year, I attended a workshop at the Center for Digital Storytelling in Berkeley, California. Although the workshops are for teaching adults how to create and express their own stories, there are some wonderful opportunities for librarians serving children to introduce these skills to patrons and students, giving children another tool to find their voices and express themselves in the digital age.

So what, exactly, is digital storytelling or a digital story? The website for the Center for Digital Storytelling (www.storycenter.org/index1.html) defines it as “a short, first person video-narrative created by combining recorded voice, still and moving images, and music or other sounds.” You combine the recorded voice with the visual elements of photos or pictures with other elements, such as music or sound effects, to create a unique multimedia piece that is more than the sum of its parts.

There are many reasons for sharing digital stories with patrons. It encourages children and adolescents to think

about how stories are created. We read stories to children, but how do we go about telling our own stories? Many children watch YouTube clips, but giving them the opportunity to create their own content and stories is a powerful tool—it helps them consider the elements of stories as well as increasing their awareness of the elements of the media they see around them.

It also allows them to express themselves. As so many of us know, children have amazing stories to tell. Whether they are stories of personal struggles or achievements, or some fantastic story they've dreamt up, digital storytelling gives them another avenue for self-expression.

A Digital Stories Toolbox

So what tools does one need to create digital stories? There are programs available on your computer and online that can be used to create digital stories. At the workshop I attended, we used Apple's Final Cut Express, a powerful program that gives its user many options for layering visual and audio tracks. Although this is a great program, the expense may not make it a viable option for all libraries.

Most PCs and Macs, however, come with their own video-editing software. Windows Movie Maker for PCs and iMovie for Macs are ideal resources.



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Although your options are more limited than more robust video-editing programs, the simplicity can actually make the process simpler because it limits the bells and whistles that can begin to weigh down a project. (For computers with Windows 7, I recommend downloading a copy of Windows Movie Maker 2.6 from the Microsoft website; the timeline function makes it easier to edit still pictures than the updated Windows Movie Maker Live that comes with Windows 7.)

In terms of audio-recording software, Audacity, a free audio-recording program for PCs, or Garageband for Macs are great tools—just add a microphone and you'll be ready to record the narrative in no time.

Last, but by no means least, don't forget about images. With the prevalence of digital cameras and cell phone cameras, many children may have easy access to pictures to use for their stories. Other options are scanning photographs the children may have or scanning pictures that they have drawn.

If you don't have access to a scanner or if you need other options, you can find pictures available online under Creative Commons licenses, such as Flickr Creative Commons, which can be used for free as long as you give credit to the owner of the image and do not use it commercially. There are numerous websites, such as Jamendo, that offer music under the same stipulations.

Ready, Set, Record!

Once you have your tools ready, what's next? There are multiple methods, but I'll outline one possible strategy. The time expended on each step will depend on your audience and resources. However, you may want to plan this project over multiple sessions and allow extra time to deal with unforeseen technical issues or time spent scanning images.

- **Have the children write out the stories they wish to tell.** This can either be an overview of what they want to see or the script that they will record. These could be original stories or they can share a personal experience. Although playing with the technology may sound like more fun than writing, having them focus on the story will give them a better appreciation for the process and make for a better finished project.
- **Record the children telling their stories.** This can be accomplished in a quiet space using a microphone and one of the recording programs. If you are working with a group, you might have the other children working on creating storyboards (on computer or on paper) by making rough sketches or notes about what pictures they want to appear within the different parts of their script.
- **Gather their images.** Children could bring in pictures on a flash drive, or they can scan a hard copy. They also may be able to access their own pictures on Facebook or use public-domain images. Another possibility is to have them draw pictures and scan them or have them create pictures with a computer program such as Microsoft Paint.

Digital Storytelling Resources

Audacity

<http://audacity.sourceforge.net>

Center for Digital Storytelling

www.storycenter.org

Flickr Creative Commons

www.flickr.com/creativecommons

Henry the Superhero

http://youtube/m5_M_ZkxI9c

Jamendo

www.jamendo.com

Windows Movie Maker 2.6

www.microsoft.com/download/en/details.aspx?displaylang=en&id=34

“Digital storytelling is an empowering and creative way for kids to tell their stories, and when they're all done, they won't just stick it on their refrigerator—they can share it with the world.”

- **Arrange the images and audio in the editing software.** If you are using Windows Movie Maker 2.6 or iMovie, import the audio and image files. This incorporates all the files within the program so you can use them like ingredients in a recipe. The next step is fairly simple—both Windows Movie Maker and iMovie allow you to click and drag the audio into the appropriate audio timeline. You can then click and drag the images that you want onto the video timeline, then click and drag how long you want each image to appear on the screen. By doing this, you can make the images sync up with the audio and have them appear with the corresponding dialog.
- **Throw in a little movie magic.** If you have some extra time, add effects in Windows Movie Maker or iMovie to make the transitions blend more seamlessly. Or, try having the image pan (move from one side to the other), much like in a Ken Burns film. In fact, iMovie has an effect titled after the famed documentary director himself.
- **Export the work to a movie file.** After you have assembled the audio and visuals, export the file into a playable movie file, such as a WMV file for Windows or MOV for Macs.

This is just one way to accomplish a digital story. Experiment and find what works for you and your patrons or students.

For one project I did with my son, who was four at the time, I gave him index cards on which he could draw each scene or panel of his story. After he finished creating, I laid the cards out and recorded him telling me the story.

I scanned the index cards, added the audio file and a title screen, and we were done. This method skipped the initial writing and just let him have fun drawing images and thinking about the story more as a comic book.

Another possibility—if it is too difficult to record the children or you don't have access to a microphone—is to create text

screens between the images that help tell the story, such as in silent movies. You could let music be the soundtrack and let the images and text do the “talking.”

These examples are not meant to be a definitive guide; rather they are a starting point for digital storytelling.

What's important is to find what works for you and your participants and fits the resources available. Digital storytelling is an empowering and creative way for kids to tell their stories, and when they're all done, they won't just stick it on their refrigerator—they can share it with the world. ☺

WE PLAY HERE!, continued from page 10

We reiterate that children's librarians have an important role in the repositioning of play as a vital aspect of childhood for *all* children. We hope that our collective experience as children's librarians in a variety of roles has provided you with insight, ideas, and inspiration about how you can continue to support play in your programs, spaces, and conversations. The library is the perfect place to show the way through play and we invite you all to become advocates for play in your libraries. ☺

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Board Major Actions

The following actions were recently taken by the ALSC Board of Directors.

Electronic Actions

APPROVED, support of the Franklin Institute's NSF implementation grant proposal, "LEAP into Science: Understanding and Building Partnerships for Informal Science and Literacy," by providing a representative to the grant advisory board. (January 2012)

APPROVED, the addition of the word "annually" to appendix IV on the bottom of page 4 of the Belpre Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). (March 2012)

APPROVED, the change to the membership statement of the Scholarships: Melcher and Bound to Stay Bound Committee to:

"Chair plus five members (6 total). At least one committee member shall be a library school faculty member. All members of committee are virtual. An ALSC Program Officer serves as staff liaison." (March 2012)

APPROVED, the change to the membership statement of the Grants Administration Committee to:

"Chair plus eight members (9 total). All members of the committee are virtual." (March 2012)

APPROVED, the Twitter guidelines as presented. (March 2012)

Midwinter 2012 Actions

Board documents are posted on ALA Connect (<http://connect.ala.org>) and provide complete details about the issues listed below. Go to the ALSC section of ALA Connect and click on "Online Docs." Board documents are usually posted about two weeks prior to conference.

ACCEPTED, the consent agenda for 2012 Midwinter Meeting, with Documents 7, 10, 14, and 15 pulled out for further discussion.

APPROVED, consent agenda items 7, 10, 14, and 15.

ACCEPTED, revisions to the Policy for Service on the May Hill Arbutnot Lecture Committee.

AGREED, to ask the Budget Committee to recommend a dollar amount to support the first bullet point of DOC #26b ("Possible Activities to Support the Advocacy Goal Area").

AMENDED, the budget for the Caldecott Award 75th anniversary celebration to reflect four free webinars to members.

AMENDED, Guidelines for Communication for Virtual Committees, number 6.5, to read "are required" rather than "should be sure."

APPROVED, the Budget Committee's recommendation for use of Friends of ALSC funds:

- \$2,000—logo, development, marketing.
- \$2,000—sponsorship for two individuals to attend ALSC Institute (\$1,000/each).

- \$1,000—sponsorship of a table at the Newbery/Caldecott/Wilder Banquet, with individual tickets available through a drawing organized by the membership committee.
- \$600—Two "Nook and a Book" drawing giveaways: one at Annual Conference and one through a virtual format.

APPROVED, recommendations to support activities suggested for the Advocacy Goal Area of the Strategic Plan (DOC #26b: "Possible Activities to Support the Advocacy Goal Area")

APPROVED, the Organization and Bylaws Committee's motion to change 1) the name of the "Legislation Committee" to "Advocacy and Legislation Committee" and 2) the function statement of the committee.

APPROVED, the Organization & Bylaws Committee motion to amend the membership statements of the Great Websites for Kids, Quicklists Consulting, and Children and Technology Committees, as discussed.

Book List for New Readers

ALSC revised the popular bibliography "Great Early Elementary Reads," which features recommended book titles for beginning readers. PDFs of the book list are available online in full color and black and white and are free to download, copy, and distribute. The updated bibliography is organized into two categories: "Starting to Read" and "Reading

on My Own.” It includes books published between 2009 and 2011. The titles were selected, compiled, and annotated by members of the 2011–2012 ALSC School-Age Programs and Services Committee.

ALSC Institute: Libraries Leading the Race

Join ALSC in Indianapolis September 20–22, 2012, for our biennial National Institute. This two and a half day workshop, devoted solely to children’s and youth library services, offers a small, intimate setting for participating in programming and getting to know colleagues. Programs will delve into some of the most important topics in library service to children, such as using technology in your programming, what’s hot in children’s spaces, working with underserved populations, and using local partnerships to improve your programming. You’re sure to go home feeling reinvigorated about the profession and more connected to others in the field.

The Institute will also be the kick-off to the Caldecott Award’s 75th anniversary celebration and will feature a very special Breakfast for Bill panel discussion to commemorate the occasion. This panel will feature past Caldecott Award winners and honorees Denise Fleming, Kevin Henkes, and Eric Rohmann, as well as Ben Sapp, director of the Mazza Museum: International Art from Picture Books. This star-studded event is sure to dazzle and inspire; additional award-winning authors and illustrators are scheduled to speak throughout the Institute, including: Peter Brown, Gary Paulsen, April Pulley Sayre, Doreen Rappaport, and Bryan Collier.

The Institute is being held at the Sheraton Indianapolis City Centre in Indianapolis, Indiana. Specifics regarding registration and programs are at www.ala.org/alscevents. Questions? Contact Jenny Najdych at jnajdych@ala.org or (312) 280-4026.

ALSC Sponsors Emerging Leader

Congratulations to Ingrid Abrams, children’s librarian at Brooklyn (N.Y.) Public Library; she is ALSC’s representative

in the 2012 Emerging Leader program, which enables newer librarians to participate in workgroups, network with peers, gain an inside look into ALA’s structure, and have an opportunity to serve the profession in a leadership capacity. Emerging Leaders receive up to \$1,000 each to participate in the Midwinter Meeting and Annual Conference, and each participant is expected to provide years of service to ALA or one of its units.

Two ALSC Sites Get Facelift

ALSC has recently redesigned two online resources: Great Websites for Kids and the Día site. To better serve the growing population of libraries offering events for El día de los niños/El día de los libros, the Día site, now at <http://dia.ala.org>, has been expanded. In 2012, ALSC is focusing on serving the needs of parents, caregivers, and children. To that end, the newly designed site has created a section devoted to ideas and resources for those audiences. The site also includes a resource guide, designed for public and school librarians, giving them everything they need to produce a Día event at their library. Included in the resource guide are a program model, planning timeline, best practices, and information on outreach, partnerships, marketing and publicity, as well as funding ideas.

The updated Great Websites for Kids (www.ala.org/greatsites) boasts a fresh and colorful kid-friendly look and interactive social media enhancements. Clear, bright icons display subject categories and appear on every page, while eye-catching thumbnail images provide a visual preview of each great site represented. Special sections highlight Sites of the Week and Month, Most Popular pages, and Top Rated selections. Prompts for each site offer “more selections like this.” Visitors now can actively connect with the site and further their online experience by rating sites; sharing their favorites on social media sites such as Facebook; and e-mailing recommendations to friends.

Perkins Honored with DSA

Linda A. Perkins is the 2012 recipient of the Association for Library Service to

Children’s (ALSC) Distinguished Service Award. This prestigious award honors an individual who has made significant contributions to library service to children and to ALSC.

Perkins became involved with ALA and ALSC from the moment she graduated from library school at Case Western Reserve, and she continues to give her passion and energy to libraries today, even after her retirement from the Berkeley (Calif.) Public Library. She began as a member of the 1978 Newbery–Caldecott Committee (when it was still a joint committee) and served as chair of the Mildred L. Batchelder Award Committee in 1995. Perkins was a Priority Group Consultant in 1999 and 2001, and has served three terms on the ALSC Board of Directors—the first time as a member, 1988–92, the second as ALSC President, 1991–92, and the third as ALA’s ALSC Councilor, 2006–9.

Her role as a champion of the Pura Belpré Award was one of her greatest contributions during that time. While serving as president of ALSC, Perkins along with Oralia Garza de Cortés, Sandra Ríos Balderrama, and Toni Bissessar of REFORMA, appeared before the ALSC Board at Midwinter in 1993 to request a joint task force with the goal of establishing a joint book award “to encourage Latino authors and illustrators in their efforts to produce children’s works celebrating the Latino experience in the United States.” In her “Children’s Book Award Handbook,” author Diana F. Marks wrote, “Linda Perkins, president of ALSC at the time, became essential. A strong proponent of multiculturalism, she gave a boost of energy and credibility to the project. She also knew the ‘ropes’ of how to make the award a reality.” In 1996, Perkins served on the Pura Belpré Award Committee. Perkins also played a vital role in gaining support for and securing the adoption of ALSC’s El día de los niños/El día de los libros Celebration.

In Berkeley’s Board of Library Trustees resolution, on the occasion of Perkins’s retirement, its members proclaimed their gratitude to her for stepping in on “several occasions” as acting deputy director of the Berkeley Public Library and said, “Ms. Perkins’s ready wit and

winning humor are among the many qualities that make her a beloved coworker." From the time she began her career at Berkeley as a supervising program librarian, Perkins oversaw library services to young people continuously for thirty-two years.

Perkins's passion for books and support of young people remains at full strength even in retirement. She volunteers at local elementary school Berkeley Arts Magnet, currently serves on ALSC's 2012 Notable Children's Books Selection Committee, and is a member of the Friends of ALSC Notables' Circle. Her commitment to addressing the needs of the young people she served in her public library system resulted in benefits for libraries and librarianship nationwide.

ALSC is pleased to honor Linda Perkins with the 2012 Distinguished Service Award.

ALSC, a division of the ALA, is the world's largest organization dedicated to the support and enhancement of library service to children. With a network of more than 4,000 children's and youth librarians, literature experts, publishers and educational faculty, ALSC is committed to creating a better future for children through libraries. To learn more about ALSC, visit ALSC's website at www.ala.org/alsc.

The 2012 ALSC Distinguished Service Award Committee includes Alan Bern, Berkeley (Calif.) Public Library; Elise DeGuseppi, Pierce County Library System, Tacoma, Washington; Caroline Parr, Central Rappahannock Regional Library, Fredericksburg, Virginia; Lucinda Whitehurst, St. Christopher's School, Richmond, Virginia.; and Jennifer Brown, chair, children's editor, Shelf Awareness, New York, New York.

2012 Award Winners

In addition to the Distinguished Service Award, ALSC confers numerous other grants and awards each year. We are pleased to announce our 2011 recipients!

ALSC/BWI Summer Reading Program Grant: Wichita Falls (Tex.) Public Library

Bechtel Fellowship: Allison Angell, Benetia (Calif.) Public Library.

Bookapalooza Award: First Regional Library, Hernando, Mississippi; Conley Elementary School Library, Whitman, Massachusetts; and Saginaw Chippewa Academy, Mount Pleasant, Michigan.

Maureen Hayes Author/Illustrator Award: Lisa McClure, Hartford (Conn.) Public Library

Light the Way: Library Outreach to the Underserved Grant: Mary Seratt, Memphis (Tenn.) Public Library and Information Center

Penguin Young Readers Group Award: Heather Schubert, Hill Country Middle School, Austin, Texas; Eric Barbus, San Francisco Public Library-North Beach Branch; Linda Klein, Anchorage (Alaska) Public Library; and Donna Alvis, Ephesus Public Library, Roopville, Georgia.

For more information on the winners and how to apply for 2012 awards, please visit: www.ala.org/alsc, click on Awards & Grants—ALSC Professional Awards.

Summer Brings New Webinars

ALSC invites you to celebrate summer with two brand-new webinars starting in July.

The first webinar is all about effective utilization of social media. **Give Me Something to Read! When Social Networking Meets Readers Advisory** examines online resources that are part readers advisory and part social networking. Learn how to combine tools like Goodreads, LibraryThing, and Your Next Thing with classic readers advisory to help answer the question "What should I read next?"

In **Caldecott Uncovered: What You've Always Wanted to Know about the Caldecott Medal**, you can get all of your pressing questions about the Caldecott Medal answered. How are members chosen for the Caldecott Committee? How does the committee decide if a book really is a picture book? Why can't the committee consider the text of a picture book...or can it? Here is an opportunity to

learn all about one of the most significant awards in the field of children's literature.

As part of the Caldecott Award's 75th anniversary celebration, ALSC is offering the Caldecott Uncovered webinar to all participants free of charge. Registration is limited to 95 participants.

July

Give Me Something to Read! When Social Networking Meets Readers Advisory Tuesday, July 10, 6–7 p.m. CT

Caldecott Uncovered: What You've Always Wanted to Know about the Caldecott Medal Thursday, July 12, 6–7 p.m. CT

August

Give Me Something to Read! When Social Networking Meets Readers Advisory Thursday, August 9, Noon–1 p.m. CT

Detailed descriptions and registration information are at <http://bit.ly/alscwebinars>. New webinars are added regularly, so please check back. Questions? Please contact Jenny Najdich at jnajdich@ala.org or 800-545-2433 ext. 4026.

Interested in presenting an online course or webinar for ALSC? Submit a proposal to the Education Committee at: <http://www.ala.org/alsc/online-education-proposal>.

Jack Gantos, Chris Raschka win Newbery, Caldecott Medals

Jack Gantos, author of *Dead End in Norvelt* (Farrar Straus Giroux), and Chris Raschka, illustrator of *A Ball for Daisy* (Schwartz & Wade Books, an imprint of Random House Children's Books) are the 2012 winners of the John Newbery and Randolph Caldecott Medals.

In *Dead End in Norvelt*, the importance of history and reading (so you don't do the same "stupid stuff" again) is at the heart of the achingly funny romp through a dying New Deal town. While mopping up epic nose bleeds, Jack narrates this screw-ball mystery in an endearing and believable voice.

In *A Ball for Daisy*, a wordless book with huge children's appeal is the story of an irrepressible little dog whose most prized possession is accidentally destroyed. With brilliant economy of line and color, Raschka captures Daisy's total (yet temporary) devastation. A buoyant tale of loss, recovery and friendship. Deceptively simple paintings of watercolor, gouache, and ink explore universal themes of love and loss that permit thousands of possible variants.

Two Newbery Honor Books were named: *Inside Out & Back Again* (HarperCollins Children's Books/HarperCollins Publishers), written by Thanhha Lai, and *Breaking Stalin's Nose* (Henry Holt and Company) written and illustrated by Eugene Yelchin.

Three Caldecott Honor Books were named: *Blackout* (Disney/Hyperion Books), written and illustrated by John Rocco; *Grandpa Green* (Roaring Brook Press, a division of Holtzbrinck), written and illustrated by Lane Smith; and *Me . . . Jane* (Little, Brown and Company, a division of Hachette Book Group), written and illustrated by Patrick McDonnell.

Members of the Newbery Committee were Chair Viki Ash, San Antonio Public Library; Laura Amos, Norfolk (Va.) Collegiate School; Timothy D. Capehart, Dayton (Ohio) Metro Library; Mary Clark, Greenwich (Conn.) Country Day School; Stacy Dillon, LREI, New York; Naphtali Faris, Missouri State Library, Jefferson City; Peter Howard, Louisville (Ky.) Free Public Library; Andy Howe, Simms Library, Albuquerque (N.M.) Academy; Maeve Visser Knoth, San Mateo (Calif.) County Library; Angeliq Kopa, Harford County Public Library, Belcamp, Maryland; Renee C. McGrath, Nassau Library System, Uniondale, New York; Mary Michell, Skokie (Ill.) Public Library; Andrea R. Milano, Multnomah County Library, Hollywood Branch, Portland, Oregon; Lynn M. Rutan, Holland, Michigan; and Amanda J. Williams, Austin (Tex.) Public Library.

Members of the Caldecott Committee were Chair Steven L. Herb, Pennsylvania State University, Paterno Library, University Park; Pabby Arnold, East Baton Rouge (La.) Parish Library; Christine D. Caputo, Free Library of Philadelphia;

Tony A. Carmack, Loudon County (Va.) Public Library; Peg W. Ciszek, Northbrook (Ill.) Public Library; Patricia A. Clingman, Dayton Metro Library, Kettering, Ohio; Betsy Crone, Guilford County Schools, Greensboro, North Carolina; Ellen G. Fader, Multnomah County Library, Portland, Oregon; Michele Farley, Indianapolis, Indiana; Cathryn M. Mercier, Simmons College, Boston; John E. Peters, Bronx, New York; Deanna Romriell, Salt Lake City (Utah) Public Library; April Roy, Kansas City (Mo.) Public Library; Allison Santos, Princeton (N.J.) Public Library; and Luann Toth, *School Library Journal*, New York.

Batchelder goes to Eerdmans

Eerdmans Books for Young Readers, an imprint of Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, is the winner of the 2012 Mildred L. Batchelder Award for *Soldier Bear*. The Batchelder Award is given to the most outstanding children's book originally published in a language other than English in a country other than the United States, and subsequently translated into English for publication in the United States.

Originally published in Dutch in 2008 as "Soldaat Wojtek," the book was written by Bibi Dumon Tak, illustrated by Philip Hopman and translated by Laura Watkinson. Based on a true story and set during World War II, the novel follows the journey of refugee Polish soldiers and the mischievous young bear they acquire in the Iranian desert while transporting equipment for the British army. More than a mascot, Voytek the bear becomes an integral part of the war effort, raising morale—and passing ammunition—in the battalion.

One Batchelder Honor Book was also selected: *The Lily Pond*, published by Delacorte Press, an imprint of Random House Children's Books, written by Annika Thor, and translated by Linda Schenck.

Members of the Batchelder Committee were Chair Susan Stan, Central Michigan University, Mount Pleasant; Rita Auerbach, New York; Ann Crewdson, Issaquah (Wash.) Library—King County

Library System; Helen Kay Kennedy, Kent District Library, Spencer Township Branch, Gowen, Michigan; and Roger Sutton, Horn Book, Boston.

Tonatiuh, Garcia McCall Win Belpré

Duncan Tonatiuh, illustrator of *Diego Rivera: His World and Ours*, and Guadalupe Garcia McCall, author of *Under the Mesquite*, are the winners of the Pura Belpré Illustrator Award and Author Award, honoring Latino authors and illustrators whose work best portrays, affirms, and celebrates the Latino cultural experience in children's books. The awards are administered by ALSC and the National Association to Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish-Speaking, REFORMA.

Diego Rivera: His World and Ours (Abrams Books for Young Readers) highlights the accomplishments of Mexican painter, activist, and muralist Diego Rivera. Tonatiuh's stylized illustrations include elements of Mayan artwork and represent his interpretation of Diego's original artwork, answering the question "What would Diego paint today?" Through eye-catching digital collage, Tonatiuh juxtaposes contemporary Mexican life with the past.

In *Under the Mesquite*, (Lee and Low Books), Guadalupe Garcia McCall, writing in emotionally riveting free verse, gracefully manages to convey the experience of growing up in a bicultural community in Texas with geographical accuracy and a radiating authentic voice for its main protagonist, fourteen-year-old Lupita, the oldest of eight children dealing with their mother's terminal illness.

Two Honor Books for illustration were named: Rafael López for *The Cazuela that the Farm Maiden Stirred* (Charlesbridge), written by Samantha R. Vamos, and Sara Palacios for *Marisol McDonald Doesn't Match/Marisol McDonald no combina* (Children's Book Press, an imprint of Lee and Low Books), written by Monica Brown.

Two Honor Books for narration were named: Margarita Engle for *Hurricane Dancers: The First Caribbean Pirate*

Shipwreck (Henry Holt), and Xavier Garza for *Maximilian and the Mystery of the Guardian Angel: A Bilingual Lucha Libre Thriller* (Cinco Puntos Press).

Members of the Belpré Committee were Chair Jamie Campbell Naidoo, University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa; Rebecca Alcalá, San Francisco Public Library; Carling Febry, San Diego; Daisy Gutierrez-Ngo, San Jacinto College, Pasadena, Texas; Amanda Sharpe, Harper Junior High School Library, Davis, California; Henrietta M. Smith, Delray Beach, Florida; and Luis Vargas, Long Beach (Calif.) Public Library.

Carnegie Honors Weston Woods

Paul R. Gagne and Melissa Reilly Ellard of Weston Woods Studios, producers of *Children Make Terrible Pets*, are the 2012 recipients of the Andrew Carnegie Medal for excellence in children's video.

In this whimsical reversal of *Can I keep him?* Lucy Bear finds a little boy in the forest and takes him home against her mother's advice. Although she and Squeaker become best friends, Lucy soon discovers that taking care of her cute critter is not all fun and games.

Members of the Carnegie Medal/Notable Children's Videos Committee were Chair Martha Seif Simpson, Stratford (Conn.) Library Association; Marilyn Ackerman, Brooklyn (N.Y.) Public Library, Office of Materials Selection; Linda L. Ernst, King County Library System, Bellevue, Washington; Linda A. Gann, University of North Carolina-Greensboro, School of Library and Information Studies; Suzanne Myers Harold, Multnomah County Library, Portland, Oregon; Lindsay D. Huth, Arlington Heights (Ill.) Memorial Library; Gwen M. Taylor, Lewis-Clark State College, Lewiston, Idaho; Emily Tichenor, Tulsa (Okla.) City-County Library; and Joanna Ward, County of Los Angeles Public Library, Temple City, California.

Tales for Very Picky Eaters Takes Geisel

Author and illustrator Josh Schneider is the recipient of the Geisel Award

for *Tales for Very Picky Eaters* (Clarion Books/Houghton Mifflin Harcourt). The award is given to the author and illustrator of the most distinguished book for beginning readers.

Each of the five chapters in *Tales for Very Picky Eaters* recounts James' refusal to eat yet another disgusting, smelly, repulsive, lumpy, or slimy food. Not only picky eaters, but all readers will delight in the outrageous suggestions along with the off-the-wall rationale from his very clever dad for why he should become more adventurous in his food selections. James turns the table on his father when he decides to become more daring and bold in his meal choices and actually tries something new.

Three Geisel Honor Books were named: *I Broke My Trunk* (Disney/Hyperion), written and illustrated by Mo Willems; *I Want My Hat Back* (Candlewick), written and illustrated by Jon Klassen; and *See Me Run* (Holiday House), written and illustrated by Paul Meisel.

Members of the Geisel Committee were Chair Carole D. Fiore, Training and Library Consulting, Tallahassee, Florida; Lauren Anduri, Oakland (Calif.) Public Library and Sequoia Elementary School, Oakland, California; Connie Champlin, Cultural Adventures, Centerville, Massachusetts; Cheryl Lee, Palo Alto (Calif.) City Library; Jackie Partch, Multnomah County Library, Portland, Oregon; Mary Schreiber, Cuyahoga County Public Library, Parma, Ohio; and Maureen White, University of Houston-Clear Lake.

Listening Library Wins Odyssey

Listening Library, an imprint of Random House Audio Publishing Group, producer of the audiobook *Rotters*, won the Odyssey Award for Excellence in Audiobook Production. In *Rotters*, written by Daniel Kraus, narrated by Kirby Heyborne, and produced by Listening Library, Heyborne's versatile character voicing animates the strange tale of Joey, a sixteen-year-old whose mother has died. His struggle begins as he is dropped into the isolated world of his father, a grave robber. The exquisite timing pulls us through the chilling story of

the destruction and rebuilding of Joey's personality.

Four Odyssey Honor Audiobooks were named: *Ghetto Cowboy* (Brilliance Audio), written by G. Neri and narrated by J. D. Jackson; *Okay for Now* (Listening Library/Random House), written by Gary D. Schmidt and narrated by Lincoln Hoppe; *The Scorpio Races* (Scholastic Audiobooks), written by Maggie Stiefvater and narrated by Steve West and Fiona Hardingham; and *Young Fredle* (Listening Library/Random House), written by Cynthia Voigt and narrated by Wendy Carter.

Members of the Odyssey Committee were Chair Lizette D. Hannegan, Easton, Maryland; Carrie Scott Banks, Brooklyn (N.Y.) Public Library; Kate Capps, Olathe (Kan.) Public Library—Indian Creek Branch; Viola Dyas, Oakland, California; Cathy Lichtman, Plymouth (Mich.) District Library; Barbara Moon, Suffolk Cooperative Library System, Bellport, New York; Jennifer R. Sommer, Wright Memorial Public Library, Dayton, Ohio; Beatriz Pascual Wallace, Seattle Public Library; and Sue-Ellen Beauregard, consultant, *Booklist Magazine*, Chicago.

Sweet Wins Sibert

Melissa Sweet, author and illustrator of *Balloons over Broadway: The True Story of the Puppeteer of Macy's Parade* was named the winner of the 2012 Robert F. Sibert Medal for the most distinguished informational book for children published in 2011. The award was announced today by the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC), a division of the American Library Association (ALA), during the ALA Midwinter Meeting held January 20–24 in Dallas.

Balloons over Broadway: The True Story of the Puppeteer of Macy's Parade, published by Houghton Mifflin Books for Children, an imprint of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, is about Tony Sarg, the artistic inventor who conceived the huge balloons that float through New York City each Thanksgiving. Beginning at a very young age, his never-ending zeal for play and discovery delighted millions, and likewise, Sweet's festive words, mixed media

illustrations and thorough research, bring their own contagious joy to this celebration of his life's creative process.

"Sweet's book rose above all others this year by brilliantly showing and telling the story of one person's ideas with passion and panache, demonstrating the very best of what an informational book can be," said Sibert Medal Committee Chair Andrew Medlar.

Melissa Sweet grew up in New Jersey, attended Kansas City Art Institute, and currently lives in Maine. She has created dozens of diverse children's books and is a recipient of a 2009 Caldecott Honor Award for her illustrations in "*A River of Words*."

Four Honor Books were selected: *Black & White: The Confrontation between Reverend Fred L. Shuttlesworth and Eugene "Bull" Connor* (Calkins Creek/Boyd's Mills Press), written by Larry Dane Brimner; *Drawing from Memory* (Scholastic Press), written and illustrated by Allen Say; *The Elephant Scientist* (Houghton Mifflin Books for Children/Houghton Mifflin Harcourt), written by Caitlin O'Connell and Donna M. Jackson, and photographs by Caitlin O'Connell and Timothy Rodwell; and *Witches! The Absolutely True Tale of Disaster in Salem* (National Geographic Society), written and illustrated by Rosalyn Schanzer.

Members of the Sibert Committee were Chair Andrew Medlar, Chicago Public Library; Roxane L. Bartelt, Kenosha (Wis.) Public Library; Marian L. Creamer, Children's Literature Alive!, Portland, Oregon; Karen MacPherson, Takoma Park (Md.) Library; April Mazza, Wayland (Mass.) Free Public Library; Susan Z. Melcher, Jefferson County Public Schools, Louisville, Kentucky; Patty Saidenberg, George Jackson Academy, New York, New York; Denise Schmidt, San Francisco Public Library; and Deborah Taylor, Enoch Pratt Free Library, Baltimore, Maryland.

Morpurgo to Deliver 2013 Arbuthnot

Children's Laureate Michael Morpurgo will deliver the 2013 May Hill Arbuthnot Honor Lecture. "The author of more than

100 titles of humor, magic and realism, Morpurgo movingly captures the struggles faced by both children and animals during wartime," stated 2013 Arbuthnot Committee Chair Susan J. Pine.

Born in England, Michael Morpurgo was teaching when he discovered the magic of storytelling and began writing. His books are noted for their imagination, power, and grace. In 1976, he and his wife established the charity Farms for City Children. He is an officer of the Order of the British Empire and served as Britain's third Children's Laureate. His novel, *War Horse*, has wowed theater audiences in London and New York and movie audiences all over.

Members of the 2013 Arbuthnot Committee were Chair Susan J. Pine, Forest Hills, New York; Gratia Banta, Lane Public Library, Hamilton, Ohio; Carolyn Phelan, Northbrook (Ill.) Public Library; Victor Schill, Fairbanks Branch Library, Houston; and Rachael Vilmar, Eastern Shore Regional Library, Salisbury, Maryland.

Notable Children's Books Younger Readers

All the Water in the World. By George Ella Lyon. Illus. by Katherine Tillotson. Atheneum.

A Ball for Daisy. By Chris Raschka. Illus. by Chris Raschka. Schwartz & Wade.

Blackout. By John Rocco. Illus. by the author. Hyperion.

Bring on the birds. By Susan Stockdale. Illus. by the author. Peachtree.

The Cazuela that the Farm Maiden Stirred. By Samantha R. Vamos. Illus. by Rafael López. Charlesbridge.

Chirchir Is Singing. By Kelly Cunnane. Illus. by Jude Daly. Schwartz & Wade.

Do You Know Which Ones Will Grow? By Susan A. Shea. Illus. by Tom Slaughter. Blue Apple.

Dot. By Patricia Intriago. Illus. by the author. Farrar.

Goodnight, Goodnight, Construction Site. By Sherri Duskey Rinker. Illus. by Tom Lichtenheld. Chronicle.

Grandpa Green. By Lane Smith. Illus. by the author. Roaring Brook.

Harry and Hopper. By Margaret Wild. Illus. by Freya Blackwood. Feiwel & Friends.

I Broke My Trunk. By Mo Willems. Illus. by the author. Hyperion.

I Want My Hat Back. By Jon Klassen. Illus. by the author. Candlewick.

King Jack and the Dragon. By Peter Bently. Illus. by Helen Oxenbury. Dial.

Little Treasures: Endearments from Around the World. By Jacqueline K. Ogburn. Illus. by Chris Raschka. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Little White Rabbit. By Kevin Henkes. Illus. by the author. Greenwillow.

Me . . . Jane. By Patrick McDonnell. Illus. by the author. Little, Brown.

Mouse & Lion. By Rand Burkert. Illus. by Nancy Ekholm Burkert. di Capua/Scholastic.

Naamah and the Ark at Night. By Susan Campbell Bartoletti. Illus. by Holly Meade. Candlewick.

A New Year's Reunion: A Chinese Story. By Li Qiong Yu. Illus. by Zhu Chen Liang. Candlewick.

Over and Under the Snow. By Kate Messner. Illus. by Christopher Silas Neal. Chronicle.

Prudence Wants a Pet. By Cathleen Daly. Illus. by Stephen Michael King. Roaring Brook.

See Me Run. By Paul Meisel. Illus. by the author. Holiday.

Should I Share My Ice Cream? By Mo Willems. Illus. by the author. Hyperion.

Stars. By Mary Lyn Ray. Illus. by Marla Frazee. Beach Lane.

Tales for Very Picky Eaters. By Josh Schneider. Illus. by the author. Clarion.

Tell Me the Day Backwards. By Albert Lamb. Illus. by David McPhail. Candlewick.

Ten Little Caterpillars. By Bill Martin. Illus. by Lois Ehlert. Beach Lane.

These Hands. By Margaret H. Mason. Illus. by Floyd Cooper. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Tia Isa Wants a Car. By Meg Medina. Illus. by Claudio Muñoz. Candlewick.

Where's Walrus? By Stephen Savage. Illus. by the author. Scholastic.

Who Has What?: All About Girls' Bodies and Boys' Bodies. By Robie H. Harris. Illus. by Nadine Bernard Westcott. Candlewick.

Middle Readers

America Is Under Attack: September 11, 2001: The Day the Towers Fell. By Don Brown. Illus. by the author. Roaring Brook.

Balloons over Broadway: The True Story of the Puppeteer of Macy's Parade. By Melissa Sweet. Illus. by the author. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Breaking Stalin's Nose. By Eugene Yelchin. Illus. by the author. Holt.

The Cheshire Cheese Cat: A Dickens of a Tale. By Carmen Agra Deedy and Randall Wright. Illus. by Barry Moser. Peachtree.

Diego Rivera: His World and Ours. By Duncan Tonatiuh. Illus. by the author. Abrams.

Dream Something Big: The Story of the Watts Towers. By Dianna Hutts Aston. Illus. by Susan L. Roth. Dial.

E-mergency. By Tom Lichtenheld. Illus. by Ezra Fields-Meyer. Chronicle.

Emma Dilemma: Big Sister Poems. By Kristine O'Connell George. Illus. by Nancy Carpenter. Clarion.

The Great Migration: Journey to the North. By Eloise Greenfield. Illus. by Jan Spivey Gilchrist. HarperCollins.

Inside Out and Back Again. By Thanhha Lai. HarperCollins.

Junonia. By Kevin Henkes. Greenwillow.

Lemonade, and Other Poems Squeezed from a Single Word. By Bob Raczka. Illus. by Nancy Doniger. Roaring Brook.

The Lily Pond. By Annika Thor. Trans. by Linda Schenck. Delacorte Press.

The Mangrove Tree: Planting Trees to Feed Families. By Susan L. Roth and Cindy Trumbore. Illus. by Susan L. Roth. Lee & Low.

Marisol McDonald Doesn't Match/ Marisol McDonald no combina. By Monica Brown. Illus. by Sara Palacios. Children's Book Press/Lee and Low.

Maximilian and the Mystery of the Guardian Angel: A Bilingual Lucha Libre Thriller. By Xavier Garza. Cinco Puntos.

Migrant. By Maxine Trottier. Illus. by Isabelle Arsenault. Groundwood.

Night Flight: Amelia Earhart Crosses the Atlantic. By Robert Burleigh. Illus. by Wendell Minor. Simon & Schuster.

No Ordinary Day. By Deborah Ellis. Groundwood.

Nursery Rhyme Comics: 50 Timeless Rhymes from 50 Celebrated Cartoonists. Illus. by various. First Second.

Soldier Bear. By Bibi Dumon Tak. Illus. by Philip Hopman. Trans. by Laura Watkinson. Eerdmans.

The Third Gift. By Linda Sue Park. Illus. by Bagram Ibatoulline. Clarion.

Thunder Birds: Nature's Flying Predators. By Jim Arnosky. Illus. by the author. Sterling.

Treasury of Greek Mythology: Classic Stories of Gods, Goddesses, Heroes and Monsters. By Donna Jo Napoli. Illus. by Christina Balit. National Geographic.

The Trouble with May Amelia. By Jennifer L. Holm. Atheneum.

Underground. By Shane Evans. Illus. by the author. Roaring Brook.

The Unforgotten Coat. By Frank Cottrell Boyce. Illus. by Carl Hunter and Clare Heney. Candlewick.

The Watcher: Jane Goodall's Life with the Chimps. By Jeanette Winter. Illus. by the author. Schwartz & Wade.

Wonderstruck. By Brian Selznick. Illus. by the author. Scholastic.

Won-Ton: A Cat Tale Told in Haiku. By Lee Wardlaw. Illus. by Eugene Yelchin. Holt.

Young Fredle. By Cynthia Voigt. Illus. by Louise Yates. Knopf.

Zita the Spacegirl. By Ben Hatke. Illus. by the author. First Second.

Older Readers

Amelia Lost: The Life and Disappearance of Amelia Earhart. By Candace Fleming. Schwartz & Wade.

Anya's Ghost. By Vera Brosgol. First Second.

Between Shades of Gray. By Ruta Sepetys. Philomel.

Billions of Years, Amazing Changes: The Story of Evolution. By Laurence Pringle. Illus. by Steve Jenkins. Boyds Mills.

Black & White: The Confrontation Between Reverend Fred L. Shuttlesworth and Eugene "Bull" Connor. By Larry Dane Brimner. Calkins Creek.

Blizzard of Glass: The Halifax Explosion of 1917. By Sally M. Walker. Holt.

Bluefish. By Pat Schmatz. Candlewick

Bootleg: Murder, Moonshine, and the Lawless Years of Prohibition. By Karen Blumenthal. Roaring Brook.

Dead End in Norvelt. By Jack Gantos. Farrar.

Drawing from Memory. By Allen Say. Illus. by the author. Scholastic.

2012 Notable Children's Recordings

Alcatraz Versus the Evil Librarians. Recorded Books.

The Apothecary. Penguin.

Beethoven's Wig: Sing Along Piano Classics. Beethoven's Wig.

Clementine and the Family Meeting. Recorded Books.

Countdown. Listening Library.

Dead End in Norvelt. Macmillan.

Dear America: Like the Willow Tree. Scholastic.

Don't Let the Pigeon Stay Up Late. Weston Woods.

Ella Jenkins: A Life of Song. Smithsonian Folkways.

Fletcher and the Springtime Blossoms. Weston Woods.

Ghetto Cowboy. Brilliance Audio.

Jim Gill Presents Music Play for Folks of All Stripes. Jim Gill.

The Incurrigible Children of Ashton Place, Book 2: The Hidden Gallery. Listening Library.

Ivy and Bean: What's the Big Idea. Recorded Books.

Jefferson's Sons. Listening Library.

Jessica. Live Oak Media.

Looking Like Me. Live Oak Media.

Lucky for Good. Listening Library.

Mirror Mirror: A Book in Reversible Verse. Live Oak Media.

Moon Over Manifest. Listening Library.

Okay for Now. Listening Library.

Operation Yes. Brilliance Audio.

The Other Half of My Heart. Listening Library.

Practically Ridiculous. Pluckypea Publishing.

The Sisters Club: Cloudy with a Chance of Boys. Brilliance Audio.

Songs of the Baobab: African Lullabies and Nursery Rhymes. Secret Mountain.

Stone Soup. Weston Woods.

Thunder over Kandahar. Listening Library.

The Unforgotten Coat. Brilliance Audio.

Young Fredle. Listening Library.

For an annotated list of the above recordings, including recommended age levels and running times, visit www.ala.org/alsc.

Members of the Notable Children's Recordings Committee were Sharon Haupt, chair, San Luis Coastal Unified School District San Luis Obispo, California; Cari Albarelli, Kansas City, Missouri; Sunday Cummins, National Louis University, Wheaton, Illinois; Linda Martin, Sugar Hill Elementary School, Gainesville, Georgia; Sharon McKellar, Oakland (Calif.) Public Library; Daniel Meyer, Kew Gardens Hills, New York; Danielle Shapiro, Brooklyn (N.Y.) Public Library; and Janet Thompson, Chicago Public Library.

Hidden. By Helen Frost. Farrar.

The House Baba Built: An Artist's Childhood in China. By Ed Young and Libby Koponen. Illus. by Ed Young. Little, Brown.

How They Croaked: The Awful Ends of the Awfully Famous. By Georgia Bragg. Illus. by Kevin O'Malley. Walker.

Hurricane Dancers: The First Caribbean Pirate Shipwreck. By Margarita Engle. Holt.

Into the Unknown: How Great Explorers Found Their Way by Land, Sea, and Air. By Stewart Ross. Illus. by Stephen Biesty. Candlewick.

Jefferson's Sons: A Founding Father's Secret Children. By Kimberly Brubaker Bradley. Dial.

Lost & Found. By Shaun Tan. Illus. by the author. Arthur A. Levine.

A Monster Calls. By Patrick Ness. Candlewick.

Music Was It: Young Leonard Bernstein. By Susan Goldman Rubin. Charlesbridge.

Okay for Now. By Gary D. Schmidt. Clarion Books.

Queen of Hearts. By Martha Brooks. Farrar.

Raggin', Jazzin', Rockin': American Musical Instrument Makers. By Susan VanHecke. Boyds Mills.

The Scorpio Races. By Maggie Stiefvater. Scholastic.

Sita's Ramayana. By Samhita Arni. Illus. by Moyna Chitrakar. Groundwood.

Space, Stars, and the Beginning of Time: What the Hubble Telescope Saw. By Elaine Scott. Clarion.

Stones for My Father. By Trilby Kent. Tundra.

Tall Story. By Candy Gourlay. David Fickling.

Terezin: Voices from the Holocaust. By Ruth Thomson. Candlewick.

The Elephant Scientist. By Caitlin O'Connell and Donna M. Jackson. Illus. by Caitlin O'Connell and Timothy Rodwell. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

The Fingertips of Duncan Dorfman. By Meg Wolitzer. Dutton.

Flyaway. By Lucy Christopher. Chicken House.

Under the Mesquite. By Guadalupe Garcia McCall. Lee & Low.

Witches! The Absolutely True Tale of Disaster in Salem. By Rosalyn Schanzer. Illus. by the author. National Geographic.

All Ages

Can We Save the Tiger? By Martin Jenkins. Illus. by Vicky White. Candlewick.

Heart and Soul: The Story of America and African Americans. By Kadir Nelson. Illus. by the author. Balzer + Bray.

If Rocks Could Sing: A Discovered Alphabet. By Leslie McQuirk. Illus. by the author. Tricycle Press.

Never Forgotten. By Pat McKissack. Illus. by Leo and Diane Dillon. Schwartz & Wade.

Press Here. By Hervé Tullet. Illus. by the author. Handprint Books/Chronicle.

Swirl by Swirl: Spirals in Nature. By Joyce Sidman. Illus. by Beth Krommes. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

For the annotated list, visit www.ala.org/alsc.

Members of the Notable Children's Books Committee were Kathleen T. Isaacs, chair, Pasadena, Maryland; Meagan Albright, Alvin Sherman Library, Research and Information Technology Center, Fort Lauderdale, Florida; Miriam Lang Budin, Chappaqua (N.Y.) Library; Dana Buttler, Beaver Acres Elementary School, Beaverton, Oregon; Patricia Carleton, St. Louis (Mo.) Public Library; Rosemary S. Chance, Dept. of Library Science, Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, Texas; Barabara A. Chatton, University of Wyoming, Laramie; Edith Ching, Silver Spring, Maryland; Betsy Fraser, Calgary (Alberta) Public Library; Maryann H. Owen, Racine (Wis.) Public Library; and Linda A. Perkins, Berkeley (Calif.) Public Library.

2012 Conference Schedule

(as of April 6)

See www.ala.org/alscevents for the complete list, including room locations and speakers.

* Denotes a closed meeting.

Thursday, June 21

2-4:30 p.m.

Executive Committee

4:30-6 p.m.

AASL/ALSC/YALSAJt. Executive Committee

Friday, June 22

7-9 p.m.

2013 Award and Notable Chair Orientation

1-4 p.m.

Board of Directors I

Saturday, June 23

8-9 a.m.

Priority Group Consultants

8-10 a.m.

2013 Carnegie/Notable Children's Videos; 2013 Geisel*

You Want Me to Circ WHAT?! or How to Best Utilize Toys as a Literacy Tool in Programs and as a Fun Part of Your

2012 Notable Children's Videos

All the World. Weston Woods.

Eric Carle: Picture Writer: The Art of the Picture Book. Eric Carle Studio.

A Child's Garden of Poetry. Warner Home Video.

Children Make Terrible Pets. Weston Woods.

Choosing to Be a GFF (Good Friend Forever). Good Friend.

Coming Out: What Every Teen (Gay and Straight) Needs to Know. Human Relations Media.

The Day of the Dead. Weston Woods.

Don't Let the Pigeon Stay Up Late! Weston Woods.

Kitten's First Full Moon. Weston Woods.

Party Day. (Laurie Berkner Band) Two Tomatoes/Razor & Tie.

Private Eyes/Les Yeux Noirs. National Film Board of Canada.

Robot Zot! Weston Woods.

Safety Smart Science with Bill Nye the Science Guy: Germs & Your Health. Disney Educational Productions.

Scaredy Squirrel. Weston Woods.

Stone Soup. Weston Woods.

Too Many Toys. Weston Woods.

For an annotated list, including recommended age levels and running times, visit www.ala.org/alsc.

Members of the Carnegie Medal/Notable Children's Videos Committee were Chair Martha Seif Simpson, Stratford (Conn.) Library Association; Marilyn Ackerman, Brooklyn (N.Y.) Public Library, Office of Materials Selection; Linda L. Ernst, King County Library System, Bellevue, Washington; Linda A. Gann, University of North Carolina-Greensboro, School of Library and Information Studies; Suzanne Myers Harold, Multnomah County Library, Portland, Oregon; Lindsay D. Huth, Arlington Heights (Ill.) Memorial Library; Gwen M. Taylor, Lewis-Clark State College, Lewiston, Idaho; Emily Tichenor, Tulsa (Okla.) City-County Library; and Joanna Ward, County of Los Angeles Public Library, Temple City, California.

For the annotated list of the above videos, including recommended age levels, visit www.ala.org/alsc.

Lending Collection. The newly revised Every Child Ready to Read recognizes that play is an important part of early literacy development, and if play is a child's work then what better tools than toys! This will be hands-on fun for everyone as participants learn tips and tricks of effectively using toys to educate and entertain in the library and beyond.

8 a.m.–noon

2013 Caldecott;* 2013 Wilder*

9:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

Division Leadership

10:30 a.m.–noon

2013 Sibert;* Notable Children's Books (procedural meeting)

Science in the Stacks. A new library service model that provides hands-on, science learning opportunities for children ages 3–12 in urban public libraries. Science in the Stacks is centered around 36 Discovery Exhibits that provide experiential science learning that is integrated with traditional library resources.

1:30–3:30 p.m.

Board Orientation

Nonfiction Book Blast: Booktalks and Activities for Your Library. Start school with new booktalks and activities for this year's hottest nonfiction books. Twelve authors will booktalk their new 2012 nonfiction books for elementary school, middle school, and high school readers. Find out the story behind each book and take home a packet of booktalks and activities you can use in your library. Moderated by *Booklist* Quick Tips for Schools & Libraries columnist Anastasia Suen.

1:30–4:30 p.m.

Notable Children's Books

1:30–5 p.m.

Notable Children's Recordings

1:30–5:30 p.m.

2013 Newbery*; 2013 Odyssey*

4–5:30 p.m.

2013 Arbuthnot;* 2013 Batchelder;* 2013 Geisel;* 2013 Sibert;* 2014 Arbuthnot;* Organization and Bylaws

ALSC 101. If you're new to ALSC or if this is your first Annual Conference as a children's librarian, then this program is for you! We'll provide you with information about the perks of ALSC membership, tips on how to get involved, and tricks of the trade for navigating conference. Plus, enter a raffle for a chance to win a Newbery-Caldecott banquet ticket or a Nook and a Book!

Exploring Rainbow Family Collections.

Rainbow Families are increasing throughout the country. Children with same-sex parents live in 96 percent of all counties nationwide and more than 6 million children live with an LGBTQ parent. With the recent influx of children's LGBTQ picture books, how can librarians decide which books are the best for their collections and programs? This session describes criteria for selecting children's books with LGBTQ content, highlights outstanding titles, and provides suggestions for connecting these books with Rainbow Families.

4:30–6:30 p.m.

2013 Belpré*

7–9 p.m.

ALSC Happy Hour. After ALSC 101, join colleagues for a Happy Hour drink! This is a perfect opportunity to meet new people and relax after a long day. Hosted by ALSC, this unofficial event is open to members and nonmembers alike.

Sunday, June 24

8–10 a.m.

2013 Nominating*

8 a.m.–noon

2013 Belpré;* 2013 Caldecott;* 2013 Newbery;* 2013 Odyssey;* 2013 Sibert;* All Committee I & II

10:30 a.m.–noon

Budget I

There's an App for That: Using Technology to Enhance Children's Librarianship.

Apps are all the rage these days. As schools and public libraries are increasingly adopting mobile devices such as iPads and eReaders, librarians are looking for ways to use apps to enhance lesson plans and create "Storytimes 2.0." In this

presentation, two school librarians and two public librarians explain and demonstrate how they have successfully integrated apps into their library programs and services. This session will help you raise the bar for librarianship and learning at your own institution.

1:30–3:30 p.m.

All Discussion Groups; Collection Management Discussion Group

Belpré Award Celebración. Join ALSC and REFORMA for this gala event honoring the 2012 Medal winners and honorees.

The New Nonfiction: What Is It and Does It Matter?

What makes for excellence in nonfiction? We're used to looking for reliability, utility, narrative skill, and clear, attractive illustration. But given new realities of access to information, questions of authority and context, standardized testing, and emerging core requirements that emphasize critical thinking and language arts, are these still the most important criteria for nonfiction for young readers? This panel will debate a new framework for evaluating and using the new nonfiction—and maybe even define it.

1:30–4:30 p.m.

Notable Children's Books

1:30–5:00 p.m.

Notable Children's Recordings

2–3:30 p.m.

AASL/ALSC/YALSA Jt. Legislation

4–5:30 p.m.

2013 Batchelder;* 2013 Geisel*

I WANT A TRUCK BOOK! Reorganizing Your Picturebook Collection to Meet the Needs of Young Patrons and Their Caregivers.

Find out how and why some public and school libraries are moving away from traditional "alpha by author" picturebook shelving to a more intuitive model that takes into account the ways young patrons actually search for reading material. The speakers—two public librarians and one school librarian—will present their rationales for change as well as the nuts and bolts of how they accomplished their reorganizations—and increased both circulation and patron satisfaction.

6–11 p.m.

Newbery Caldecott Banquet. This gala event celebrates the Newbery, Caldecott, and Wilder Medalists and Honorees—authors and illustrators of the year's most distinguished books for children. Cash bar before dinner; doors open at 6:45 p.m.

Monday, June 25**8–10 a.m.**

Youth Council Caucus

ALSC and YALSA Joint Presidents' Program: The Digital Lives of Tweens and Young Teens. Michelle Poris, PhD, will launch the program by illuminating attendees on what lives are like for tech-savvy tweens and young teens. Poris has nearly 20 years of research experience with youth and families and is currently the Quant Savant at Smarty Pants, a full-service market research and strategic consulting firm, for which she leads all custom and syndicated quantitative research initiatives. Following Poris, library futurist Stephen Abram, MLS, will shine a beacon on the intersection of digital learning, libraries, and youth. Abram was listed by *Library Journal* as one of

the top 50 people influencing the future of libraries. Abram is past-president 2008 of the Special Libraries Association (SLA) and the past-president of the Ontario and Canadian Library Associations (CLA). Following these presentations, the ALSC and YALSA presidents will showcase short videos submitted from librarians in the field to highlight effective programming and innovations for working with tweens and young teens.

10:30 a.m.–1:30 p.m.

ALSC Awards Presentation and Membership Meeting. Join your colleagues for the annual presentation for the Batchelder, Carnegie, Geisel, and Sibert Awards. The ALSC Membership Meeting will immediately follow where Mary Fellows, ALSC president, will recognize the 2013 professional award winners and share the past year's accomplishments and new initiatives.

1:30–3:30 p.m.

2013 Nominating*

How to Save Your Library: Advocating on Multiple Fronts during Economic Crisis. Public libraries across the country are facing decimation during the current

economic crisis. Especially hard hit are children's services whose early literacy programming and summer reading programs disappear as closures and shorter schedules increase. Learn from recent events in Oakland, California, and from other librarians and community members how new social media and family friendly actions can stem the tide and mobilize your communities and staff to save their libraries.

1:30–4:30 p.m.

Notable Children's Books

4–5:30 p.m.

Odyssey Award Presentation & Program. Celebrate the spoken word at the 2012 Odyssey Award Presentation, featuring this year's winner and honorees.

4–5:30 p.m.

Budget II

Tuesday, June 26**1:30–5:30 p.m.**

Board of Directors II 

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THE LAST WORD

A World Record Achievement

Elizabeth Enochs

“How would you like to spearhead an effort to win Lee Bennett Hopkins the Guinness World Record for most prolific anthologist of children’s poetry?”

That was the question posed to me in April 2011 by Dr. Sylvia Vardell, professor of Library and Information Studies at Texas Woman’s University and internationally known advocate for children’s poetry.

Could any children’s librarian resist?

After all, I read from Hopkins’s books several times a week to children in the library. Teachers on our faculty treasure their dog-eared copies of *My America* and *Good Books, Good Times!* And I had just served on the 2011 selection committee for the Lee Bennett Hopkins Poetry Award, so I knew of his personal generosity and heartfelt commitment to spreading the word about poetry for children. I was hooked.

The online application had a frustrating word limit that precluded full citations for Hopkins’s astonishing 113 anthologies of poetry for children. In the end, I submitted an abbreviation-riddled bibliography and an agonizingly short description of his life’s work that conveyed very little other than the number of titles he had authored. After that, I wrung my hands and waited.

In July, we received a rejection due to unclear information on the bibliography—not exactly a surprise. But that’s when the real work began. Freed from the word limit of the online appli-



cation, I compiled a more detailed bibliography, aided by a surprise assistant, my thirteen-year-old son, Jeff.

He has been a Hopkins fan since second grade, thanks to his teacher’s passion for children’s poetry. He proofread with me into the wee hours, identifying the earliest edition of many titles, finding missing ISBNs, and navigating WorldCat like a pro.

“Glad to do it, Mom,” he insisted. “I really *love* his books.”

Guinness sent the bibliography to one of their expert consultants, and for another two weeks . . . no response. Finally, with no advance notice, the official World Record certificate arrived! We took a picture of Jeff holding the award and sent it off to Hopkins right away.

My son’s elation reminded me that as librarians, we can promote extraordinary achievements in unexpected ways that reach new audiences. Who knows what child might pick up a copy of *Incredible Inventions* because it’s written by a Guinness World Record–holding poetry anthologist?

Hopkins’s world record acknowledges his astounding personal achievement, and every child who loves poetry can share in the absolute joy of it.

Elizabeth Enochs is Librarian at George C. Clarke Elementary School in Fort Worth, Texas, and a library science doctoral student at Texas Woman’s University.

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.