

Children & Libraries

the journal of the Association for
Library Service to Children

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On the cover: the BookHouse at Morrison Regional Public Library in Charlotte, North Carolina
—Photo by Ian Nquyen



Editor's Note Learning Along the Way

Sharon Verbeten

The best thing about editing a publication like this is all the things I learn along the way. Each issue opens up doors to ideas I might want to try, books I might want to read, people I might want to meet, or places I might want to visit.

This issue is a perfect example of all those forces coming together; I'm pleased that this issue combines a viable and interesting mix of scholarly pieces, best practice, and more lighthearted essays. I'm sure you'll find something to put to use in your library in these pages.

Next year, our spring issue kicks off year seven for *CAL*! Seems hard to believe that we've come so far, so fast for ALSC. Thanks for always reading and supporting our association and our publication. I look forward to meeting you at an upcoming convention or seeing your byline in an upcoming issue! ☺



Executive Director's Note ALSC Honors

Diane Foote

Did you know that ALSC gives away more than \$82,000 worth of grants, professional awards, and scholarships each year? Thanks to healthy endowment support and sponsorships from generous donors such as Bound to

Stay Bound, Penguin Young Readers Group, Book Wholesalers, and the University of Florida, we're able to encourage study and professional development and recognize outstanding achievement at an unprecedented level.

In this issue, Jacquelyn Spratlin Rogers' "Picturing the Child in Nineteenth-Century Literature" is the result of her Louise Seaman Bechtel Fellowship at the University of Florida's Baldwin Library. And you can also read David Macaulay's May Hill Arbutnot lecture in this issue, in case you weren't able to attend in person.

Winners of the 2009 professional awards, including the ALSC Distinguished Service Award winner and the May Hill Arbutnot Lecturer, will be announced at ALA Midwinter Meeting in Denver. This year, consider nominating someone or applying yourself!

For more information, please visit the ALSC website at www.ala.org/alsc and click on "Awards & Grants." ☺

Children & Libraries

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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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Pura Belpré Illustrator Award Acceptance Speech

Be Not Afraid of Espantos

Yuyi Morales



Photo courtesy of Holt

Yuyi Morales is the winner of the 2008 Pura Belpré Illustrator Award for *Los Gatos Black on Halloween*, written by Marisa Montes (Holt). Her acceptance speech was delivered at the ALA Annual Conference in Anaheim, California, on June 29, 2008.

My name is Yuyi Morales, and I love Spanish. I am learning my English, and I am proud of my Spanglish.

Today, at this gala of cultures, children, and books, I want to say with all of my languages, *gracias* very much for bringing me, once more, to this *sin igual* celebration of the Pura Belpré Award. This is a *pachanga* like no other!

As elated as I am to be here, there is something I need to say. I have been praying to Quetzalcoatl that the Pura Belpré committee is so dizzy with delight at having all of us here today for this fiesta, that they will still give me the medal after I make a confession.

Jean Hatfield from the Pura Belpré committee called me one day last winter to tell me that I had been awarded their prestigious golden medal for my imaginative and inventive depiction of *espantos* (apparitions like ghosts, witches, zombies, werewolves, and lots and lots of dead people, dogs, and mice) in *Los Gatos Black on Halloween*.

Now, you see, I am afraid of *espantos*—this is not all of my confession but only part of it. I have been afraid of *espantos* since I was a child.

And this is where I need to start explaining myself. I want the Pura Belpré Medal. I want it so much that I am here to plead to the committee, in front of all of you, that they allow me to take the golden recognition home, even though—this is the rest of my confession—I did not make up any of the terrifying illustrations of *Los Gatos Black on Halloween*. Instead, they simply came to life as accurate renditions of my childhood fears.

Have you ever heard about *La Mano Peluda*—the Hairy Hand? So have I. My family and I had just pulled up to the driveway of our new little house when the tall neighbor girl came to say hi. While her parents and my parents talked, she kindly explained to me how everybody in the *barrio* knew that Mano Peluda lived buried in my front yard, and then she even helped me hear the scratchy noises Mano Peluda made trying to dig itself out so that it could get ME.

Ever since, I have been afraid of Mano Peluda.

And have you heard about *El Coco*? So have I. Grandma, my *abuela*, used to say, “If you don’t behave and eat all of your *sopa de sesos*—the delicious cow’s brain soup I prepared—El Coco is going to come and get YOU!” *¡El coco va a venir y te va a llevar!* I learned a lot of things from my grandmothers.

Since then I have been afraid of my *abuela*—of course, I am afraid of El Coco too.

Yet nothing beats being scared of *La Llorona*, the sad weeping woman that cries outside your window at dark, “Ay, mis hiiiiijooooos!” It was my own uncles who explained to me how they had heard La Llorona crying one night, and how she is still looking for her children, but lonely Llorona could take ANYBODY else instead.

Of course, my Mama would say, “Yuyi, all of those are only stories, and you shouldn’t believe them.” But everybody knows you shouldn’t listen to your mother, *verdad?*

When Reka Simonsen, editor at Henry Holt, asked me to illustrate the startling *Los Gatos Black on Halloween*, a book packed with *espantos*, I was still . . . what is the word in Spanglish? Terrified*cada*.

And so with trembling hands and shaking knees, I accepted Marisa Montes’ manuscript, which would bring me right into the center of the most chilling parade of monsters.

Except for movies, I had never seen Halloween before I came to the United States in 1994. During my first October nights in California, I was a mother with a toddler discovering new and foreign horrors. I had to get used to the bloodied chainsaw displays, the Freddy Krueger masks, and the skeletons hanging from the suburban trees. After many of those nights, even my Mano Peluda seemed less Terrified*cante*.

Actually, with the years, my childhood *espantos* seemed to become almost embarrassed and mortified of ever hav-

ing been so scary to me. Had they known that they were giving me such sleepless nights, they would have tried a little less harder: “Really, Yuyi, we would have wailed softly, and we would have flown by your window more quietly so as to not scare the cowardly wits out of you, because . . . well . . . because we know how it is like to be terrified *cados* too.”

After all, *espantos*, with their stories of unfulfilled desire and hardships, are just other struggling tenants in the neighborhood.

I do believe in stories, and since I don't listen to my beautiful Mama, I believe in *espantos* as well. In the process of creating the chilling illustrations for *Los Gatos Black on Halloween*, I did not get any braver, but learned one or two more things about being scared:

Uno. You can be afraid of anything. Just give it a try.

Dos. It's easier to stay afraid if you close your eyes.

Tres. Carbon Black and Diarylide Yellow don't mix well.

Cuatro. Your aunts might be witches.

Cinco. You can never tell who is a werewolf.

Seis. Your agent knows better.

Siete. Cantinflas never died!

Ocho. If your editor is not calling you after she received your illustrations, she is in shock.

Nueve. La Llorona needs someone to love and someone to love her back.

Diez. If you are afraid of someone, that someone is afraid of YOU. It is easier to stay afraid if you both close your eyes.

And so, I invite you to open your *ojos* and take this offering that is *Los Gatos Black on Halloween*. In this book I present you with my childhood *miedos* and my adulthood struggles of what it means to me to cross towards the scary unknown—*el otro lado*. And I mean it to be a gift.

Please take my corpse, with its cold dead eyes, out of its tomb on page 17, and guide it gently through the scary world of the living, because every soul that immigrates into foreign lands is faced with having to accomplish vast learning, and it helps to have a friend.

In fact, I invite you to be brave, very brave, and give a hand to an *espanto*, if you are so kind.

There are so many of them to choose from if you look inside *Los Gatos Black*, or just look around you. There you have hairy Muchacho Lobo who needs help to raise his grades at school. Or give a tour of the city to a recently arrived

Peruvian mummy, since he comes from so far away and tends to mix up the signs on the street and get lost. Listen to the dreams of the Aztec prince ghosts, even if they are in another language, because it is possible they can still become true.

And don't lose sight of the skeleton of General Simon Bolivar because there is so much to learn from the Libertador de America. Or ask the ghost of Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz to help you memorize one of her rebellious poems. Take the rubber hand of hombre Cabeza Olmeca and learn the mystery of his civilization. Or invite freedom fighter Josefa Ortiz de Domínguez to one of your neighborhood meetings. Learn the sad but brave story of *mujer* goddess Cihuateteo. Or take a dance lesson from Pachuco Calaca. And if possible, be patient with the stubborn corpse of Dictator Porfirio Díaz, he doesn't know any better. Furthermore, please, please don't be afraid of La Llorona anymore. Why does she cry? Only she knows. But it is possible she needs directions to help her find what she has lost.

I thank you today for allowing me to take the medal home after all, right? It is mine, isn't it? But mostly, I thank you for taking my scared hand, while suddenly the door unclasps!

This journey through the world of the living continues being the most beautiful scare ever. ☺

Pura Belpré Author Award Acceptance Speech

The Poet in All of Us

Margarita Engle



Photo courtesy of Holt.

Margarita Engle is winner of the 2008 Pura Belpré Author Award for *The Poet Slave of Cuba: A Biography of Juan Francisco Manzano*, illustrated by Sean Qualls (Holt). Her acceptance speech was delivered at the ALA Annual Conference in Anaheim, California, on June 29, 2008.

Gracias, y gracias a Dios—thank you, and thank God, for this celebration in honor of poetry. I am deeply grateful to the American Library Association, ALSC, the Pura Belpré Committee, and REFORMA, for this thrilling, humbling, amazing experience. Special thanks to all the anonymous interlibrary loan wizards who have helped me find rare and precious books when I needed them.

I wrote *The Poet Slave of Cuba* with hope that Juan Francisco Manzano's courage and perseverance would serve as an inspiration for young people. His life demonstrates the profound, universal human craving for self-expression. For years, I felt haunted by Manzano's desperate yearning to learn how to read and write. For years, I struggled to write about him in prose. Until I switched to free verse, the story simply did not spring to life.

Once I switched, the manuscript had a life of its own. I sent it into the Henry Holt and Co. slush pile. Robin Tordini pulled it out. Thank you, Robin! Reka Simonsen edited it beautifully. Thank you, Reka! Sean Qualls honored it with wonderful illustrations. Thank you, Sean! Tim Jones sent it to countless librarians. Thank you, Tim!

To my knowledge, there had never been a youth biography of a poet, written entirely in poetry, but that didn't matter. I had read Karen Hesse's multiple-voice free verse novel *Witness*, so I knew that there was room in the youth publishing world for unusual formats.

Juan Francisco Manzano's autobiographical notes were the only known slave narrative written by a Cuban slave while he was still held in bondage. His work was so unique that I could hardly believe it was virtually unknown outside of Cuba. I felt compelled to write about him, partly because I could not rest until the job was done, and partly because he had said that he hoped to write a novel about his life. He never had the chance. I felt like he was looking over my shoulder, cheering me on. I believe that this story of an enslaved poet came to life because free verse is a suitable vessel for the intense emotions of an inner life, a

secret life, a life of hidden hopes. Like a bottled message on ocean waves, poetry floats, hoping to reach unknown shores.

I feel that Manzano's paired longings for freedom from bondage, and freedom of expression, are just as relevant today as during Cuba's centuries of colonialism and slavery. All people, regardless of time and place, know what it feels like to yearn for a way to communicate the inexpressible. Words are as close as we can come.

I wrote terribly. I wrote foolishly. I wrote wildly. I wrote as if getting published does not matter. I felt free to write about themes that are close to my heart, instead of popular themes, or marketable themes, or bestselling themes.

I was born and raised in Los Angeles, but during childhood visits to my mother's family in Cuba, I fell in love with the island. It is a love that has persisted through decades of travel restrictions and censored mail. My passion for Manzano's life story is part of that profoundly personal and complex relationship with an island, and an extended family, that I am still only able to visit occasionally, and briefly. I am deeply grateful to my parents and other relatives for those childhood visits to Cuba. I am equally grateful to my husband and children for tolerating my return visits as an adult, and for allowing me to live in two worlds at once, the real one, and my imaginary one, a blend of memory and wonder.

As a child, I was a bookworm who wrote poetry. The public library was my sec-

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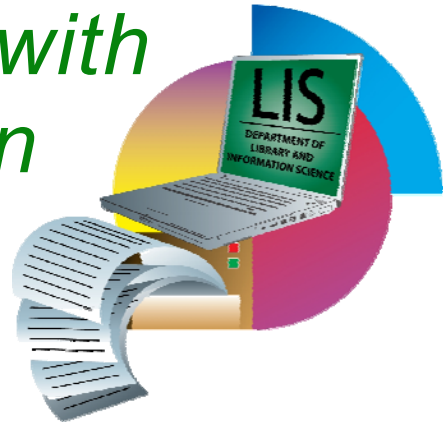
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Sibert Award Acceptance Speech

Memories Behind the Iron Curtain

Peter Sís



Photo courtesy of Farrar, Straus, and Giroux; photo by Palma Fiacco Fotografijn.

Peter Sís is winner of the 2008 Sibert Medal for *The Wall: Growing Up behind the Iron Curtain* (Farrar/Frances Foster). His acceptance speech was delivered at the ALA Annual Conference in Anaheim, California, on June 30, 2008.

English is not my mother tongue. I have been in this country for twenty-five years, but I still misunderstand the language from time to time.

Especially on the phone . . .

Especially if a phone call comes when I am drawing . . .

It is amazing how many life-changing phone calls I have misunderstood—a credit card pitch, Maurice Sendak, Mrs. Onassis, the Caldecott Committee, the MacArthur Foundation. . . . It took me forever to realize what those calls were about.

And these were weekday phone calls!

No wonder I had no idea who was calling me one Sunday night in January . . .

Carolina? Or was it Caroline?

Park? The Car?

By the wall?

Sober Committee?

My apologies, Caroline Parr, Sibert Committee chair. Once I understood, I was jumping for joy . . . and I still am.

I am incredibly grateful to the Sibert Committee for recognizing *The Wall* as a meaningful and important book. It means a lot to me not only because this is a book about my life, but because the subject of human rights and freedom acquires a different kind of importance in a society where people take it for granted as an undeniable right.

I have been asked, especially by my fellow Czechs, why I would want to write about growing up during the Cold War. I have been questioning my life in Communist Czechoslovakia ever since I left. The Wall came down in 1989, and my memories became part of history. My children were born in New York City, in the free world. I wanted to celebrate their freedom and their future with books about the great minds of history, like Galileo's and Darwin's. The world is to be discovered and explored, I was trying to tell them.

The children grew. September 11, 2001, happened, and the world changed. They grew some more, and I realized how fragile freedom can be, even in a free country. I wanted to tell them about the world I grew up in behind the so-called Iron Curtain. It was difficult to explain. I started to draw pictures. My then-ten-year-old son was learning about the early settlers in America and asked me how I became a settler myself. I drew more pictures to explain it.

I have been questioning my life in Communist Czechoslovakia ever since I left. The Wall came down in 1989, and my memories became part of history.

The red, orange, yellow, and blue alerts came and went. Then the leaflets and public announcements about speaking up if you saw something suspicious. All of this brought more and more memories of a childhood full of suspicion, fear, and indoctrination. I drew and drew and the book started to take shape. Soon I had a maze, a labyrinth of memories, and I was lost. My editor, Frances Foster, helped me find the way through them.

I started to research the conditions of my life more deeply. The more information about the Communist system I unearthed, the more upset I got about what I had to deal with as a child—though I was unaware of it as a child and couldn't have imagined it being any different. This made me angry, but what better person to calm me down than Frances, who after so many books knows me pretty well.

My material piled up. I'd collected more than I could possibly use—boxes and boxes of emotionally loaded memories. As I followed the timeline of those forty years of Communism in what used to be Czechoslovakia, the historical events as well as the journal entries of my life

behind the Iron Curtain fell into place.

It is amazing to me that in this profit-obsessed era of shopping malls and fast food restaurants, a book like this was published with so much care and attention given it every step of the way. I would like to express my thanks and gratitude to all the people at Farrar, Straus, and Giroux who made it possible: Margaret Ferguson, Michael Eisenberg, Susan Doran, Tom Consiglio, Jeanne McDermott, Jennifer Doerr, Karla Reganold, and Robbin Gourley for the beautiful design. Someone in Prague told

me that a book about such an awful time should have been ugly. Luckily Robbin had ideas of her own.

And to the Sibert Committee, I cannot thank you enough for this recognition.

I wish my parents could have seen this book and could have read with me the many touching letters from people who, like them, lived through these difficult Cold War years, I hope they would have been proud, but there are still so many questions I would have wanted to ask!

What comes after the Sibert Award? A sort of continuation of things past—spinning history as I revisit a fairytale, “The Island for Six Thousand Alarm Clocks,” which was the story I animated in my first professional film, thirty years ago in Prague.

Initially it was celebrated as an artistic achievement, but then shelved by the Communist censors who decided it carried a hidden political message encouraging people to emigrate. That had never occurred to me at the time, but perhaps they were right. 🐉

PURA BELPRÉ, continued from page 6

ond home, but I also loved nature. I loved the outdoors. In college, I studied agriculture and botany. While I was an agronomy professor at one university, and a botany PhD candidate at another, I suddenly had the opportunity to take an intensive, one-on-one creative writing seminar from the great Chicano poet, novelist, and educator Tomás Rivera. Dr. Rivera advised me to write as if getting published does not matter. I will always be grateful to him for that liberating advice. It has served me well. It is the emotional equivalent of saying, “Dance as if no one is watching.”

Soon, I was writing instead of studying. I dropped out of the doctoral program. I resigned from my tenured teaching position. I never looked back. I wrote terribly. I wrote foolishly. I wrote wildly. I wrote as if getting published does not matter. I felt free to write about themes that are close to my heart, instead of popular themes, or marketable themes, or bestselling themes.

Ultimately, publishing does matter, once the book is finished, because writing is

not only about self-expression. It is also about communication. Writing about themes that are close to the heart is a painful process. History hurts. The writer is a time traveler. Modern life vanishes. The room has no walls. The paper levitates. Birds fly in and out of the syllables. Winged horses perch on the words.

The poetry and life of Juan Francisco Manzano have helped me to see freedom of expression in a fresh, childlike light.

The twentieth century Cuban poet Dulce María Loynáz wrote, “*En mi verso soy libre; él les mi mar . . .* In my poem, I am free; it is my ocean . . .” I imagine poetry was like that for Juan Francisco Manzano. Verse must have felt like a sky or a sea, where he could fly, or float away.

The great Ecuadorian poet Jorge Carrera Andrade wrote, “True poetry is only that which has fallen from combat with the angel.” I imagine Manzano must have felt like he was not only soaring or floating, but also struggling with heaven, with truth, with hope.

One of my favorite definitions of poetry comes from the Lithuanian Nobel Prize-winning poet Czeslaw Milosz: “Poetry is an attempt to break through the density of reality into a zone where the simplest things are again as fresh as if they were being seen by a child.”

The poetry and life of Juan Francisco Manzano have helped me to see freedom of expression in a fresh, childlike light. Thank you, Juan! Today, as we celebrate poetry, I feel certain that you are with us in spirit, celebrating too.

There is an old Cuban folk saying: “*De músico, poeta, y loco, todos tenemos un poco.* Of musician, poet, and lunatic, we all have a little bit.” Thanks to all of you for honoring poetry and the poet in all of us. *Gracias, y gracias a Dios.* 🐉

May Hill Arbuthnot Honor Lecture Thirteen Studios

David Macaulay

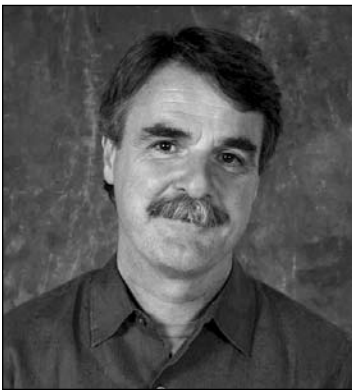


Photo courtesy of Houghton Mifflin.

*David Macaulay is the author/illustrator of many children's books, including the popular *The Way Things Work*. He received the 1991 Caldecott Medal for *Black and White* and was a 2006 MacArthur Fellow. He delivered the 2008 May Hill Arbuthnot Honor Lecture on April 17, 2008, in Madison, Wisconsin.*

Before embarking on the creation of this little paper, I did what we all do under pressure: I procrastinated. I strolled around the corner from our house and my studio, down the alley behind the inn, and into Dan and Whit's, the local legendary general store, home to everything from plumbing supplies and crocks to digital thermometers and sushi—"If they don't have it, you don't need it"—and bought six fourteen-ounce bags of peanut M&Ms. As usual, I chose the pink bags, the ones that increase awareness of breast cancer. Might as well be doing something good for someone else's body if I'm going to abuse my own.

I've been consuming chocolate for as long as I can remember, with or without peanuts—although "with peanuts" somehow seems marginally less sinful, like drinking red wine instead of white.

I returned with my sacks of treasure, avoided the dogs whom I knew would insist on being walked, and sprinted up the stairs to my second-floor work space. I sprinted because I knew that in a matter of seconds I would be able to pay off, at least temporarily, whatever energy debt I had incurred with my little journey. I carefully poured the contents of all six bags into the large jar my enabling children had given me on Father's Day. After finding an extension cord for the computer, I placed the jar on the sofa and cuddled up next to it, ready at last to gather my thoughts.

I didn't always prefer the peanut variety.

Both *Mill* and *Ship* were completed under the influence more or less equally of "peanut" and "plain." Halfway through *Mill*, I began tacking the empty bags to the ceiling that sloped over the drawing board. I'm an inveterate collector, and what's the good of building a collection if you can't display it?

For the past six years, I've been completely immersed in the creation of a book on the human body—a subject about which I knew nothing when I started, which is the primary reason why I started. In the fall of 2006, after four years of learning as much as I could squeeze into my head and still with no

end in sight, Deborah Stevenson called to tell me I'd been selected to make "a significant contribution to the field of children's literature" in the spring of 2008. As she talked, I did some hasty calculations, realized that tonight was at least a year and a half away, thanked her, and went back to the drawing board.

While I have on occasion tried to figure out how to pronounce "Arbuthnot," all my days and far too many nights since then have been devoted entirely to human anatomy, physiology, neuroanatomy, and cell biology. For the last two years this has meant working seven days a week. I finished the last piece of art for *The Way We Work* about six weeks ago and immediately began making corrections, mostly minor, to both art and text. I still have a few to make.

Fear not however. For the past ten days, and in an attempt to justify your presence here, I've been scrambling to prepare even an insignificant contribution to the field of children's literature. For a while I thought I'd concentrate on the process I'd just survived, but my fear of turning this evening's program into either a therapy session or an outright sales pitch has caused me to shift my thinking slightly. I decided it might be more useful to put the body book into some kind of larger context, a career for example—my own in fact.

While assembling the bits and pieces has been quite a nostalgic journey, it's also been somewhat frustrating. I can't believe how much I can't remember. I've been back and forth over my résumé, the copyright pages, and through my sketchbooks trying to reconstruct as accurately as possible the sequence of events that has led me to Madison.

Since I can barely figure out the timing and order of things I did a week ago, you can imagine the challenge presented by the twenty-nine years that preceded work on the body book. I'm not sure how much of the history I will describe tonight is based on actual facts or on facts I've invented during my years of making presentations, facts I've come to trust because they either get a laugh or help tell a good story.

But then again, that's history, isn't it? A combination of facts for which there is reasonable evidence and areas of cement to hold the facts together. In the end, of course, the usefulness of the history depends on who's choosing the facts and the quality of the cement. I can't wait to read the history of the last seven and a half years—for two reasons. First of all, it will mean that the endless parade of obscene abuses performed by a barely credible marionette and his band of sinister puppeteers can at last be addressed in the past tense, even though their deeds will haunt the lives of our children for years to come, and secondly, just maybe seeing it all laid out will help me understand how they got away with it for so long. Fear, as FDR reminded us long ago, is a powerful force and we've seen it used masterfully.

Where was I? Trying to make sense of my own little history and to distinguish the facts from the cement. I don't suppose it really matters, but I still can't figure out exactly when I produced *Angelo*. I've been back and forth over the various calendars and there just hasn't been enough time and yet I know it exists. I have a copy!

Anyway, I was making serious headway through the contents of the jar before I first began to notice the growing list of places in which I've worked while producing what I am fairly sure will remain my primary contribution to the field of children's literature.

Thirteen studios in thirty-five years may not be unusual, but it's certainly inefficient.

Let's face it; that's a lot of packing between books and increasingly of books, since with each project I invariably acquire a new library. Now when I say studio, I mean dedicated work space. I'm not including the kitchen tables, dining room tables, or any other surfaces I may have commandeered while first tiptoeing toward illustrative waters way back in the mists of time.

There are many ways of choosing a career, but none as liberating as receiving a diploma with your name misspelled. My bachelor of architecture degree has a

name on it almost identical to mine. Even as I tried to figure out how I was going to explain the slip up to my parents after five years of paying tuition, I found the error both amusing and entirely appropriate. By my fourth year, I was already beginning to entertain serious doubts about my commitment to the profession for which I was being trained. And by the end of my fifth year, which I spent in Rome, the question was no longer whether I would become an architect but rather what would I do instead.

After graduating and while searching for whatever might be next, I was gainfully employed as a junior high school art teacher, a challenge for which I was totally unprepared, and as an interior designer. It was during this time, the very early seventies, that I first became aware of the field into which I would one day be asked to deposit a significant contribution. I came across books by Etienne Delessert, Tomi Ungerer, and Maurice Sendak, as well as the work of Milton Glaser, and I was fatally smitten. Not only did I love what I saw, but they seemed to be having so much fun. This appealed to me. So powerful was their influence that many of my earliest attempts at illustrating were often bad imitations of their work—so bad, in fact, that you would not recognize them as imitations—which has served all five of us well.

Although I drew a lot in high school, mostly to show off, and later at Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) to learn how to see, my first attempts at something approximating illustration included a menu cover for a Chinese restaurant and an accompanying newspaper ad, three album covers, and lots of sketchbooks filled with ideas.

From these bits and pieces, I was able to extract something resembling a portfolio with which I somehow finagled a job illustrating a series of books for young readers, which, thanks to May, I now consider my own "Dick and Jane" period. Frogs, flying elevators, a hole in a tent, three guys in a sieve, I drew all sorts of things to accompany the blocks of oversized text. And the only restriction was that all the illustrations had to work with, within, or at least acknowledge the

existence of a unifying grid—a hint of architecture—which I actually enjoyed.

These books gave me my first opportunity to combine words and pictures both in terms of content and as elements on the page and then to consider the pages in sequence, and I was paid for my efforts. Earn while you learn. It was a perfect opportunity. And best of all, in a burst of what can only be described as pure common sense, the entire series was scrapped before it ever saw the light of commercial day, leaving my nonexistent reputation intact and my *tabla* very much *rasa*. On a more personal note, because the job had paid the rent, my wife reluctantly agreed that perhaps my decision to give up my interior design job to concentrate on illustration hadn't been such a reckless and irresponsible thing after all.

But as invaluable as the experience was, these were not the kind of picture books that inspired me, the ones I wanted to illustrate. Since I had little interest in writing my own text, I began asking friends to write for me. I was perfectly happy to make pictures, all the while hoping that one day I would see my name on the cover of a book I didn't own. The first story I illustrated from cover to cover was actually written for me by my interior designing boss Morris Nathanson. It was the story of Maxwell, a boy with a remarkable gift for drawing. As I finished each picture, I cut up the typed manuscript and with rubber cement, glued it into the space I had left for it. The finished pages were then slipped into plastic sleeves so that the entire thing could be read as a book. Years later, I realized why Maxwell had not been snapped up by a publisher. It wasn't until I came across *Harold and the Purple Crayon* that I saw we had basically created the colorized version. The fact that it was three times the size and would have been ten times the price probably had something to do with their reluctance.

Another friend who gave me stories to illustrate was glass artist Mary Shaffer. She exhaled more stories in a minute than I could come up with in a lifetime. *Little Miss Rabbit*, for instance, was burdened with very long ears and sought advice on her problem from all her woodland

friends. She, like Maxwell, soon had her own thirty-two-page book. And over time, through the plastic sleeves, I was able to witness the science experiment that is what rubber cement does to white paper. By now I was so absolutely hooked on the process I even came up with a couple of ideas of my own. The first, a fable about the resilience of nature featuring, of all things, a rainbow, grew out of my fledgling awareness of pollution, strip malls, fast food, plastic, the military, and the politicians inevitably responsible for all of the above.

In those days, if you had a book idea, you looked up the number of the closest publisher and made an appointment to deliver the good tidings in person. The first voice of Houghton Mifflin's children's book department I learned to recognize over the phone belonged to Melanie Kroupa. Eventually, I heard it in person as every few months she declined one of my classic offerings, including *Maxwell*, *Little Miss Rabbit*, and believe it or not, the rainbow story. She did so, however, with great sensitivity and always left the door open for the next idea, which turned out to be the inspirational story of a gargoyle beauty pageant.

But things didn't unfold exactly as I had anticipated. After looking over the sketches and story line, Walter Lorraine, who worked with Melanie and ran the children's book department, came back to what was undoubtedly the "excuse" for this implausible tale in the first place—a drawing of a half-finished gothic façade towering over a medieval city. He pointed out that while there was plenty of fantasy around, there wasn't much for the average young reader on building cathedrals.

I was confronted by a seesaw. At one end of it, solid and unflinching, sat rejection, while at the other perched possibility. For those of you more scientifically minded, think mammoth and villagers. But once again, the seesaw was level. It could tip either way and it was up to me. And that's how I found myself being invited into the world of children's books through, of all things, architecture. A day or so later I was in the RISD library and came across a book called *The Construction of Gothic*

Cathedrals: A Study of Medieval Vault Erection by John Fitchen. I read it and was amazed by it. It was full of detailed drawings showing how medieval builders probably assembled their towering structures. What it didn't do was use perspective to make the reader feel like he or she was actually there, nor did it offer any unifying story line. I saw my opportunity and immediately fired all but one of the gargoyles.

Two months later, I was back in Boston with a whole new set of sketches and this time Walter and Melanie were smiling. Six weeks and a thousand-dollar advance after that, I was on my way to France for a face-to-face encounter with the cathedral I had chosen from photographs.

Incidentally, that contract for *Cathedral* was made out to the same guy who had graduated just three years earlier from

Cathedral was written in a kind of blissful ignorance, "What did I really know about book making?" and it was well received—both an exhilarating and slightly unnerving way to begin a career.

RISD. But since architecture had now crept back into the mix, I let the discrepancy slide and deposited the accompanying check.

While Melanie somehow escaped Houghton Mifflin before the battlements of my castle were finished, Walter remained to build what may well be the best backlist in the business. And it has been Walter who over the last thirty years has answered the phone many times to hear me say, "I'm going to be late . . . again. I think I can get it done for next fall."

For me, deadlines are crucial, even when I miss them, even when I miss them more

than once. You know what people say about inspiration. A lot of this so-called creative process stuff has to do with simply working every day until you're done. Without deadlines, I wouldn't always be able to keep putting one foot in front of the other.

Maxwell, my "Dick and Jane" series, *Little Miss Rabbit*, the rainbow story, all the sketches and most of the finished art for *Cathedral* were produced in one room of a small third-floor apartment in Providence, Rhode Island. Most of the space beneath the sloping ceiling was occupied by a huge wooden drafting board on an adjustable, though not particularly portable, cast-iron base. The surface of the board was filled with thumbtack holes from years of use before I got it. Along with the table, and equally heavy for its size, came a slightly worn upholstered swiveling stool. This space was studio number 1.

Cathedral was written in a kind of blissful ignorance, "What did I really know about book making?" and it was well received—both an exhilarating and slightly unnerving way to begin a career. Walter and I were in a taxi in New York having attended some kind event in honor of my fledgling effort when he turned and asked what I was going to do next. The fact is that Roman city planning was the only other thing, historically speaking, about which I remembered much from school.

City was produced in studio number 2, the apartment downstairs into which we and our new baby moved the moment it became available. Ah, the lure of vertical walls. I don't really need much space for drawing—the truth is no matter how big my drawing board, once I start working, my tools close in around me. My actual work space is ultimately defined by my reach, and I have short arms. Next to a drawing board, vertical walls are the most important surfaces a book maker can have. On the drawing board, I produce one thing at a time. But on the walls, I can see how they all go together. This is true from the earliest sketches to the finished art.

I sensed even back then that a truly successful book has a lot more to do with

how images work together than how they stand alone. Even so, I spent far too much time trying to make one perfect drawing after another. To this end, after drawing on tracing paper, often for days, I would transfer the final sketch onto a piece of expensive three-ply paper. I would also put down my easy-to-handle, completely submissive markers and pencils and move to the time-honored and fiendishly frustrating medium of pen and ink. How else could I become Maurice Sendak? How else could I make “serious” art? It took me a very long time to shake those old counter-productive habits. Every illustration from *The Way Things Work* is on three-ply Bristol. Every illustration from *The Way We Work* is drawn on the same nonarchival crappy tracing paper on which all of the preliminary sketches had been developed. And with very few exceptions, very little of the finished art is outlined, and absolutely none of it was done with a dip pen.

Studio number 2 was a corner room with lots of light and a spider plant. With baby in the next room, however, I decided to wear headphones while I worked. Using a fine dip pen called a crow quill, I drew several views of a growing colonial Roman city in excruciating detail while listening to Simon and Garfunkel. I remember the selections because I couldn’t adjust the volume on my reel-to-reel tape deck, the only audio equipment we had that took earphones. So I traveled with the boys full blast as I scratched my way hectare after hectare across the imaginary Po Valley landscape.

Things must have been going well enough because after a few months we were able to buy our own house right in the middle of the city’s East Side. I set up shop at one end of the third floor—sloping ceilings and all. I don’t think we ever used the other rooms up there. *Pyramid* and *Underground* were born in what became studio number 3. Both books went down to the wire, leaving no time for cleaning up along the way. Besides a couple of bookshelves, the only other pieces of furniture to join the drawing board and chair were a yellow plastic tabouret to hold all my supplies, and during *Underground*, a small television so I could watch Dorothy Hamill.

Pyramid afforded me the opportunity to visit Egypt, climb the great pyramid, travel to Luxor, Aswan, and even Abu Simbel, but it didn’t offer much in the way of creative challenge, or at least I didn’t let it. The formula for those early architecture books was pretty much set, and I just plugged in bald-headed workers and palm trees where previously there had been togas and pines. I must have been feeling that it was time to shake things up a little because, for the next book, I changed not only the kind of subject but the format and even added a second color.

Unlike the other books, which relied heavily on what other people had written, much of *Underground* was put together from conversations with people who actually work underground. Of the first five books, it remains the most satisfying to me.

By the time I reached the end of *Castle* and simultaneously my first marriage, I was pretty much a wreck. The excitement that had accompanied much of my first four years of book making, and had also allowed me to ignore my personal life, was gone.

In terms of creative challenge, *Castle* was *Cathedral*, just closer to the ground and with much smaller windows. Ironically, it was also a Caldecott honor recipient. I would have gladly traded that silver medal for a second chance at my marriage, but life doesn’t always work that way. So, confronted as I was by the inevitability of new things in my personal life, I decided to follow the same tack in my professional one.

I’m not good at vacations, but occasionally they are thrust upon me. Of course you may define vacation differently, but for me it is having the opportunity to do something different. Judith York Newman, an architect and gallery owner in New York City, offered me a show. She wanted to exhibit and sell some of the drawings from the first five books. Since I wasn’t ready to sell them and didn’t know whether I ever would be, I offered instead to make an entirely new set of drawings that would have nothing to do with a book. The exhibition was to be called *Great Moments in Architecture*

and would feature anything but. The drawings were all done in pen and ink with lots of crosshatching, always a big selling item for a couple of reasons. First of all, the “Gee whiz” factor, “How do you draw all those lines?” and secondly it gives them an automatic credibility, a historical weight, which in this particular case could only heighten the absurdity of the content. Once the drawings were done, however, I saw the possibility of cranking the joke up to eleven.

Why not combine all these images into a serious-looking art book?

For the first time, I worked with the grownups at Houghton Mifflin and specifically Austin Olney to produce the book named after the show. It had three sections, Plates, Drawings, and Studies, and each image was carefully numbered and labeled. The entire oeuvre was prefaced with a suitably pompous and generally incomprehensible piece of text written one evening over wine by my friend Kevin Barry and me.

Incidentally, for those of you keeping score, both *Castle* and *Great Moments* were produced in studio number 4—my between-marriages, wall-to-wall carpeted, charm-free apartment. I remember the carpet because it became my display wall since the real ones were way too smooth to dare blemishing with push pins.

Plate VII, called “Roman wall painting, 115AC, AD 200,” depicts a fragment of Pompeian wall painting in the little-known eighth style and shows both a natural scene and a duplex outlet—also painted. I originally called it “Roman wall painting from the Motel of the Mysteries, AD 79.” But something about the title appealed to me, so I withheld it from the book and let it rattle around in my brain. I also remarried and moved into studio number 5, another third-floor space under a sloping roof, attached to an entire house that soon had a new baby in it.

I was still, professionally at least, on vacation, and so it turns out was King Tut. He was visiting a number of American cities in his very own blockbuster show. As we received catalog after

catalog of Egyptian-looking coasters, ties, bookends, furniture, cufflinks, etc., all produced to help offset the cost of the exhibition, I was also wandering around the country, speaking in schools. In both hotels and motels, I began to observe some of the nationally shared traditions that make us feel at home wherever our travels may take us.

The inevitable yet mysterious point at the end of the toilet paper, the stainless steel racks into which towels, wadded up under huge pressure, were somehow wedged. With images of Tut and of course Howard Carter dancing in my head, and “sanitized for your protection” straps wrapped around the toilet seats, it wasn’t long before a story, or at least a collection of ideas, began to emerge. *Motel of the Mysteries*, that free-floating title, soon had a home.

From this studio also came *Help? Let Me Out!* written by my friend David Lord Porter. It was my first real book in full color. *Unbuilding* was next, followed by *The Amazing Brain*, and finally *Mill*. But desperate once again for vertical walls, I packed up my drawing table and carted it off to a cold and drafty factory space on the other side of the city. In studio number 6, inspired by the election of a second-rate actor to be president of the United States, I went to work on my most lighthearted book to date, *Baaa*. I’ve always been more optimistic about the past, but still I couldn’t imagine how things could possibly get any worse.

This black-and-white picture book was published once again by the adult division of Houghton Mifflin but reviewed as a children’s book because it had so many pictures and sheep are cute. Of this book, Judith Viorst, writing in the *New York Times*, said, and quite rightly so, “I would not give this book to a child I loved.” The story line was cobbled together from notes scribbled on a hotel message pad. In my generally depressed state, I’d been thinking about making a series of drawings of popular places around the world, all of them deserted and with a haunting de Chirico kind of silence.

But it was actually a loud noise that got the ball rolling. I was awakened in the middle of the night in a hotel somewhere

by some idiot who’d gotten his room mixed up with mine and insisted on trying to kick the door down until he was dragged away to the correct room. I couldn’t get back to sleep and so began devising a story line that might explain those well-known empty spaces.

The earliest sketches for my next book, one which would involve the interactions of mammoths, logs, rocks, and cave persons, were also done in studio number 6.

It was finished, however, in a narrow two-story building a few miles south of Providence, in the town of Warren. With its ornate false front, studio number 7 appeared to have fallen out of a Western movie set. *The Way Things Work* was a brilliant idea, and I can say that with complete humility because it wasn’t mine, nor did I recognize that brilliance at the time.

In 1983, I was having dinner in London with my friends Linda and Christopher

One way of really getting to know something is by drawing it. The act of drawing forces a person to really look at the subject matter, to understand it inside and out.

Davis. Linda ran the children’s book department at Collins and was responsible for first bringing *Cathedral* and *City* to the United Kingdom. Christopher, who had named my motel “The toot ‘n’ come on,” was part of a successful London packaging operation called Dorling Kindersley (DK). He asked if I would be interested in joining them in the creation of a book about machines that had been requested by a German book club. I don’t know whether it was the idea of working with a team—I’d become such a one-man band by this time—the scale of the project, or the subject matter, but in any event, I declined.

A year later, DK had matured from packager to publisher and they were planning to produce *The Way Things Work* on their own. Christopher asked me again if I’d be interested in joining the team along with Neil Ardley and David Burnie, neither of whom I knew. Perhaps it was just later in the meal, I don’t know, but this time I said yes. Over the next four years, I made frequent trips to the Covent Garden offices of DK and worked through my jetlagged haze to learn about four hundred pages worth of machines.

Neil, who wrote the text, seemed to know everything about everything. David served as project editor. Both of them patiently taught me what I needed to know to produce accurate and hopefully engaging pictures.

A word or two on drawing . . .

One way of really getting to know something is by drawing it. The act of drawing forces a person to really look at the subject matter, to understand it inside and out. This kind of drawing may or may not have anything to do with making art, but it has everything to do with learning.

To make sure that no one, child or adult, is truly left behind, all avenues to learning need to be open and available. Whether through drawing, writing, or performance, a person can eventually be lead by his own growing enthusiasm to science, mathematics, history, or whatever it is he might need to know. My career is the proof.

One of the many wonderful slogans to emerge from Washington over the last few years in lieu of sensible policy comes from the National Endowment for the Arts. They apparently believe that a great nation deserves great art. Like all slogans, it sounds terrific until you start to think about. What defines a great nation? What exactly is “great art” and why does one “deserve” the other?

Without going into it too deeply, doesn’t this slogan at least imply that a country that cares about its citizens will teach them not only how to recognize art, great or otherwise, but more importantly how to use it, and then maybe even how to make it? And wouldn’t this require, let’s

say, “art classes” in all schools?

By the time I left studio number 7, I had also made *Black and White*, *Ship*, *Shortcut*, *Rome Antics*, and *The New Way Things Work*. It was a highly productive period marred only by the collapse of my second marriage somewhere along the way.

Although I didn't realize it until it was finished, *Rome Antics* is not only a love letter to Rome, the city in which I will always feel at home even though I barely speak a word of Italian, but also a love letter to my third and final wife, Ruthie. I don't learn the important things quickly, but I do learn them.

While still living in Warren, we bought a severely neglected 1848 carpenter Gothic cottage in the adjacent town of Bristol. When we finally moved into this house, after almost a year of construction, we sold the Warren house and along with it studio number 7. I moved into a large sunlit space in the Herreshoff museum just a short walk along the water from our new house and set up camp in studio number 8. Here I pulled together *Building the Book Cathedral*, a twenty-fifth anniversary celebration of my first book, and created *Building Big*, a companion book for the PBS show of the same name. To get it done in time for the airing of the show, the entire thing had to be written and illustrated between February and early July. We were on press by August, and I was signing copies of the book in early October. Even more astounding than the highly compressed schedule are the facts that Donna McCarthy, the production goddess at Houghton Mifflin, was still speaking to me, and I was still happily married.

Studio number 8 turned out to be a little too sunny, so I converted the three-car garage behind the cottage into studio number 9. Part of it for me and part for Ruthie so she could work on her jewelry without burning down what we had so painstakingly restored. There, I somehow produced *Angelo* and then began work on the body project. I started to assemble the necessary books, charts, and models. I read and sketched every day, excited by what I was learning, but increasingly aware of the size of the

task I'd taken on. I was just beginning to make a little progress when September 11 happened.

Suddenly, it seemed far more important to learn something about the culture from which that handful of fanatics had emerged than it did to explain digestion. On September 15, I called Walter and told him I thought it was time to go back to the architecture books and make one about the building of a mosque—and not just a mosque, but all the buildings that went with it—the school, the soup kitchen, the baths, and so on. It was the most logical contribution for me to make, and I felt that even this one little book would be more useful than all the saber rattling. The ink on the body contract was still wet and that book would now be delayed for at least a couple of years. But I didn't hesitate to propose the change. Walter has always put the convictions of his authors ahead of corporate constraints, so he agreed, and I was off to the library and to Istanbul.

A year and a half later, it was back to the body, and, not surprisingly, I'd forgotten everything I'd read before September 11. So to make this project even more challenging, we moved again. Not once, but twice. We loved our house, but it did have two minor drawbacks. The front door was about twenty feet from a busy road and the back door less than a hundred yards from the waters of Narragansett Bay. As our children became increasingly mobile, we became increasingly fearful that they would either be flattened or drowned.

The first move took us about half a mile to a house on a wider but much quieter street closer to the center of town. It came with a large grassy yard surrounded by a high hedge and sidewalks. Thanks to the forgiving nature of the lawn, bike riding was mastered the first day and in no time the kids were off meeting and greeting a host of new neighbors. We never loved this house, but it was the right move. I gave up my garage and moved back into a third-floor space, sloping ceilings and all. [It was] toasty in the winter months and really toasty in the summer.

Working in studio number 10 was basically drawing in a sauna. As you finished

each drawing, you peeled it off your arm. But summer heat wasn't the only problem. As I cranked out sketch after sketch trying to get to grips with body material, I was increasingly frustrated by the lack of vertical wall space and storage space in general.

So I moved into a vacated real estate office near Bristol harbor. Studio number 11 had two plate glass windows and a leaky roof, neither of which I needed, but it also had a long uninterrupted wall. Very few people knew what was going on in that corner space. A guy drawing body parts would have seemed all too appropriate behind the stained gauzy curtains that acted like one-way mirrors during the daytime. I could see out, but no one could see me, or my frequently unshaven face, or the various anatomical models and scattered bones. This was just as well when I stop to consider the clients of the ice cream parlor next door.

I continued reading and sketching, day after day, week after week, but I was becoming increasingly worried about where I was going and whether or not I would ever understand enough to confidently produce a book. I was not alone. My wife was worried, my parents were worried, and a whole group of people at 222 Berkeley Street in Boston were worried.

As my advance for the body book dwindled—not surprising since the book was already two years behind schedule and would take another two at least—I gave up studio number 11 and moved back to the house to save on rent. This time, however, I landed on the second floor in what became studio number 12, and moved the kids upstairs. They didn't seem to mind sloping walls.

By this time, I had been introduced to Anne Gilroy, a clinical anatomist at the University of Massachusetts in Worcester. Without knowing exactly what she was getting into (how could she? I didn't!), Anne offered to advise and guide my efforts. I took her anatomy course and watched her eager med students dissecting in the lab below. Thanks to Dana Andersen, chair of the department of

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A Novel Approach

Library Builds House from Weeded Books

Nancy J. Snyder

Photos by Ian Nguyen



For almost a year, the Morrison Regional branch of the Charlotte and Mecklenburg County (N.C.) Public Library displayed a small cardboard house that came from Candlewick Press, publisher of Lucy Cousins' popular *Maisy* children's books. Children of all ages enjoyed going in the house to read or just hang out.

After considerable time, however, the well-used house fell apart and was beyond repair. The children's staff wondered what they would do to replace it. After browsing a number of catalogs and searching online, they could not find an appropriate replacement.

Meanwhile, the Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County was weeding hundreds of damaged, unreadable, and low circulating books. Cathy Cartledge, senior library assistant at Morrison, came up with the idea to use them to construct a house.

She had built several houses from refrigerator boxes, but knew she would need help for this project. Steve Matheny, a maintenance and operations technician with experience in construction, agreed to help.

Matheny built the frame while Cartledge and her staff requested books from other library branches. Juvenile fiction books of a specific size were gathered for the sides, and picture books were used to make roof "shingles."

Children's staff worked together to give Cartledge the time and opportunity to use her creative talents. After some trial and error . . . glue or staples . . . rows or staggered . . . binding in or out . . . plastic clear or no plastic clear . . . eventually this

collaborative effort resulted in a BookHouse.

Large enough to fit two to six small children, the house consists of 474 books and has a linoleum floor inside. Matheny redesigned his idea for windows to include a bookcase inside the house. Along with books, stuffed animals or pillows were placed inside to make it cozy and inviting. Since the ribbon-cutting ceremony on the kick-off day of the 2008 summer reading program, this one-of-a-kind BookHouse has become a major conversation piece with children, parents, and staff.

This house elicits many excited remarks from patrons who see it for the first time, including:

"What a great BookHouse!"

"What a wonderful and totally cool idea!"

"Kids love little spaces like that."

"Can I check that book out?"

"It's simply incredible!"

The BookHouse is truly a labor of love that gives children a place to step inside to dream, imagine, and browse their favorite books . . . for years to come. 📖

Nancy J. Snyder is Children's Services Manager at the Morrison Regional Public Library in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Building a BookHouse in Six Easy Steps

Want to try your hand at building a BookHouse for your library? Here are the steps we took:

Step 1. Collect the books to use as bricks. Quantity and size do matter. Books measuring 8-1/2 x 6" were the most available. We collected and stored J Fiction and Easy Reader books.

Step 2. Determine the dimensions. We laid out the books in a linear outline. The best configuration was five books lined top to bottom for each side, with three for the back and two in front for the doorway. It looked like a big U. A base of heavy plywood and 2 x 4' boards was constructed according to the outline.

Step 3. Stack the books in columns to build the walls. The books were individually nailed and bolted together with rods. The walls were built up to a height of 11 inches, and at that point, a U-shaped plywood form was bolted to the books to hold them together. We then installed a linoleum floor.

Step 4. Construct the windows. We made 17-inch square windows (the length of two books). Open shutters were made 8-1/2" wide. After the windows were installed, the walls were built to the height of 29 inches. Another plywood form was bolted in to further strengthen the house.

Step 5. Frame the top of the house, the door, and the base, and construct a removable roof. All priming and painting were then finished.

Step 6. Decide what books to use for the roof tiles and piece them together. After putting new clear plastic on the worn books, they were attached with masking tape to the roof for a sure fit. The books were nailed down.

Staff spent about four months in the brainstorming, planning, and trial-and-error stages; actual construction of the house took about five weeks. Cost was negligible since the wood used was scrap wood; extras like paint and linoleum cost less than \$20.

The BookHouse took 474 books, with an additional twenty picture books creating the roof shingles. The house remains permanently in the children's department at Morrison Regional Public Library, and maintenance only requires cleaning the linoleum and touching up the paint occasionally.



From Potty Training to Parents

Childhood Issues in Swedish Picture Books

Heather Norquist

Norquist traveled to Sweden in September 2005; her report on library services to children in Sweden appeared in the Winter 2006 issue of Children and Libraries. Here she looks at how Swedish authors explore common childhood topics.

I inherited a love of Scandinavia from my father, whose parents emigrated from Sweden to northern Minnesota in the 1890s. While dreaming about traveling to Sweden, I was browsing the website for the Consulate General of Sweden and found a travel grant for study in Sweden offered by the Bicentennial Swedish-American Exchange Fund. I came up with a research proposal based on my love of picture books and fascination with Swedish culture. I started teaching myself the Swedish language so I would be able to translate the books I was studying. While I didn't receive the grant on my first try, I applied the following year and received the grant in 2005, traveling to Sweden for two weeks.

Swedish children's literature is known for its candidness and attention to life from the child's point of view. As a children's librarian working in the United States, I've often been pleasantly surprised by the different perspective I find in picture books by Swedish authors. This comes across sometimes as a sort of quirkiness and at other times boldness in representing things as they are, so that, even when they're translated into English, you can tell they're coming from a different point of view.

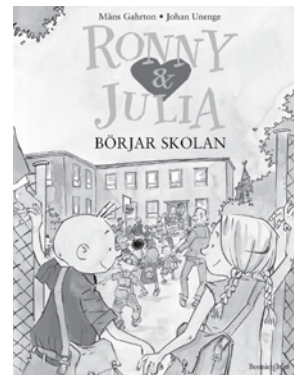


Heather Norquist is a Youth Services Librarian at the Live Oak Branch of the Santa Cruz (Calif.) Public Libraries and a volunteer librarian for the Scandinavian Cultural Center of Santa Cruz. She lives in Santa Cruz with her husband and two sons.

This led me to wonder how Swedish authors deal with some of the difficult issues that picture books address for young children. The issues I chose to study were potty training, moving, starting school, having same-sex parents, death, and divorce. To keep my task manageable, I focused mainly on recently published titles that had not been translated into English.

Starting School

In *Ronny and Julia börjar skolan* (*Ronny and Julia Start School*), Ronny and Julia are neighbors who enjoy playing school together, but as the first day of *real* school approaches, each is nervous: Ronny wonders if he will still be able to play pirates in school, and Julia worries that the other children will already know how to read and count.



Ronny's grandmother is no help, scaring him with stories about how, when she was in school, the teachers were really dumb and children had to stand in the corner for the smallest little things.

The day before school starts Ronny isn't feeling well. He doesn't have a fever, but he hardly eats and won't even play soccer. He tells his dad that he hurts everywhere. Julia is very worried about starting school without Ronny, but her parents reassure her that lots of kids are worried, that it's the same for everyone.

When the morning comes, Julia's mom calls Ronny's house to say that Julia is very unhappy and absolutely does not want to go to school when Ronny can't. Ronny goes to the phone

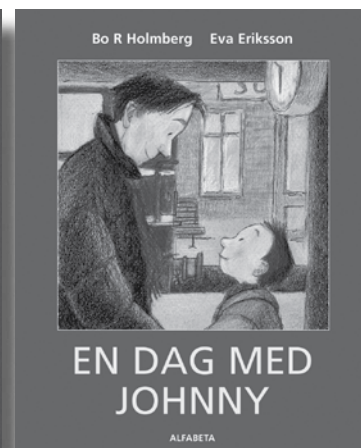
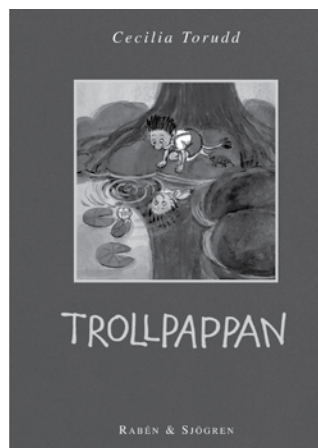
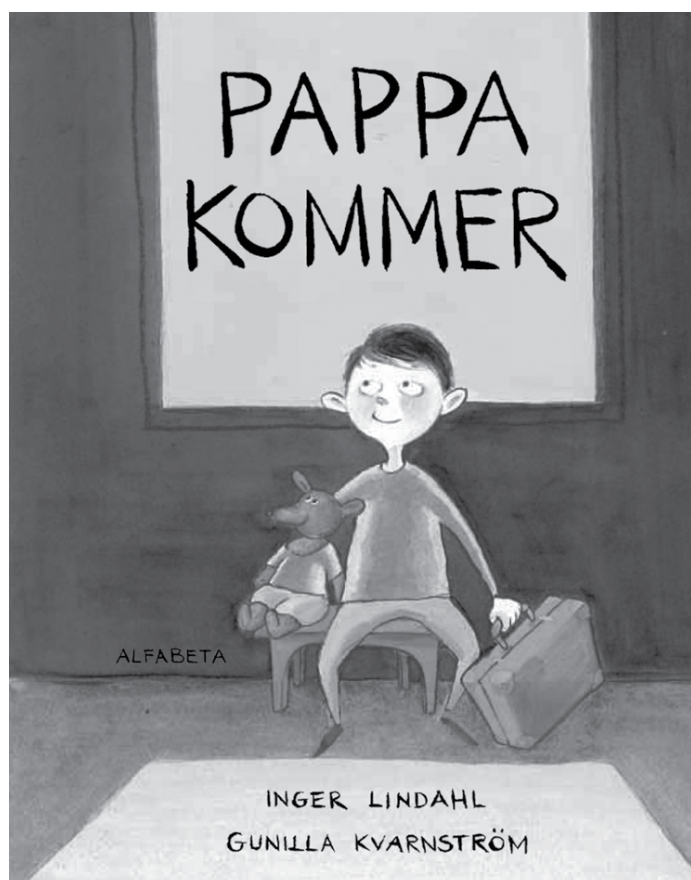
and tells Julia he feels better. They make it through the first day and even consider coming back the next day, and even all week.

Divorced Parents

The weekend visit by the non-custodial parent is the subject of two of the books I found. In *En dag med Johnny* (*A Day with Johnny*) by Bo R. Holmberg and Eva Eriksson, Tim, who has recently moved to the city with his mom, spends the day with his father Johnny, who lives in another town a train ride away. As they spend the day together, Tim proudly shows his papa to the people they meet—the girl at the hotdog stand, the ticket man at the movie theater, the waiter at the pizzeria, the librarian. At the end of their visit together, when Papa's train arrives, Papa brings Tim aboard and introduces him to all the other riders in the car. The mutual adoration the boy and father feel for each other is obvious. Johnny waits until the last possible moment to leave and wave goodbye.

In *Pappa kommer* (*Papa Is Coming*) by Inger Lindahl and Gunilla Kvarnström, Axel waits for his Papa to come and take him to his house. He waits and waits while his mother reassures him repeatedly that his papa will come soon.

Axel distracts himself by drawing a picture of Papa and building a tower for him, but Papa is even later than expected, and when he finally does show up, Axel is angry. He knocks the tower over, blames Papa, and kicks him in the shin. This leads to Axel's fear



that all his toes are broken, which Papa soothes by bandaging every one. He even bandages the toe of Axel's teddy bear, and when Axel and the teddy bear are satisfied, they leave with Papa, waving to Mama that they'll be back soon.

A Troll boy meets the father he never knew in *Trollpappan* (*The Troll Papa*) by Cecilia Torudd. Something is bothering the little troll; he's preoccupied and depressed, but he doesn't know what about. His mother takes him on an adventure, a hike through the forest to the other side of the mountain, but doesn't say where they're going. They spend the night in a tent that belonged to the troll's papa, and the troll mama asks her son if he remembers his papa. He doesn't really remember him, but when he tries to he feels a pain in his chest. When they finally reach the little house where the troll papa lives, he's inside with his friends, singing drunkenly. Although the troll boy doesn't remember his papa, he knows him right away. The father and son get to know each other during a week-long fishing trip. After this, the boy wants his papa to come live with him and his mama, but his father tells the boy he does best where he is, and his mother says it would be impossible because "one can't stand your papa all the time."¹

On their last day together the boy catches a very large fish and gains the approval of Papa's friends. At a goodbye party they tell stories about all the big fish they have caught. This leads to a quarrel, with Papa quarreling worst of all. Mama carries the boy away telling him that they will all be asleep soon.

In the morning, Papa, with an aching head, follows them to the foot of the mountain, where he gives his son his fine gold coin so he won't forget that his papa is coming next spring.

Moving

In *Bo här och bo där* (*Live Here and Live There*) by Eva Uddling and Gunilla Kvarnström, Fia is tired of moving from place to place. Her parents have split up and her mom has kept the house, while she and her father are homeless. Although mama tells Fia she can always feel at home there, it doesn't feel the



same and even smells differently, as if Mama was always getting ready to go out. The places Fia and her father move into are all called Second Hand and seem to be sublets they live in while the apartment dwellers are on vacation. Fia tells of the continual packing, unpacking, and cleaning up so it looks as if no one has been staying there. But she doesn't approve of that, so she decides to leave something of hers at each place so the returning inhabitants will know she's been there. The closest place to home for Fia is the cardboard box they use to pack food in each time they move, which she uses for a fort.

Most of the places they move to don't have children for neighbors, but at one place, Fia meets Gustav, and they have fun splashing in the rain together. She is so angry when Papa tells her they are moving again that she bites Papa.

The last place Fia and her papa move to is called First Hand. Her father finally got the paperwork for a place of their own, where they can do whatever they want. Fia celebrates by painting a shining sun on her bedroom wall.

Same-Sex Parents

A girl's mother marries her lesbian partner in *Malins mamma gifter sig med Lisa* (*Malin's Mama Marries Lisa*) by Annette Lundborg and Mimmi Tollerup-Grkovic. Malin lives with her mother and her mother's partner, Lisa. Her father lives with his partner, Niklas, and the two couples are friends. On the wedding day, the couple has typical wedding day jitters.



Lisa and Malin's mother get married in the town hall, with a party afterwards at Malin's house. That night Lisa shares the secret that she is going to have a baby, and lets Malin be the one to tell her mama. They spend the summer in a farmhouse on Gotland, where Malin asks her mama why babies grow in the stomach, and learns about sperm and eggs and the night she was born. It turns out that Niklas is the father of Lisa's baby. Malin's father explains that Niklas wants to be a papa too. The story ends with Malin's happy realization that she's going to be a big sister soon.

New Sibling

In *Rut and Knut and lilla Tjut: Rut and Knut får en syster* (*Rut and Knut and Little Tjut: Rut and Knut Get a Sister*), things change when Tjut arrives. Rut and Knut take care of the baby, while their parents are nearby, as indicated by an occasional hand or shoe. This baby is a handful—going through a thousand diapers, always wetting herself, spitting up, and keeping her siblings awake with her howling.

But when Tjut hides and they can't find her, they realize how much they love her. But soon the rivalry resumes: Tjut gets the best presents, throws food, and takes their toys. But they love her anyway. Rut wants to hold her on her lap, but the baby wants her brother, leading to a fight between the older siblings. The baby joins in, and they come together in an affectionate hug. Until the next stinky poop, when Rut is happy to tell Knut that it's his sister. He cleans her up, Rut gives her ice cream, and they end up sleeping sweetly together all in a bed, until . . .

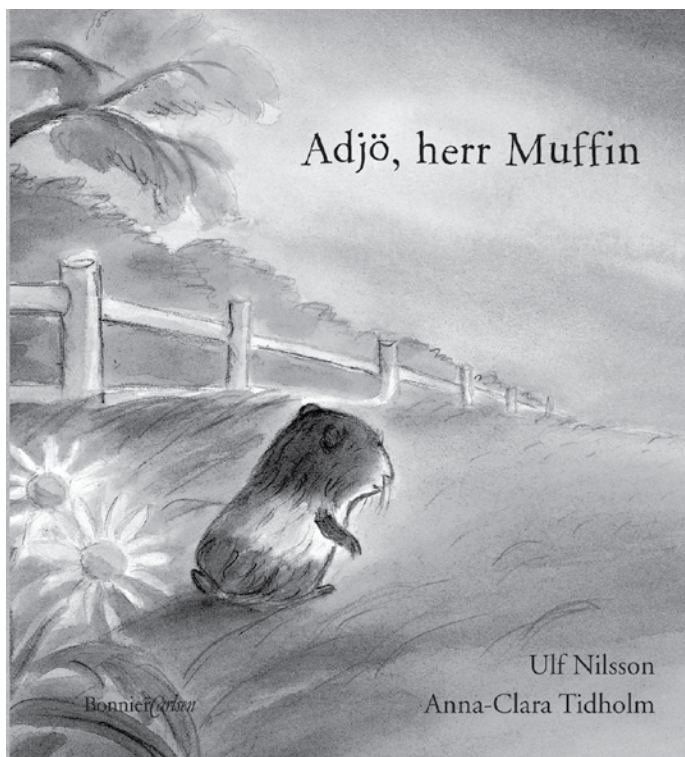
Death

A young girl meets an angel who can bring the dead back to life in *Ängeln Gunnar dimper ner* (*The Angel Gunnar Tumbles Down*) by Barbro Lindgren and Charlotte Ramel. Elin meets the angel Gunnar, who comes down to earth for summer vacation. He sees her crying about her cat, which died when it was hit by a car, and offers to bring it back to life. Once he has accomplished this, he asks if Elin knows anyone else who is grieving and sad, so Elin brings him to a woman who has lost her infant son, Elin's uncle who has lost his dog, a young girl who has lost her mother, and a crow's mate, each time going to the grave and raising the dead. Everyone is overjoyed to see their departed loved ones again. But such a wonderful gift can't go on forever. Gunnar's summer vacation is over, and he must return to heaven. The story ends with Elin and her mother talking about how strange it is that he could bring people back to life but couldn't pull sugar cubes from his ears.

A young boy experiences the death of his guinea pig in *Adjö, herr Muffin* (*Goodbye, Mister Muffin*) written by Ulf Nilsson and illustrated by Anna-Clara Tidholm. Mister Muffin is a guinea pig that lives in a blue cardboard box. Outside the house, there is a cardboard letterbox where he sometimes finds a bit of cucumber, an almond, or a letter.

One day there is a letter from the boy, whose father has told him that Mister Muffin is old and sick and will probably die soon. In a series of letters, the boy communicates his thoughts on death. He wonders whether death is just like a rest, or whether one goes to a better place. We don't know whether Mister Muffin can read or not; he eats the letters. Mister Muffin reflects on his long





and happy life and lists the good things he has been blessed with in his life of seven years, including one very wise and kind wife, six small lovely children, and being cuddled three times a day (7,665 times in his life). But he is in pain, and finally he does lie down on his bed and die. They bury Mister Muffin in the garden, with a few special belongings and the boy's final letter.

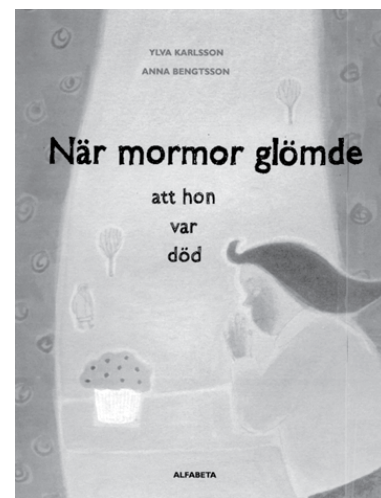
A girl thinks back on her beloved dog's life in *Lina, Gulan och kärleken* (*Lina, Gulan, and Love*) by Max Lundgren and Fibben Hald. This book follows Gulan's life from the time Lina chooses her, the smallest puppy, from all the other golden retriever puppies at the farm where she was born. Lina is an only child and her parents work long hours, so she is lonesome. She begs for several years until her parents finally feel she is old enough to handle the responsibility of owning a dog. Lina wakes up in the middle of the night to put Gulan out, deals with the damage caused by her chewing and digging, and makes Gulan her best friend.

One evening, Mama peeks into Lina's room and sees them both asleep in Lina's bed, Gulan with her nose on Lina's cheek, and thinks, "That is love."

When Gulan is three, she becomes sick and won't eat. They take her to the vet and find that her stomach is full of lumps and that she has only a few weeks to live. Lina realizes that, even though it's the last thing she wants, she must have Gulan put to sleep, for her sake. Lina is at Gulan's side, talking to her as she dies. "You shouldn't be afraid," says Lina. "I am right here. You will always be with me. Always. Always."² Lina never forgets Gulan.

A girl's dead grandmother comes back for a visit in *När mormor glömde att hon var död* (*When Grandmother Forgot that She Was Dead*) by Ylva Karlsson and Anna Bengtsson. Johanna tells about

the time her dead grandmother came for dinner. Johanna sees her coming up the path and is worried that if her father sees her he will be sad, so she takes grandmother for a walk to look for crocuses. Grandma realizes she has forgotten something, and can't recall what. Johanna knows that Grandma has forgotten that she is dead, but doesn't want to tell her because she will be sad if she remembers.



Grandmother wants to go back to her apartment to see if she left herself a note, but Johanna must prevent her, even though it is difficult, since someone else lives there. In Swedish lore, magpies are magical, so when Johanna sees a magpie disappear toward a common area, she thinks that going there might be a solution. She tells Grandma that she has forgotten to look for the spring crocuses that are popping out from the ground.

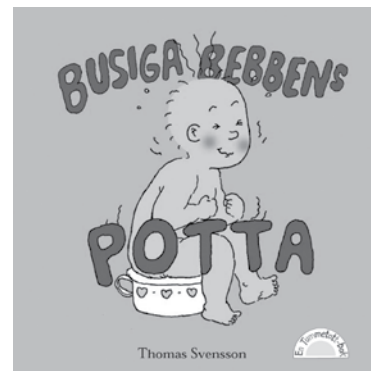
Back at the house, Johanna warns her father, but Grandma knows something is wrong. Has she come on the wrong day? When mama comes home, Grandma apologizes for coming on the wrong day. But Mama looks seriously at her and tells her she shouldn't have come at all. "Mama, you aren't alive anymore," says Mama. Grandma looks terrified.

"Gosh!" she says. "How could I forget that?"

"It doesn't matter," Johanna reassures her. "It was good that you came."³ Grandma says she should probably go, but they beg her to stay, since she's there nevertheless. They play cards, eat fish balls (except for grandmother, who doesn't need to eat but does drink a little coffee). When it's time for her to leave, they hug Grandma for a long time. Johanna asks if she'll come back, but Grandma doesn't think so. She's trying to do less forgetting.

Potty Training

A baby learns to use the potty in the humorously entertaining *Busiga bebbens potta* (*The Rowdy Baby's Potty*) by Thomas Svensson. For each step in the process, the child being read to has a question to answer and a group of images from which to select the answer. First, the baby climbs onto the big potty but falls in. His papa runs to save him. Finally the baby is shown looking at his small potty,



with steam coming out of it. At this point the spread shows the steaming potty on the left-hand page, with the words: “What did baby make in the potty?”⁴ On the right-hand page are four choices—a hot dog, a banana, a cucumber, or two steaming poops.

A Librarian’s Response

I found these books had an openness that I find less common in American books. The issues are there, but are a part of life along with everything else. It was also amusing to me to see how often characters use the toilet in Swedish picture books (other than potty training books). Presumably this is because we all use the toilet many times every day, and some of us do our best thinking on the toilet.

The element of magic appeared in many of the Swedish picture books I read. Magpies, good for making wishes on, appear in *När mormor glömde att hon var död*, and Fia used her magic wand to cure her papa’s lumbago in *Bo här och bo där*. I was surprised at how these elements of magic, along with otherworldly characters such as trolls and angels, were incorporated into these stories dealing with real issues.

Children in Swedish picture books are very comfortable expressing their anger, often in ways that shock American readers. In *Bo här och bo där*, Fia bites her Papa when she has to move away from her new friend. In *Papa kommer*, Axel kicks his father in the shin so hard that it feels like he’s broken his toes, and the troll boy in *Trollpappan* calls his mother a Dumb Old Trollwoman. When I read these stories to my own children, they were shocked that the children would do such things. It’s not that American children don’t kick and bite their parents, but it just doesn’t happen in picture books—probably because we’re afraid of giving children bad ideas.

It’s too bad that these titles aren’t available in English. Along with giving children a taste of life in Sweden, they reinforce the idea that children worldwide experience these difficult childhood issues and find their way through them. ☹

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Illustrated Fiction

The Conundrum of Shelving

Ellen Pozzi

When I used to go into the library to choose picture books to read to my own toddlers, I would occasionally come home with a book that was wonderful, but not appealing to them. Either the subject matter was over their heads, or too mature for them, or the text of the books was so long that all of us fell asleep before we finished the book.

While the format says picture book, the content is juvenile fiction. Instead of calling them picture books, they can be called illustrated fiction books or illustrated literature. Perhaps the most recent and famous example of this genre is the current Caldecott Medal book *The Invention of Hugo Cabret: A Novel in Words and Pictures* by Brian Selznick.

While some libraries shelve illustrated fiction in the picture book section, others shelve them with juvenile fiction. While this works for *Hugo Cabret*, it is most often a messy solution that looks unattractive and doesn't get the books into the right hands any more than shelving them in the picture book section gets them to the right audience.

Because of this, some libraries have created a separate section for illustrated fiction. This solves several problems at once. Juvenile fiction shelves will look neater, wonderful books like Patricia Polacco's *Pink and Say* won't be buried and unused in the picture book section, and it will be easier to persuade older readers to take them out. There may be some resistance from catalogers, but it's worth trying to persuade them to help you develop a separate section for illustrated fiction.

Who is the audience for illustrated fiction, and how can you get

After working as a children's librarian for several years, **Ellen Pozzi** is currently a doctoral candidate studying library science at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. She is a member of the Garden State Children's Book Awards Committee and on the board of the Children's Services Section of the New Jersey Library Association.

the books to circulate now that you have populated your brand new section (or even if they are still shelved in a less than ideal place)? These books can work well for struggling or reluctant readers—those who still need the illustrations to decipher the meaning of the text, but don't want “baby” books. Having illustrated fiction in a separate section eliminates the stigma of reading books for “little kids.” Instead, this can be a place just for them. This also works for English-as-a-second-language students who may need a little boost to get them to the next level of reading.

Try to find ways to connect illustrated literature to curriculum, either for teachers or for homeschooling parents. A colleague

and I did a presentation at the in-service day at her local school district that presented ways illustrated fiction can be used to introduce history, science, math, and multicultural subjects to K–6 students. It was a great way to make contacts with teachers and to booktalk some wonderful books for two hours. They were happy because they were introduced to some new titles and new ideas, and they got a free program for their in-service day.

Don't stop at higher elementary students or middle-school students. Some books are appropriate for high school or even college students. *Motel of the Mysteries* by David Macaulay has been used in introductory anthropology courses in college to explore the idea of interpreting archeological evidence. *The Middle Passage: White Ships/Black Cargo* by Tom Feelings is a wordless book that is a powerful exploration of slavery and should be used only with older middle school students and up. It is shelved with the adult books, but you should draw teachers' attention to it. *Patrol: An American Soldier in Vietnam* by Walter Dean Myers is a great book to begin discussion of war with middle school and high school students.

So go through your collection and pull out those wonderful books that have been pining to get to the right audience and put them in a new home. If you can't talk your library into creating a new section, develop booklists highlighting the collection. But don't let those books languish another day. ☺

Dewey in the Land of Disney

ALA Annual Conference, Anaheim, California, June 2008

All photos by Sharon Verbeten



Palm trees and sun welcomed attendees to ALA Annual Conference in Anaheim, California.



Sun, a good book, and some down time was all it took for this woman to show what librarians are all about—reading!



Leslie Millrod of Westhampton Free Library in Suffolk, New York, displays summer reading paraphernalia at the ALSC Preconference.



A group of young musicians thrilled audiences at the Pura Belpré celebration.



Award-winning author and illustrator Yuyi Morales signs a book for a fan at the Roaring Brook booth in the exhibit hall.



ALSC Marketing Specialist Jenny Najduch, left, greets then ALSC President-Elect Pat Scales at the ALSC 101 gathering.



Kristen Frey of Rocky River, Ohio, meets others at the ALSC 101 program.

Measuring the Effectiveness of Homework Centers in Libraries

Celia Huffman and Robert J. Rua

In 2002, the Maple Heights (Ohio) School District was in a state of academic emergency. The district had performed poorly on its annual assessment, meeting only six of twenty-two requirements on the Ohio Department of Education's State Indicator scale.

Graduation and attendance figures were low as well. There were few, if any, after-school assistance programs in the community to help struggling students. At the time, I was the children's librarian at Cuyahoga County Public Library's Maple Heights Branch. My colleagues and I felt very strongly that something needed to be done to fill the community's after-school void, so in 2003 we established a grassroots out-of-school program (OSP) that we called Homework . . . Y.E.S. (Youth Experiencing Success) (it has since been renamed the Homework Center).

Aside from a \$1,000 grant from Sam's Club, we had very little funding. Like-minded volunteers helped launch the program. Because our budget was fairly small, we had to make creative use of our preexisting core materials and computer terminals.

As the program grew, we continually reevaluated our approach in search of best practices. We established a model consisting of homework time, reading time, and educational activities and began tracking program attendance and effectiveness by hav-

ing participants fill out exit survey forms.

In 2004 we partnered with America Reads, a federal program that collaborates with universities to train—and fund—university students to tutor school-aged urban youth. By partnering with the America Reads program at Cleveland State University, we significantly improved our student-tutor ratio.

The Program Takes Off

America Reads helped our program flourish. In the second year of the program, more than fifteen hundred students visited—a significant increase from the previous year. Our increased attendance and the positive testimonies we were getting from our exit surveys helped us get the attention of the Ohio Library Council, which, in 2004, awarded us with the first-ever Innovation Award for breaking ground in library service. By the next year, we had expanded our program to two additional branches.

During the 2005–06 and 2006–07 school years, we received \$500,000 in funding from the Cuyahoga County Commissioners for the Homework Center as well as several other programs. This allowed us to expand the Homework Center program to additional branches in other academically at-risk communities. Our grassroots project had become a major operation.

Keeping Track

By this time, we became acutely aware of the need to improve our data collection efficiency and tracking efforts. Such data,

Celia Huffman is Youth Services Manager of the Cuyahoga County (Ohio) Public Library. She has worked more than twenty-six years in youth services and is currently pursuing a PhD in education. Robert Rua is a Communications Coordinator with Cuyahoga County Public Library.

we knew, would be valuable in two ways.

It would help satisfy our funders, who wanted to see results from the programs they were supporting, and it also could be used to court future funding sources. In the first few years of the Homework Centers program, we only collected informal qualitative data. When paired with our total attendance figures, this data provided us with solid evidence that the centers were meeting community needs.

It eventually became clear, however, that we needed formal evaluative data as well. Though we were confident that our informal data showed that the Homework Centers were making a difference, we knew evaluative data would help us more convincingly demonstrate their effectiveness to potential supporters.

In time, we developed a valuable and successful methodology that combined qualitative and evaluative data, and it has served us well. In fact, we were able to use the combined data we collected within the past year to secure funding from the Cleveland Foundation, a non-profit organization that supports development in the Greater Cleveland area through grants and endowments.

This is not to say that we've finally arrived at an airtight methodology; we are continually refining our approach in the pursuit of the best possible practices. It is merely to say that, for Cuyahoga County Public Library's Homework Centers, a mixed method approach to data collection has made a significant difference.

Documenting Progress

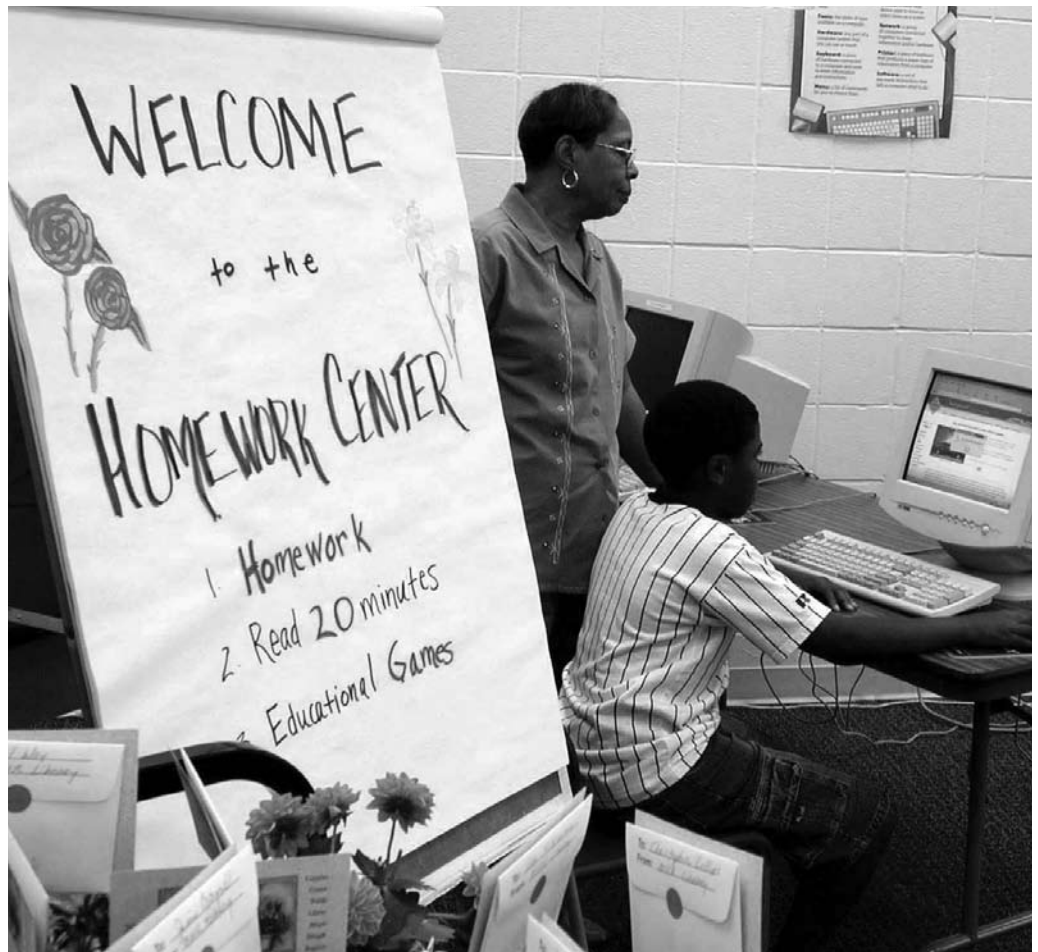
I first became familiar with the process of formulating research permission documents and quantitative and qualitative research methodologies while pursuing a doctoral degree in education at Kent State University. I drew from this experience as we began incorporating evaluative elements into our data collection methodology for the Homework Centers program.

It was also extremely helpful that, as part of the funding we received from the County Commissioners, we were able to consult with Kent State researchers who happened to be working on various projects

with Cuyahoga County's Family and Children First Council. The consultants supplied invaluable input as we began developing working survey documents for the families and children served by our centers.

We developed three documents to support our data collection efforts, the first of which was an intake survey. In this document we asked parents/guardians to indicate their child's grade level and gender and why they felt their child should come to the Homework Center. We asked them to circle as many of the following reasons as they felt were applicable to their child:

- To do homework
- To get help with reading
- To get help for a test
- Because he/she has nothing else to do
- Because I make him/her come
- Because there's no one else to help with homework after school
- To get help with math



Each Homework Center session is broken up into three segments: homework help, twenty minutes of reading, and educational games.

- Because his/her friend is going

We also added an “Other” line so the parent or guardian could fill in a reason not included in our list.

These questions were followed by a series of eight additional questions in which the parent or guardian was asked to indicate their answer on a Likert scale from one to seven. Circling a 1 would indicate “No, not at all,” while circling a 7 would indicate “Yes, absolutely;” circling a 3 would indicate an answer of “Sometimes;” and circling any of the remaining numbers would indicate varying degrees in between.

We qualified the series of questions with the text “Right now, at this time,” to indicate that the parent or guardian’s responses were to reflect the child’s status prior to entering the Homework Center program. The questions were as follows:

- My child needs help to understand his/her homework better
- My child’s grades need improvement
- My child complains about school
- My child and I argue a lot at home about homework
- My child attends school regularly with few absences
- My child has missed assignments at school
- My child regularly spends time every day on homework
- I spend time at home helping my child with homework

At the end of our intake survey document, we invited parents and guardians to write their questions and concerns on a blank space.

Our original exit survey document, in its beta format, was divided into two separate parts, one for the parents and guardians to fill out and one for the children. For the parents or guardians survey, we asked respondents to indicate how many times their child had visited the Homework Center during the school year and repeated the entire series of eight questions from the intake survey. This was done for the purpose of tracking any variance in each respondent’s answers from the initial survey. However, for the exit survey, we prefaced the eight questions with the phrase, “Since coming to the Homework Center,” naturally, to indicate that the parent or guardian responses were to reflect the child’s status after having participated in the Homework Center program.

We also asked parents or guardians whether they would recommend the Homework Center to another parent or child and what they liked best about having their child come to the Homework Center. Respondents were instructed to circle as many of the following answers as they wished:

- Getting help with homework

- Getting help with reading
- Getting help with math
- Working with a tutor
- Doing homework with other kids
- Reading with a tutor/coach
- Playing educational games

At the end of the document we once again left space for the parent or guardian to share questions and concerns.

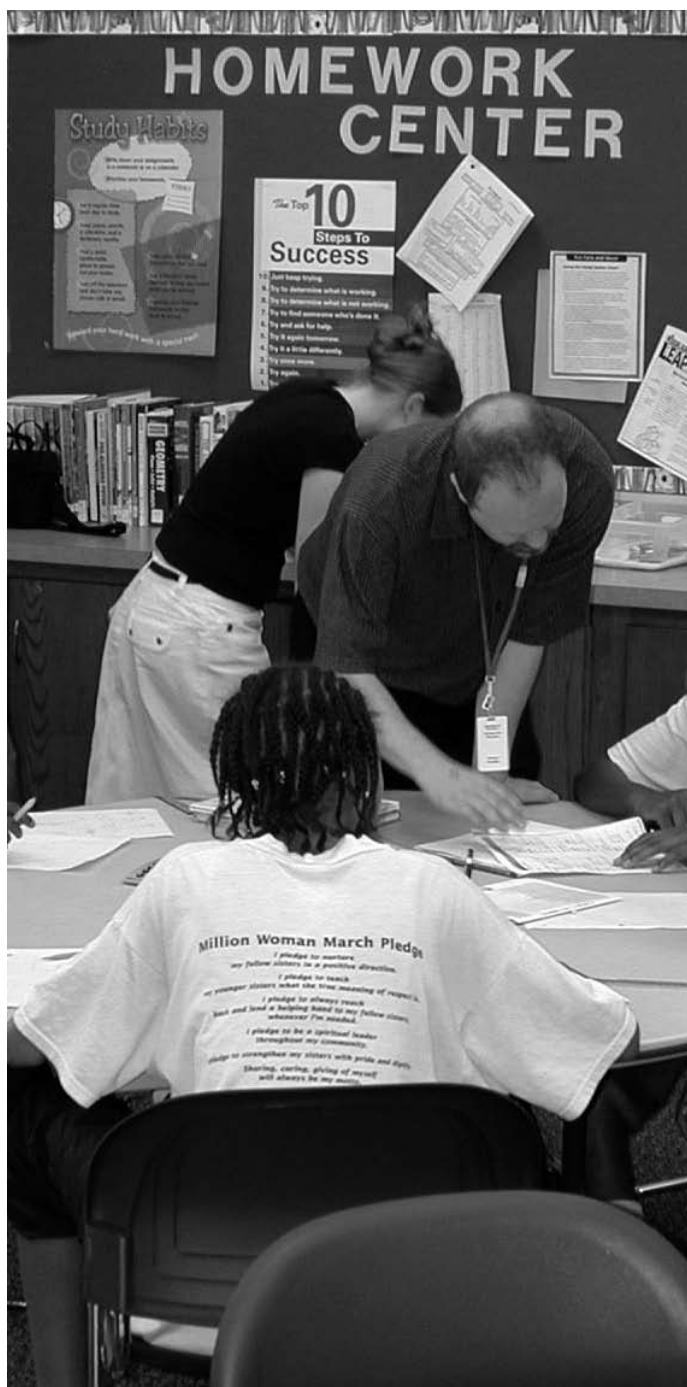
For the child’s exit survey, we repeated many of the questions from the parent or guardian survey to see how their answers compared. We also asked the children to indicate what they liked best about the Homework Center and how they found out about the program. Again, we asked a series of questions to be weighted 1–7. The children’s survey contained nine questions:

- My tutor helped me understand my homework better
- My grades are better
- I like school better
- My parents and I argue a lot at home about homework
- I have missed fewer days of school
- I have missed fewer assignments at school
- I spend time every day doing homework
- My parents/guardians help me with my homework
- I would tell my friends about the Homework Center

At the end of the survey, we invited the child to write additional comments about their experience.

Our initial, pilot plan was to use these documents at one of our Homework Centers in December 2006, when we broke for the holidays, and again in May 2007. We rolled out the surveys in December, but when we gathered with our consultants in February 2007 to look at the first data collection results, it was apparent that we were not getting the data for which we had hoped, both in terms of quality and quantity. It was clear that our questions were not being fully understood by the survey respondents.

Conversations with the beta test site’s Homework Center coordinator and supervising children’s librarian also revealed unanticipated language barrier problems. To complicate matters further, our Homework Center staff members were also encountering difficulties in connecting face-to-face with participating parents and families. It was clear that our strategy needed revision.



Homework Center Coordinator Jim Crayne works one-on-one with a student.

Back to the Drawing Board

For our second data collection effort in May 2007, we conducted telephone surveys and gathered data from parents only. This was not a decision taken lightly. We were not trying to indicate that parent data was necessarily more valuable than that of the kids. But there were pragmatics involved, such as trying to get solid telephone interview data from kids.

In addition, given the limited time at the end of the season that coordinators have to collect the data—just two weeks among other program wrap-up responsibilities—it was also a practical

adjustment. Our survey documents were modified in accordance with this new approach and with these realities in place.

For the series of eight questions in the exit survey, we decided to do away with the Likert scale approach, since respondents found it confusing. Instead, we opted for a simple “yes or no” format, and questions were altered slightly to accommodate this new approach. We incorporated the qualifying sentence, “Since coming to the Homework Centers,” into each of the eight questions—in the first version of our document, it was placed before the series of questions, where it was often overlooked.

The telephone survey approach proved much more successful in garnering participation, and it allowed us to collect more useful data for comparison and analysis. Undoubtedly, the success of this approach is largely due to the diligence of our staff members in obtaining the survey data, but it is also a result of the support and collaboration we enjoy with the local school districts in the communities that our Homework Centers serve.

Our branch managers contacted the district superintendents during the summer to garner the school systems’ support for the student grade report collation. We shared our permission letter, procedures and logistics letter, and survey documents with them to secure their comfort in releasing student records, and to reassure them that their students’ FERPA rights, guaranteed by the federal government, would be honored. All of this documentation was shared with the schools via file transfer for easy duplication.

2007–08 Data Results

During the 2007–08 school year, our nine Homework Centers served 818 individual students, hosted 12,225 total student visits, and experienced 3,735 total tutor visits. Within this context, we also had 18,353 instances of students receiving tutor subject assistance. Of this number, 7,671 were for language arts assistance, 7,438 were for math, 1,460 for social studies, and 1,281 for science. We also used an “Other” category to represent subject areas not listed above, such as foreign language. We recorded 503 instances of student assistance in this category.

The most populous grade levels served were fourth graders (113 students), followed closely by fifth graders (111 students), third graders (ninety-five students), second graders (ninety students), and sixth graders (eighty-four students). Our nine Homework Centers served twenty-four separate communities and students from 118 distinct school buildings. This data has been gathered yearly since our Homework Centers came into existence. More specific data was gathered by the two beta centers that participated in the detailed research process below.

Our 2007–08 research study results for October 2007 through May 2008 were garnered from a sample of thirty-nine parent or guardian participants, 49 percent girls and 51 percent boys, spanning grades K–10. One hundred percent of the parents and

guardians who completed the survey indicated that their child understood his or her homework better, 79 percent indicated that their child's grades had improved, 79 percent responded that their child was spending time on homework daily, and 49 percent felt their child complained less about school (it is important to note that an additional 38 percent of respondents said that their child did not complain about school prior to attending the Homework Center).

In addition, 47 percent of parents felt that they argued less with their child over homework, which in turn made for a more positive home environment (again, an additional 38 percent of respondents said their child did not argue prior to attending the Homework Center). The correlation between Homework Center attendance and school attendance was inconclusive, with 18 percent responding that it made a positive difference, and 56 percent responding that their child's school attendance was unrelated to Homework Center attendance.

When we asked parents and guardians why they decided to send their child to our Homework Center, the top responses were as follows:

- To do their homework (95 percent)
- To get help with math (77 percent)
- To get better grades (74 percent)
- To get help for a test (67 percent)
- To get help with reading (21 percent)

When we asked them the things they liked best about their child's participation in the Homework Center program, the top replies were as follows:

- Working with a tutor (97 percent)
- Getting help with homework (92 percent)
- Getting help with math (62 percent)
- Doing homework with other kids (28 percent)

Using the Data

With two years of data collection now accomplished, I feel confident about applying our survey approach in all nine of our Homework Centers, a task that we'll begin in fall 2008. It will be interesting to see the comparison data as we move toward the future. We will be multiplying our previous efforts at least fourfold, so we're going to end up with a lot of information to sort through. The question arises, what do we do with all of it?

We use our data to provide a regular measure of the work we are doing and to identify where we need to make improvements

and adjustments. For instance, our data helped us recognize the need to expand our Homework Center materials collection. A high percentage of respondents said their child used the Homework Center program to receive math assistance. So, to meet their needs and to support our math tutors, we purchased additional print and nonprint math materials.

Similarly, many of our respondents said their child visited the Homework Center to prepare for Ohio's statewide achievement tests. Having identified the demand, we were able to furnish the center with the appropriate support materials. In addition, the data we obtained from the parent or guardian feedback section of our survey has afforded us with many useful suggestions about our collections, staffing, and overall operating practices.

We also use the data to report to our current funders concerning the goals we have set and the outcomes we have projected. For example, in the 2007–08 school year, our goals included helping youth better understand their homework, helping them improve their grades, getting students to spend time on their homework daily, and helping them feel better about their school experiences.

Our additional projected outcomes included helping to facilitate a more positive family home environment through reduction of homework struggles, encouraging more regular school attendance, and family participation in literacy development through programs and book distribution. We planned a 40 percent increase in each of these areas. Because of our data collection efforts, at the end of the school year we had concrete numbers to demonstrate the success of our efforts to our funders.

We also use this data as we approach future funding sources. However, it should be noted that we do not limit the data application only to our Homework Centers but also, for example, to demonstrate our broad effectiveness in providing a variety of out-of-school-time programming for youth. In addition, we use this data to show our awareness of the necessity of data collection and reporting. Increasing demands for accountability require that requests for funding dollars are handled with the serious respect they deserve. We anticipate that these measures will result in additional successful grant applications in the future.

Don't Be Afraid to Experiment

Too many librarians are involved in "reinventing the wheel." Feel free to use and modify these documentation methods in ways that will support and demonstrate the effectiveness of the programs that *you* offer. In whatever application you choose, I recommend starting in small and manageable ways that give you an opportunity to test your data collection process and survey documents. Inevitably, tweaking and adjustments will be necessary to measure your programs effectively. Remember that data collection should be a fluid, ever-evolving process. ☺

Storyville USA

Library Mini-Town Bustles in Baltimore

Ruth Schaefer

Photos by Ruth Schaefer and courtesy of Baltimore County Public Library

A new town officially opened February 2008 on the east side of Baltimore County. It doesn't show up on MapQuest, and unobservant travelers might drive right by. But once visitors arrive, they never want to leave.

No one can live permanently in the town of Storyville, the colorful, child-sized village of reading, fun, and learning built inside the Rosedale branch of the Baltimore County Public Library (BCPL). Specially designed to help parents and caregivers prepare their young children for school, the "literacy wonderland," to quote a reporter, has become an exceedingly popular and successful destination.

Bloggers, YouTubers, radio and TV announcers, and members of the press have been active spreading the good word about BCPL's unique 2,240-square-foot, interactive townscape of hands-on play stations for babies and preschoolers (ages 0–5) to explore with grown-ups at their side. Simultaneously stimulating, entertaining, and educational, Storyville incorporates research-based activities and experiences that form the core of early childhood development and school readiness.

Designed to simulate life in a small town, up and down Storyville Lane children and adults together mimic everyday life in the sturdy, two-story house, theater, combination store



A peek inside the colorful walls of Storyville.

and post office, construction site, Chesapeake Bay waterfront, baby garden, and, of course, library—naturally located in the center of town.

No other town provides places where babies engage in peek-a-

Ruth Schaefer works in marketing and development for Baltimore County (Md.) Public Library.



Melina takes her baby for a ride in Storyville.

boo, play with colorful toys, or look at board books under the watchful eyes of a friendly rabbit nestled among colorful flowers; walkers and talkers crawl through a fallen tree trunk, read in a lighthouse, rock in a boat, go fishing, and peer into tidal pools; preschoolers prepare lunch in the cottage, perform onstage in custom-made dress-up clothes and present puppet shows in the theater, weigh their produce for dinner in the store, and practice building at the construction site. The library, stocked with a variety of children's books and furnished with comfortable seating, beckons all ages to read together.

Each of the seven themed areas, designed with the ages and stages of a child's development and literacy skills in mind, provides age-appropriate books, materials, and activities that promote language and literacy, as well as other vital school readiness skills. The centers provide numerous opportunities for the development of counting, number and letter recognition, and other skills. Parent resource materials and themed take-home kits are available for checkout.

No wonder visitors of all ages are reluctant to leave at closing time and return to their own home. After exploring the kitchen and its amenities, one mother remarked, "If it weren't for the fact that I am way too tall for the kitchen, I think I could live here."

Touring Storyville

As soon as news about Storyville spread, citizens from across Baltimore County and far beyond its borders came for a tour of this pint-sized community, unique among public libraries in Maryland and perhaps nationwide. After its official opening in February, Storyville has averaged close to seven thousand visitors per month. At this rate, by the end of 2008, Storyville is expected to welcome its fifty thousandth visitor.

The official opening of Storyville culminated a dream come true for BCPL staff involved in this ambitious undertaking. The

imaginative project had been adopted three years before by the Foundation for Baltimore County Public Library, headed by Debbie Thomas, former Resource Enhancement director, and Jeffrey Herschman, foundation president, acting on a vision conceived by BCPL's former assistant director Lynn Lockwood. The foundation's fundraising efforts were a major source of financial support in Storyville's development and creation. BCPL staff members involved included Marisa Conner, youth services coordinator; Rosedale Library Manager Judy Kaplan, Beth Babikow, former manager of facilities projects; Mary Hastler, former assistant director; and Michele Presley, Storyville coordinator.

"The community's overwhelmingly positive response to Storyville has been gratifying," Herschman said. "We're so pleased that people are as excited about Storyville as we have

been. It's amazing that we'll have fifty thousand visits in less than a year of operation!"

Storyville's Effect

In the month following Storyville's opening, the effect on library business levels and staffing became evident. Like the library, which added Sunday service, Storyville provides sixty-nine



An enthusiastic Jason mans the cash machine in Storyville.



A young visitor weighs fruit on the produce scales.

hours of service a week. Initially Storyville averaged 277 visitors a day, the highest being 421. Since its opening, visitors have come from more than 160 different ZIP codes, many of them new customers coming to the Rosedale Library for the first time.

With a comfortable maximum capacity of sixty-five to seventy, waiting lists occur for some of the busiest times, when groups agreeably wait in the children's area of the library and take advantage of the children's collection and the Early Literacy Activity Centers located there. As a welcome result, door counts, circulation, and customer service statistics have surged.

"Certainly as a result of Storyville, door count increased 50 percent from January by 10,587," Kaplan said. "Items loaned also showed a substantial increase, rising from 19,648 in



Perhaps its best mission? Storyville provides a cozy place to read!

January to 22,128 in February, a 12.6 percent increase." In collections related to early childhood alone, picture books showed a circulation increase of 78 percent, up from 1,047 in January to 1,866 in February. There has been a 21.6 percent increase in borrowing of library materials for young children since Storyville opened, compared to the same period in the prior year.

All of Rosedale's staff share responsibilities associated with Storyville's operation. Typically, one person serves as a greeter, who registers visitors and another roves throughout Storyville, although busy times may require more people. Constant wiping up to assure cleanliness, tidying up, and returning play materials to their proper venue are among the ongoing, requisite activities (even when the important learning concept of children cleaning up their playthings is conveyed).

The "Sanitize Me" bin placed at the exit demonstrates respect for the reality that children learn in part by placing objects in their mouth. Plans have successfully grown to develop a corps of volunteers, including appropriate candidates from nearby high schools and a community college.

The \$700,000 town of Storyville was designed by the architectural firm of James Bradberry and Associates, constructed by Lynch Exhibits, and built with donations to the Foundation for BCPL from private sources, individual, and state funds, and a bond bill grant for \$250,000. Plans to build West Side Storyville on the opposite side of the county in the

Woodlawn Library are underway. ☺

If you're in the vicinity of Baltimore, stop in and play awhile. To take a virtual tour, visit www.bcplstoryville.org/storyville_tour.html.

No wonder visitors of all ages are reluctant to leave at closing time and return to their own home. After exploring the kitchen and its amenities, one mother remarked, "If it weren't for the fact that I am way too tall for the kitchen, I think I could live here."

Setting Up Camp

Prepping the Library for Science Camps

Linda Staskus

Science day camp for children entering grades 4–6 in the fall. A library program? It can't be possible. What an outrageous idea! Would anyone come to the library for two hours a day for five consecutive days?

It's not as outrageous as it seems. In August 2008, the Parma-South Library branch of the Cuyahoga County (Ohio) Public Library offered its third science day camp—Operation: Monster Storms—for upper elementary school children. Registration closed just three days after it opened. What could possibly be the attraction? It's hands-on science with stories, music, and art projects, too. It's an opportunity to explore without the pressure of homework, grades, or tests.

Laying the Groundwork

Children's departments in public libraries have been offering programs for school-age children for decades. But most of the programs have had a direct relationship to books, encouraging children to develop their reading skills and introducing them to the world through books. In fall 2005, the opportunity arose to present a totally different type of program in the library. Through a partnership with the Center for Science and Mathematics Education (CSME) at Case Western Reserve University (CWRU),

Cuyahoga County Public Libraries were asked to be partners in presenting the JASON Project expeditions and Immersion Presents—as public programs. Both programs were developed by famed scientist Robert Ballard.

The JASON Project allows middle school students to participate in science as it occurs on real expeditions. JASON allows for real-time interaction between students and scientists through online video and through e-mail. It develops further into a curriculum program in which schools could participate. Materials include access to the JASON website, a teacher's manual, and a video or DVD to be used in the classroom. JASON does not concern itself solely with science, but also covers mathematics, literature, art, and music.

The JASON programs currently available are Monster Storms and Operation: Resilient Planet. Registration to the project site (www.jason.org) is free, and teacher and student manuals can be purchased online. These programs are year-long science curricula intended for middle-school students; however, the programs can be modified for upper elementary students using the Primarily JASON section on the website.

Immersion Presents programs were originally developed for the Boys and Girls Clubs. However, the programs can be used in the classroom, in science clubs, and in after-school settings. Along with the website, instructors are provided with a DVD and a CD with support materials. The available programs are Adventures to the Black Sea and Eastern Mediterranean, Titanic Live!, Life at the Extremes, Dolphins, Ancient Eruptions, Secrets of the Gulf, and Monterey Bay. To contact the Immersion Presents program, visit www.immersionpresents.org.

Linda Staskus is Public Services Supervisor, Children, at the Parma-South branch of the Cuyahoga County (Ohio) Public Library.

Getting Started

The CSME at CWRU waived the fees for the instructor training sessions and the JASON and Immersion Presents materials and websites. This was a great benefit to the library because we had access to both the print and online materials to use for programming throughout the year.

Several two-hour programs were offered through the year to gather interest in science programming and to practice putting science programs together. Children who attended these programs were fully engaged in hands-on science activities. They enjoyed activities like the egg drop, flying rockets using a device called an “uberflyer” to hit a target, swimming like dolphins, and landing on Mars and taking a core sample using a candy bar for the Martian planet. These programs served as practice sessions for putting together the science day camps.

Creating a Summer Day Camp

The biggest challenge was to create and offer a weeklong summer day camp. The day camp was to be five days long, two hours each day. We wanted to create a highly interactive hands-on science program for children entering grades 4–6 in the fall.

At the onset, we did not know if we were going to receive any grant funding. The CSME was applying for a grant, but the answer would come just before the camps were to take place. We went ahead with our plans with the hope that the funding would be received.

The planning for day camp began in October, after the program orientation occurred at the CSME. The library’s meeting room is booked for the entire week. The day camps have an emphasis on local history and concerns. For Shipwreck Camp!, the emphasis was on Great Lakes shipping. For Wetlands Camp, we used the wetlands area adjoining the library as an outdoor lab. For Operation: Monster Storms, local historic weather events were explored.

Then the difficult and exciting part of the project began. Each camp had basic requirements—a week-long project, an art project, a literature component, a music component, hands-on activities, short videos, and guest speakers. A book and audio-visual display was set up where kids could browse or check out materials.

The day camps were supported by a combination of grant money and program support funds from the Friends of the Parma Libraries. Promotion was done through the Parma-South Library summer children’s flyer and on the CCPL website www.cuyahogalibrary.org.

Program attendance was intentionally small. If one person presented the camp, then only fifteen to twenty children could be managed comfortably. The day camps involved a lot of interaction, and the campers often needed help with activities.

General Timeline for Day Camps

October

- Program training at the CSME.
- Book meeting room. Begin thinking about program elements.

October—January

- Begin looking for program elements in the JASON/Immersion Presents materials, library collection and online sources, and check into local resources.
- Gather ideas that are age and skill appropriate.

January

- Status of funding. Grant money? Friends funds?
- Begin contacting potential guest speakers.

January–May

- Begin organizing program as well as purchasing and collecting equipment and supplies.
- Perform hands-on activities to make sure they work.

April

- Make sure event is listed in children’s summer flyers and online.

June

- Purchase supplies for hands-on activities.
- Write orientation letter for parents.
- Begin organizing supplies.
- Make models for campers to use as visual guides.

Week before camp

- Make sure equipment and supplies are on hand.
- Organize supplies so that they are readily available.
- Make reminder calls to campers.

Day before camp

- Set up meeting room with tables, chairs, whiteboard, and a CD player.
- Decorate meeting room with posters and display items.
- Have materials organized.
- Print out registration list.

Long-range planning paid off, since different aspects of the camp could be worked out individually and integrated into the general plan.

Here's a glimpse of three camps we sponsored.

Summer 2006: Shipwrecks! Camp

Before we began organizing Shipwrecks! Camp, we contacted the Western Reserve Historical Society, which provided leads to local organizations that present programs as well as information about two local maritime museums—The Great Lakes Historical Society's Inland Seas Maritime Museum in Vermilion, Ohio, and the Ashtabula Maritime Museum in Ashtabula, Ohio.

Four guest presenters (paid through grant funds) each gave forty-five-minute presentations at day camp. The Great Lakes Science Center presented hands-on science activities. Carrie Sowden, a scuba diver from Peachman Diving, talked about scuba diving and searching for shipwrecks in the Great Lakes. Erie Wrecks, another scuba diving organization, spoke about finding shipwrecks in the Great Lakes. Both organizations brought interesting realia. Dennis Hale, sole survivor of a lake freighter sinking on Lake Huron, also spoke to the groups.

For the week-long project, the children were to build a model boat. Many of the commercial plastic boat kits available were too detailed and complicated for ages 9–11. Through online research, we found Bearco Marine, which sold wooden lake freighter models suitable for that age group. They provided plans to build a model of the Edmund Fitzgerald, including which color of spray paint to purchase plus the appropriate decals. Models were purchased with grant monies.

For hands-on activities, every day, the children spent some time actively doing experiments. For the most part, the activities involved inexpensive recyclable or readily available materials. In addition to the planned activities, there were some random activities available for those who had finished their activity and wanted to do something while waiting for others to finish.

We found some simple instructions for knot tying (because all sailors know their knots!). Each child was provided with a yard-long piece of rope and instructions in their project folder. Most of the knots, such as the square knot and the bowline, were simple, but a more complicated knot was included for those who wanted a challenge.

Another random activity was a jigsaw puzzle map of Great Lake shipwrecks. The puzzle was placed on a table for anyone to work on when they had time.

For this first day camp, we purchased drinks and snacks for the campers, but this proved to be more expensive than the supplies for the activities.

The hands-on activities were selected from both JASON and

Immersion Presents programs. The activities chosen had to be meaningful and comprehensible to children in upper elementary school.

At the Inland Seas Maritime Museum, we found posters, charts, a jigsaw puzzle, and a Great Lakes music CD to round out the program.

The last thing we prepared was a letter to parents explaining the goals of the day camp. Before day camp began, supplies were purchased and organized. The meeting room was decorated with posters and nautical realia.

Summer 2007: Wetlands Camp

With the success of our previous camp and the demand for another the following summer, we immediately began preparing our next venture—Wetlands Camp.

Grant money was not available, so some cost-cutting was made. To decrease the expense of food, children would have to supply their own snack at break time. And only one guest speaker (who spoke for free) was invited to present a program. A Cleveland Metroparks Ranger brought in a table model of water flow. Any required supplies were purchased using funds provided for the Parma-South Library's children's department from the Friends of the Parma Libraries.

For Wetlands Camp, the week-long activity was to learn to keep a scientific journal. Each camper received a small spiral notebook to fill in information daily. The students made insect sun catchers for the art project, and Cajun music was played during breaks, since the study of wetlands focused on the Louisiana wetlands. The most popular part of camp involved exploring the wetlands adjacent to the library.

Summer 2008: Operation: Monster Storms

After the fall orientation session at the Center for Science and Mathematics, planning for Operation: Monster Storms began slowly in the fall and was worked on during the winter and spring as time allowed. This is a new JASON Project under the auspices of the National Geographic Society.

With the change in sponsorship also came a change in the structure of the program. It seemed to be more classroom oriented with fewer hands-on activities suitable for the upper primary grades. Children needed to learn the basic concepts of meteorology so they could understand monster storms. To have a local focus in the program, Ohio "monster" storms were showcased, including the 1969 Xenia tornado, the blizzard of 1978, and the Independence Day storm of 1969.

A weather station, purchased with grant funds, was installed on the roof of the Parma-South Library with the remote read-out located in the meeting room. Grant funds also supported the purchase of some unique weather games such as Weather

Setting Up Camp

Bingo, Wild Weather cards, the Scientific American Weather Quiz deck, and the Clever Catch Weather Ball.

As it turned out, Operation: Monster Storms would have a stronger emphasis on recording daily weather data, hands-on activities, and making simple weather instruments such as a barometer, an anemometer, a wind vane, and a rain gauge.

Assessing the Camps

Our science day camps have been very successful. One important aspect in the planning of the program is to have the luxury of time, allowing planning to be done when time was available.

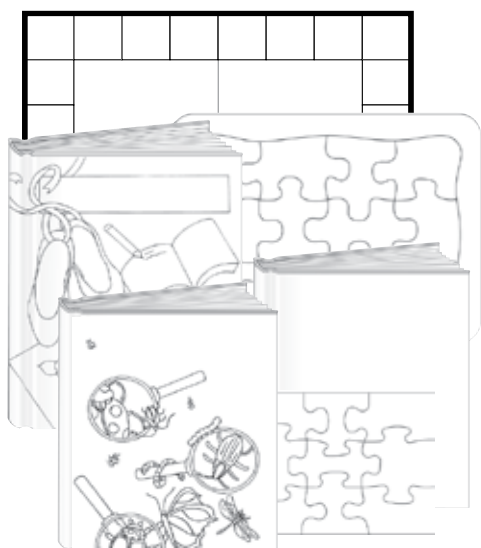
Activities could be considered and discarded if something better was found or if the activity proved to be too dull, complicated, or expensive. If we had grant monies, we took advantage of that opportunity to invite speakers and obtain more expensive

materials such as basic science equipment, which could be used in future science programming.

If we had to depend solely on the program support funds from the Friends of the Parma Libraries, we chose activities using recyclable materials or materials readily found at home.

Science programming does attract a different audience from typical library programs. These children usually have an interest in science and are somewhat independent. Since the group is small, the children make friends easily and work well in teams. Working in teams of two or four allows the children to explore without being on the spot if their experiment did not turn out "right."

This experience of summer science day camps has proven to be very rewarding. It just takes an interest in science, time for planning, and having the goal to share knowledge and experiences with children in an active and friendly manner.



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The Flowered Couch

A Foundation for Early Literacy and a Haven from Storms

Heather McNeil

I love my job. I get to be with children and books all day. I can act silly with books, be creative with books, and get others excited about books. I can recommend books, read aloud books, and laugh, cry, shiver, and dream with books.

I also love my job as a parent. Well, most of the time. Okay, fine, some of the time. My daughter is now ten, and the days I remember as easy and filled with cuddles and laughter are gone, replaced with struggles for independence and arguments that have no purpose other than just another chance to get in the sandbox.

But we have a haven, and that is the flowered couch next to the fireplace. That's where we curl up with our books (usually about horses) to read aloud, or in silence. "Listen to this," says Jamie, and she shares something that has made her laugh or ponder. "Listen to this," I say, and I share a paragraph that has touched my heart or amused my mind. We are comfortable, involved, and safe with books.

I think about how reading became our shelter from the storms. I began Jamie's life with books right from the day she was adopted in Vietnam, at the adorable age of three months. And without realizing what I was doing, because I didn't know the names for them yet, I brought her to the joy of reading by growing the six early literacy skills. All I knew was we were reading, rhyming, singing, and playing with books.

But now, when I teach Magic of Early Reading workshops for parents and caregivers, and hand out American Library Association's Every Child Ready to Read @ your library® brochures, and create rhyme sheets with early literacy tips for the parents at my Toddlin' Tales story time, I realize that these

skills played a very important role in Jamie's development as a reader.

Narrative Skills

One day I was driving somewhere (aren't we always driving somewhere?) with my then three-year-old daughter in her car seat. I was trying to keep her awake until we got home so she would then take her nap, and I could accomplish the thirty-eight chores that needed accomplishing. So, together, we were making up a story.

"Once upon a time there was a—," I began.

"Mouse," says Jamie.

"And what is the mouse wearing?" I ask.



Heather McNeil is Youth Services Coordinator for Deschutes Public Library in Bend, Oregon. She is also a storyteller and the author of two collections of folklore, *Hyena and the Moon: Stories to Tell from*

Kenya, and *The Celtic Breeze: Stories of the Otherworld from Scotland, Ireland, and Wales*. You can reach Heather with your own stories of early literacy, or weathering the storms of parenthood, at heatherm@dpls.us.



Ten-year-old Jamie and I share laughter and *A Horse of Her Own* by Annie Wedekind on the flowered couch.

“A red hat.”

“And what is the mouse doing?”

“Walking his cat.”

“What color cat?”

“Pink.”

“And where are they going on this walk?”

“To the ocean!”

I don't remember all the details of this story, but what I do remember was her surprising creativity and the pride she took in coming up with the ideas, and in making me giggle or gasp when I heard what she said. To this day, I have a very clear image in my mind of a mouse walking his pink cat while ocean breezes blow away the hat.

I also remember making up our own version of the *Three Little Pigs* when we were trapped together in a steamy bathroom, and Jamie was recovering from the barking seal coughs of croup. Our story had only a glancing resemblance to the original folktale, and the pigs had plenty of attitude. She named them Tony, Bologna, and Boobooshots. I have no idea where those names came from, but I remember that she was able to have fun even though she felt miserable. A shelter amid the storm.

Both of these personal experiences are examples of narrative skills, the ability to tell stories, to put things in sequence, describe things, and explain events. Young children need to understand that a story has a beginning, middle, and end. If they are able to tell about the trip they took to the pet store with their preschool, or make up a story about a dinosaur who likes to blow bubbles, or create their own version of a fairy tale, then understanding how a book works and learning how to read will make a great deal more sense to them. So Jamie made up stories about precocious pigs and adventurous mice, and now she writes stories about galloping horses and friendships at the stables.

Phonological Awareness

Phonological awareness is another of the early literacy skills, and it means hearing and playing with the smaller sounds in words. It means rhyming and playing with the parts of words.

The first book my daughter “read” was *What Did You Put in Your Pocket* by Beatrice Schenk de Regniers. She was four, and we had read the book aloud 9,587 times—at least. Everything about this book makes it just right for encouraging a child to read on her own. It repeats. It has a predictable pattern. The illustrations are crazy and colorful. And the story is *fun*, with silly words that stick in your head.

What did you put in your pocket? What did you put in your pocket? What did you put in your pocket, early Monday morning?

I put in some slushy glushy pudding. I put in some slushy glushy pudding. Slushy glushy pudding, early Monday morning.

The story continues to include nicy icy water, fluppy gluppy potatoes, slurpy gurpy ice cream, and so on, ending with “a spinky spanky handkerchief early Sunday morning.” We had read it together, and we'd talked about the delightful squishiness of putting floppy potatoes in our pockets, and we'd chanted the chant when we had a bowl of ice cream. I knew Jamie had parts of it memorized. But then, one day, Jamie sat beside me on the flowered couch and said, “I want to read it. By myself.” And she did, from beginning to end. By herself.

Being a librarian, but mostly a mother, I went insane. We called her grandmother. I hugged Jamie. She read it again. I hugged her some more. It was glorious.

I am reminded of a wonderful quote from Mem Fox in her book *Reading Magic: Why Reading Aloud to Our Children Will Change Their Lives Forever*, in which she calls reading aloud a “delicious chocolate kind of experience.” On that day, I felt bathed in a chocolate fountain.



Reading *Guess How Much I Love You* by Sam McBratney to six-month-old Jamie during our first visit to her grandmother's house in South Dakota.

Vocabulary

One day I came home from work and was met by a sniffly three-year-old Jamie. “I have the wheezles and sneezles,” she whispered. I knew exactly what she meant, thanks to “Sneezles,” a poem by A. A. Milne that we had

read often. Jamie's nanny described the quiet day they had shared, while I sat on the flowered couch and held my daughter.

Jamie relished the poems by Milne because of their lovely cadence and delightful choice of words. "The King's Breakfast" was read daily for many months, until both Jamie and I could recite it by heart. And, of course, the phrase, "Could I have some butter for / The Royal slice of bread?" became a common question at meals.

Her favorite was "Pinkle Purr." "Tattoo was the mother of Pinkle Purr, / A little black nothing of feet and fur; / And by-and-by, when his eyes came through, / He saw his mother, the big Tattoo. / And all that he learned he learned from her. / 'I'll ask my mother,' says Pinkle Purr." As I re-read the poem for this article, I was humbled by another layer of meaning, so apropos for our current stage of life. "And whenever he thought of a thing to do, / He didn't much bother about Tattoo, / For he knows it's nothing to do with her, / So, 'See you later,' says Pinkle Purr."

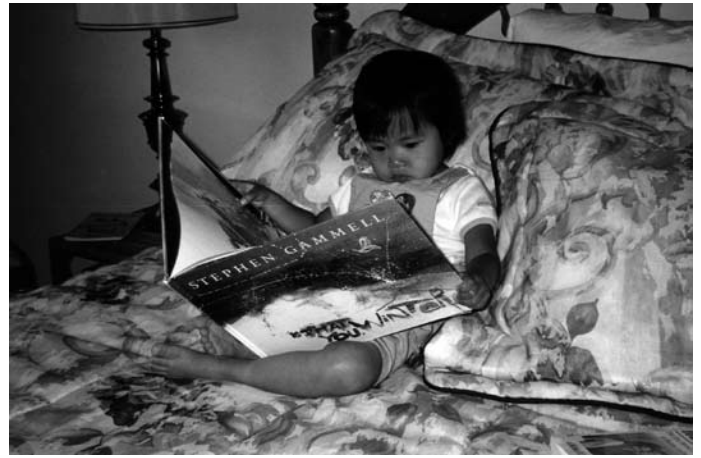
The vocabulary we find in quality literature tucks into a child's spongy brain and grows with them. It helps them describe, understand, and respond. Jamie could have said, "I have a cold," just as Rudyard Kipling could have said, "There was once an elephant with a short nose." But instead we clearly remember wheezles and sneezles, and, "a blackish, bulgy nose, as big as a boot." Toddlers learn at least nine new words a day, and how much more fun it is if the words are playful, such as "marmalade" or rhythmic, such as "In the high and far off times, oh, best beloved."

Letter Knowledge

Jamie is a superb speller. She's not so good at swimming, she struggles with problem solving in math, and she doesn't like to give speeches in front of her class. But she loves to play basketball (is she *my* child?), she's becoming an excellent horseback rider (she is *definitely* my child), and she's a great speller. She just seems to know how letters fit together to make words, and she loves to learn new words that are challenging. "I'm the only one in my spelling group who could spell 'conscientious,'" she proudly announces. I am proud, too.

I remember arranging magnetic words on the refrigerator when she was just beginning to read. They were simple—cat, log, swim, and so on. I would have a silly rhyme or message for her each morning to sound out, and then she could rearrange or add words as she wanted. Of course, the more ridiculous, the better.

I didn't know then what I know now. What we were doing was



Three-year-old Jamie loved *Is That You, Winter?*, autographed to her by the author, Stephen Gammell.

encouraging the early literacy skill of letter knowledge. She was discovering letters, looking for them in combinations with other letters, and sounding them out in order to identify the word. But we were doing it without flash cards, or practice drills, or baby genius videos. We were doing it by having fun. And I have no doubt that all the reading we did, which led to all the creative writing she does on her own, has also led her to being the excellent speller that she is. Conscientious, too!

"I love you like crazy cakes," we often said to each other. But what I remember the most was the one night she looked up at me from her crib, those black eyes sparkling, and unexpectedly repeated another line from the story.

"I waited for you my whole life."

Print Awareness

Well, duh! If a child has books in her hands *every day* and cuddles on the flowered couch while stories and poems are read aloud to her *every day* and has a librarian for a mother *every day*, what do you expect? Of course, she grows up with an awareness of how a book works and how print opens up a world full of wonders. She also knows that librarians will stand in long lines at conferences to give their daughters

autographed copies of books by Mem Fox, Mo Willems, Pam Muñoz Ryan, and other favorite authors because we are so very aware of the importance of print.

Print Motivation

Print motivation is about helping children to understand that books pertain to their lives. It sets the foundation for making sure that there is always time for books, and that books and stories have meaning and importance. And the books in which we recognize ourselves are books of exceptionally great power.

Harriet, You'll Drive Me Wild by Mem Fox is just such a story. It tells of a mother and her daughter, Harriet, who is a "pesky

child. She didn't mean to be. She just was." Throughout the day, Harriet's disasters increase, until finally her mother, who "doesn't like to yell," explodes with frustration and yells.

Later she apologizes, and the two end up in a giggling pillow fight. But what remained for Jamie and me is the reoccurring phrase used to describe Harriet's accidents and her mother's yelling, "Sometimes it happens. Just like that." We have said that one a lot as we survived the usual mistakes and accidents of life.

And now, here's my favorite memory of how Jamie and I found comfort in a book amid the storms of life.

I have talked with Jamie about her adoption since July 31, 1998, fondly known as Gotcha Day, when her foster mother placed a chubby-cheeked infant—*my daughter!*—in my arms in Hanoi, Vietnam. I regularly read books about adoption to her, along with other favorites such as *The Eensy-Weensy Spider* by Mary Ann Hoberman, *Papa's Song* by Kate McMullan, *Sleepytime Rhyme* by Remy Charlip, and all the others she wanted to hear over and over and over. One of those was *I Love You Like Crazy Cakes* by Rose Lewis. This adoption story was the right book for the right child (and her mother) at the right time.

"Read it again," she would say, and she would meticulously pore over the illustrations, noticing a tiny foot, a blanket embroidered with stars, red roses on a tea cup, a mother's tear. Over and over we read that story, and the title became a song I sang to her as a lullaby before turning out the light.

"I love you like crazy cakes," we often said to each other. But what I remember the most was the one night she looked up at me from her crib, those black eyes sparkling, and unexpectedly repeated another line from the story.

"I waited for you my whole life."

Today we flounder in the storms, still loving each other forever and foremost. Parenting is, of course, the most challenging and rewarding of gifts. But I am thankful that books have given us solace, that the love of stories grew within her mind and heart, and that the early literacy skills led her to reading anything and everything she will ever need.

And I am thankful for the flowered couch that now holds a ten-year-old and a fifty-something-year-old, lost together on the grasslands of Wyoming with Flicka and Artemisia and all the other horses of our dreams. 🐾

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Picturing the Child in Nineteenth-Century Literature

The Artist, the Child, and a Changing Society

Jacquelyn Spratlin Rogers

The concept of the role of the child in nineteenth-century Western European and American society was different from our ideas and expectations of children today. What influences affected the illustrator of children, as portrayed in nineteenth-century literature? What changed in the course of the century? The answer may be found by examining nineteenth-century historical events, industrial development, and movements of social consciousness that shaped the art of the illustrators of children and how they rendered their small subjects on the drawing board.

I would like to present some thoughts on these influences and include examples photographed from the excellent antiquarian book collection of the late Ruth M. Baldwin, former head of the Baldwin Library of the University of Florida (UF). Her personal library of children's books, donated to the university, initiated the core collection that makes up a part of the special collections archives of the UF library complex. The collection has grown to more than 100,000 volumes.

Vulnerability of Youth

The particular placement of children in a social order has been documented through the art of the illustrator who, within the visual medium, reveals a child's standing in society. The power of the illustrator can enhance an author's text or even reach levels of meaning beyond the text.

Diana Klemin notes in *The Art of Art for Children's Books* that the illustrator was responsible for the *mise en pages*, and that a book was stamped with the illustrators' individuality. "These [illustrators] are the creative persons who are masters

of technique, can grasp the meaning of a book, are devoted to the art of illustration, and understand its relation to the story. They have visualization, imagination, and inner fire to make a meaningful graphic statement and to integrate it with the text until story and illustration are one."¹

Consider the popular early depictions of the child as a small adult. Even as late as the first quarter of the nineteenth century, children wore scaled-down versions of the clothes worn by their elders, with boys in tricorner hats and girls in crinolines; all depending on the adult fashions of the time.² Why were they consistently depicted as miniature adults? The answer is as complex as the society of the time period.

Prior to the twentieth century, the high mortality rate of children due to poor nutrition, work hazards, and disease played an important role in forestalling the recognition of a formal



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government documents librarian. Rogers was the recipient of the 2006 ALSC Bechtel Fellowship, which allowed her to pursue the study of illustrators of children's literature at the University of Florida's Baldwin Library.

childhood. Joyce Irene Whalley, author of *Cobwebs to Catch Flies*, points out that “infant mortality was high [1700–1900] and the number of children surviving in any one family was usually small, [with] many infants dying before they were five years old.”³ She went on to express the gruesome reality in all levels of society that even the most gentle and loving parent shunned the thought of the vulnerability of youth.

Parents generally wished to accelerate their child to adulthood, beyond the deadly pitfalls of youth, even if it was only in a superficial fashion. The child had no childhood as we understand that period of development today. Clothing, work, responsibilities, and attitudes of children mimicked the adults. The sooner the child became an adult, or *appeared* to become an adult, the better.

The investment of love, attention, and a playful spirit was an emotionally risky venture when the object of that attention so often did not survive to maturity. Entire generations of a society tried to ignore the “dangerous period of youth,” as just stated, by drawing their children into the realm of adulthood as soon as was possible. However, that is not to say that children did not act childish and find play in their own way. The creative processes of discovery, made manifest by “play” that is inborn in children from prehistory to the present is, and has always been, an integral part of the developing child. The earliest illustrators of children’s books mirrored the social mores and events of the day, including the emotional effect on the adults by reason of the infant and early childhood mortality rate.

The absence of a recognized childhood can also be attributed to the need for cheap labor brought about by the Industrial Revolution that was sweeping through Europe and North America in the nineteenth century. It is ironic that while child labor depressed the lives and risked the safety of many of the youngest citizens at that time, the children’s book publishing industry flourished. This can be explained by the economics of invention (encouraging the use of child labor in factory work) plus supply and demand (pleasure reading materials for children made possible by more efficient machinery in the factories).

In *A History of Children’s Book Illustration*, it is noted that “the Industrial Revolution continued to bring great prosperity to at least some classes of society, and the constant improvement of industrial products and techniques all made for . . . the flowering of illustration and to the production of some of the most outstanding children’s books ever published in England.”⁴ This flowering exacted a price that would eventually lead to a social revolution.

Fashion and Body Language

The nineteenth-century novels, chapbooks, and cautionary tales show illustrated examples of children of all social and economic levels demonstrating good and bad behavior. *Little Goody Two-Shoes*, the first storybook noted as being written exclusively for a readership of children, exemplifies the righteous example of a

child of poor means rising in society while maintaining a good character. Many illustrators have depicted the rags-to-riches status of Margery by change of dress and of posture as well. Fashion and body language are tools of meaning that support and sometimes exceed the meaning in the text by the author. The artwork carries the message of these early works.

In contrast to Goody’s generous nature, a chapbook from the Baldwin collection, *The Merchant’s Son*, illustrates in both text and art a spoiled rich boy who is cruel to his sister and to innocent animals. The illustration and caption depicts the bad boy tormenting his sister and even kicking his dog. The illustrator indicates that he is from a wealthy background by dressing him in a top hat, carrying either a stick or a riding crop, wearing a ruffled collar, and a coat with formal tails. The affectations of adult dress would not be unusual to the eye of the early nineteenth-century reader.



This “going to the fields” image was found in a box of mixed contents, such as loose brochures and chapbooks. The artist is anonymous; it is likely from an undated chapbook from the Baldwin Library of Historical Children’s Literature.

All images courtesy of the Baldwin Library of Historical Children’s Literature, University of Florida.

out in pantaloons with ruffled layers, a dress with a big sash, ribbon at her neck, and a hair ornament that, comically, keeps her hat perched precariously high on the back of her head. Within the rural setting of both examples there is no guesswork as to whether these children live in a poor country farmhouse or in a wealthy country manor house.

The nineteenth-century chapbooks of moral instruction gradually gave way to books of entertainment, and so we observe that the buying public began to lend importance to the genre of children’s books as pleasure reading. With this new direction in publishing, authors and illustrators were no longer anonymous; they were given credit for their creative work.

Revolution, Reform, Revolt

The moral instruction of the chapbook grew into more powerful forms of expression of social reform. A landmark nineteenth-

The Baldwin Library of Historical Children’s Literature includes an eyebrow-raising illustration from another anonymous story titled *Going to the Fields* (one of many little surprises in a box full of miscellaneous examples of anonymous chapbooks). John instructs his “weak little sister Jane” with an imperious pose. John is wearing tailored pants, buttoned vest, frilly lace collar, short jacket, and cap, and he carries what, again, looks like a riding crop. “Weak” little sister Jane is decked

century book that addresses a call for reform is in the format of the Victorian novel *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë. Events in *Jane Eyre* were grounded in her true experiences at a church-sponsored school for girls of small means that she and, tragically, two of her sisters attended, and where they suffered cruelties to body and spirit.

The character of Mr. Brocklehurst professed a popular opinion of the time: "My mission is to mortify in these girls the lusts of the flesh; to teach them to clothe themselves with shame-facedness and sobriety, not with braided hair and costly apparel; and each of the young persons before us has a string of hair twisted in plaits which vanity itself might have woven: these, I repeat, must be cut off."⁵ The artist, as indicated before, can send many messages both through the clothing and the positioning of the figures. There have been several interpretations of the scenes from *Jane Eyre*, both in nineteenth- and twentieth-century editions that have produced variations on the theme of the suffering children. In presenting a nineteenth-century-era child, the illustrator of a book could have been as much a voice of social conscience as the author.

The illustrator, time and again, is shown to be an important indicator of society's interpretation of childhood. A major turning point in the way children were presented coincided with the beginning of the Victorian period (1837) and the growing resistance to some of the horrors of working conditions as a result of the Industrial Revolution. What does this change have to do with the effects of the Industrial Revolution? Heading into the middle third of the century, society began to turn away from the dark constraints, warnings, and consequences of the morality tracts and cautionary tales to instead, embrace a period of childhood innocence as an actual stage of life. Lewis Carroll and Edward Lear contributed to producing children's literature not solely as instruction and admonishment, but as entertainment for the pleasure of the child. The mood of children's literature as a whole changed as other authors and illustrators followed suit.

Across the Atlantic, too, changes were taking place in the artistic and literary interpretation of the role of children and children's literature. E. Jennifer Monaghan, in *Learning to Read and Write in Colonial America*, writes, "The broadening of children's reading material was not just a matter of the growing availability of all books. It was, to some extent, the product of an alternative view of children. In England, profound shifts were occurring in cultural perceptions of childhood that affected the content of books for children."⁶ The "profound

shifts" accelerated later, in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Cultural Barometers of Change

Children were allowed to be children in this post-Industrial Revolution climate. The Pre-Raphaelite Revolt against the excesses of brutal working conditions was the wakeup call championed by novelists, poets, and artists. By the last third of the nineteenth century the image of the child was idealized. M. Ernest Chesney, quoted in Bryan Holme's *The Kate Greenaway Book*, said of the artist, "Miss Greenaway, with a profound sentiment of love for children, puts the child alone on the scene, companions him in all his solitudes, and shows the infantine nature in all its naiveté, its gaucherie, its touching grace, its shy alarm, its discoveries, ravishments, embarrassments, and victories; the stumblings of it in wintry ways, the enchanted smiles of its spring-time and all the history of its fond heart and guileless egoism."⁷ The saccharine sentiments of Chesney's prose were embraced by the middle and upper class Victorian public.

Poet John Ruskin commented to Miss Greenaway, "You have the radiance and innocence of reinstated infant divinity showered again among the flowers of English meadows."⁸ The change in the attitude of society is underscored by the term *infant divinity*.

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The change was dramatic. The resulting actions of the industrialists and politicians of the day were recorded by authors and artists for the public. The actions of reform (or the beginning efforts of reform) allowed a modern childhood as society drew back from the ugly realities of child labor, hunger, class warfare, and entered an idyllic land of the child as a special creature, Ruskin's *infant divinity*.

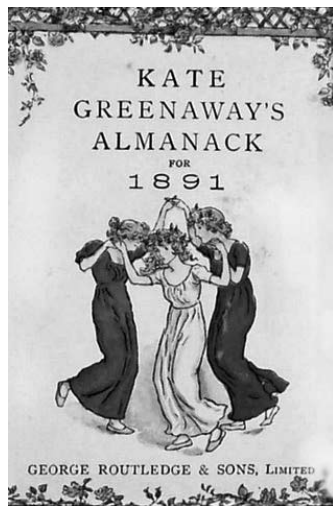
Art and literature can be seen as cultural barometers of change. Children's literature addresses attitudes and class standing as it reacts to social realities. Defenses of children in the face of the brutalities of child labor were subtly realized through the influence of the illustrator of children's books as presented to the reading public. Even though drawings were often of "pretty" young folk dressed in idyllic costumes of the preceding century, the pictures promoted the pre-Raphaelite movement simply by including the working child as worthy of being a subject in glorified renditions of youth.



Sara Crewe, in black dress, faces Miss Minchin in this illustration from the 1888 title *Sara Crewe, or, What Happened at Miss Minchin's* by Frances Hodgson Burnett, illustrated by Reginald Bathurst Birch.

father's death. She is wearing an old black dress. It is too small and too tight, and her slip is showing. Sara is in poor straits, but her spirit is not defeated. Birch draws her with a direct gaze into the eyes of her tormentor, Miss Minchin, even as she clutches the hem of her dress in fear and uncertainty. The artistic rendition is powerful because it indicates two strong and differing emotional reactions simultaneously.

Later, Birch defines a character in more dire circumstances than Sara. The child Anne is barefoot, her unadorned dress is ragged



Kate Greenaway's Almanack for 1891, published in London by George Routledge and Sons.

Look at the illustrations by Reginald B. Birch from *Sara Crewe* (1888) to see yet another example of the changes, sometimes subtle, in the clothing and stance as drawn by the illustrator to accompany the descriptive text. *Sara Crewe*, published in the children's magazine *St. Nicholas*, was later expanded and reprinted as the novel *A Little Princess*.

Frances Hodgson Burnett describes Sara's appearance following news of her

and falling off one shoulder, she wears neither coat nor shawl nor head covering of any kind. The tattered clothing denotes her status as a child of the streets. The visual indicator of her self-concept is the fact that she does not turn her head up, but only raises her eyes as Sara offers the starving waif something to eat.

The illustrator responds to Burnett's text: "She [Anne] looked frightful in her wet and dirty rags. She was staring with a stupid look of suffering straight before her . . . the child started and stared up at her [Sara]; then she snatched up the bun and began to cram it into her mouth with great wolfish bites."⁹ The powerful scene created by the author is magnified through the artist's perspective. This action on the part of the artist brings us back to the opening points of this essay: How is the child defined in the society of the time? How does the illustrator send messages of intent regarding status and self-concept? What are the events of the day that contribute to shaping the social image of the child? What changed in the role of the child of the early nineteenth century and the late nineteenth century?



The cover of the 1917 American editions of *Girls and Boys: Scenes from the Country and the Town*, published by Duffield in New York.

Roles and Attitudes

Louis-Maurice Boutet de Monvel promoted the noble working child in the developing ideal of childhood he illustrated in the early twentieth-century book *Girls and Boys: Scenes from the Country and the Town* by Anatole France. In this book, he depicts children laboring in a rural setting. Unlike so many pictures of working class children of the first part of the nineteenth century, defeat is not implied in their faces or posture. These children are dressed in a practical fashion; the girl with simple bonnet, shawl crossed

over her chest and tied behind her back for work (as opposed to loosely worn over the shoulders), a functional apron and thick knit socks, not stockings, with her clogs; the boy is pictured in a plain cap and wearing a loose-fitting peasant shirt; and the smaller boy wears a child's cover-all pinafore, as was the fashion until the male or female child reached four or five years old—a common practice carried on into the early twentieth century. Oppression is not implied in their working status.

The long Victorian period filled two-thirds of the nineteenth century and spilled over into the beginning of the twentieth century. In this stretch of time, the custom of picturing more affluent children in top hats and other adult clothing gradually diminished, except in a lighthearted or exaggerated fashion. Books, cards, and department store advertisements often showed boys wearing top hats and girls with elaborate bonnets. The literature, following the trend of society, increasingly put the adult look for children in an anachronistic category. The



This image of working children is from Anatole France's *Girls and Boys: Scenes from the Country and the Town* (1917). The work was illustrated by Louis-Maurice Boutet de Monvel.

child pictured as a miniature adult was now tolerated merely as a cute affectation, not as a consequence, emotionally, of the mortality rate or any other social reason to cast them seriously as something other than a child. The adult dress for children became, simply, whimsical.

How else did the illustrator and artist portray the nineteenth-century child, besides by drawing on events, industrial development, or social movements of society? It can be described in one word: "attitude." In the mid-to-late nineteenth century we find girls attire that is different from that of an adult. Children's bloomers and looser fitting skirts free of crinolines are common. Additionally, and an important matter of note, the girls pictured are engaged in more strenuous situations than, for example, the previous description of "poor weak little Jane." Girls are now shown playing with hoops, running, climbing, and jumping. Such activity demonstrates a healthy animated role of females as opposed to exclusively passive or emotionally dependant girls.

Visual cues to stages of development emerge in society and, as well, in children's literature. As the century advances, boys are wearing short pants or knickers, and sometimes they are seen wearing a type of hat or cap that would not be worn by men. And, in a different sense from the increasingly active girls, the boys are more often shown in relaxed games and activities that have nothing to do with earlier common poses of boys listening to lectures from an instructor or working at the duties of an apprentice. The role, then, of both male and female children expanded to include engaging behavior that occurred in what became the realm of "childhood."

More and more illustrators of children's literature joined the movement toward placing children in their own world. This

world, this separate society promoted by the work of John Newbery and Randolph Caldecott, was realized by the nineteenth-century parade of pioneers of illustration in children's literature, by a contingent of other artists (which would open this topic to a broader treatment). The power of the illustrator helped define this new concept of "childhood" through clothing, body language, and actions. The new concept was a visible part of the changes in society taking place in politics, science, education, and the economy of Western world literature.

New Age of Childhood

The illustrations by such artists as Boutet de Monvel revel in presenting happy and active children. The artist acted as a bridge from the late nineteenth-century Victorian era to the pre-World War I blossoming of the arts throughout Europe and America.

Note the kinetic energy of the illustrator's children as pictured riding a rocking horse on the cover of the book by France, *Girls and Boys: Scenes from Country and the Town* (1917). The children are not pictured as small adults here, in either dress or demeanor. They are, blissfully, children. They wildly ride the rocking horse. Their energy and total abandonment to the activity represents the new age of childhood that did not have a place in earlier literature—or society.

From post-World War I to the twenty-first century, social changes have made a geometric leap around the globe. The culturally diverse illustrators and authors presented by today's publishing industry continue to be important in measuring the role of the child in our contemporary society. Conclusively, an important role was played by the nineteenth-century artist in the interpretation of the place of the child within the adult world. Social changes and developments throughout the nineteenth century shaped the imagination and art of illustrators of the day, in the context of children's literature. The illustrators of children's literature assisted the social evolution that extended throughout the nineteenth century into the early twentieth century and helped define the notion of a period called childhood. &

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Toddling Toward Technology Computer Use by Very Young Children

Gaye Hinchliff

In 2005, a large-scale, in-depth survey on electronic media use by young children in America was sponsored by the Kaiser Family Foundation. Researchers have sifted through this data to analyze media use and determine where additional research should be focused. Meanwhile, new technological toys for babies and toddlers continue to be developed at an incredible rate. Young girls and boys begin using computers on their parents' laps, and by age three they are independently turning on the computer, controlling the mouse, and loading CD-ROMs.¹

On a typical day, many children under age 6 watch television, some play video games, and about 27 percent spend an average of fifty minutes using a computer.² "A high proportion of very young children are using new digital media, including fifty percent of four- to six-year-olds who have played video games and seventy percent who have used computers."³ Parents are supportive—72 percent of parents with children ages 0–6 believe computers help their children learn.

Zero to Six, a publication produced by the Kaiser Family



Gaye Hinchliff is a Children's Section Lead in the King County (Wash.) Library System. After writing an earlier Children and Libraries article on graphic novels, she wrote this second one for the ALSC Research and Development

Committee. Other members of the current committee include Mona Kerby, Ya-Ling Lu, Alice Neve, and Suzanne Stauffer.

Foundation and the Children's Digital Media Centers (Austin), lists key findings indicating that while children are immersed in technology, computers do not dominate children's lives. Many parents have media-related rules. Reading or being read to remains a constant for most children; listening to music is a favorite activity among young children.⁴ Additionally, Vandewater et al. found no relation between screen media use and time spent reading or in outdoor play.⁵

Concerns

Positive associations have been found between computer use and its effect on children's development, yet research is limited and concerns remain. The authors of *Zero to Six* consider their study a starting point for developing research on understanding electronic media use by very young children "because social and intellectual development are more malleable in these early years [and] media use at this age could have an especially significant impact."⁶ Their report asks a dozen questions about the effect of media on children's development—for example, can we maximize the positive effect of music play? And does early computer use lead to higher academic achievement later in life?

The Alliance for Childhood is concerned that the use of technological tools interferes in a child's healthy development if the child's abilities and understanding of those tools are not addressed, and they suggest a "time-out" until a range of recommendations can be met.⁷ Their promotion of a public debate is healthy, but a moratorium is unrealistic.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) provides recommendations on children's computer use without isolating

children from the media, since the AAP recognizes they cannot outspend the media industry, nor do parents seem to oppose media exposure.⁸ The AAP also recognizes that very few studies have examined this issue for children under age 5; thus they recommend additional research because “at this point, there are more ‘unknowns’ than ‘knowns.’”⁹

Both the AAP and the Alliance for Childhood demand increased awareness and encouragement of partnerships on this issue. A major challenge is evaluating contradictory findings due to different measurement techniques, and an equally important challenge is dealing with the “changing landscape of the media environment.”¹⁰ As technology changes, so do the results of research, especially in studies where computer use is adapted to needs of very young children.

Recent Research

A review of research literature by Nicola Yelland outlines the benefits of computer use by young children, especially when innovative methods are employed. Studies in the last decade document how children are motivated to work and play together even when they don't share a common language, how children have access to higher concepts when innovative technology is used, and how special populations benefit from adaptive software. Her review includes results of a study around the hotly debated issue of “play.” Children show high motivation and collaborate more around the computer than in traditional play environments.¹¹

School Readiness

Used appropriately with the right software, the computer can be a valuable learning tool for preschoolers. In one trial designed to study the effect of computer use on a class of Head Start students, children spent fifteen to twenty minutes with developmentally appropriate educational software. Results indicated a positive relationship between the preschoolers' computer use and their performance on school readiness and

cognitive tests.¹² In a later article, these results were further discussed, linking computers as suitable tools with theories of healthy child development.¹³

Customized, developmentally adapted software and appropriate adult interaction can substantially increase the value of computer use for two and three year olds. In one study, toddlers showed “significant levels of independent interaction” and “the beginnings of self directed learning,” as well as positive attitudes towards computing and increases in focused time.¹⁴

While investigating the language use of preschoolers, Feng and Benson found “significantly greater developmental gains” in skills and knowledge of three- and four-year-old children using computers regularly in the classroom compared to children without computer experiences in similar classrooms.¹⁵ Using Halliday's seven functions of child language, Feng and Benson found instances of all seven functions during the study, but the use of regulatory language (“the ‘do as I tell you’ function”) was prevalent at the computer center of the four and five year olds they observed.¹⁶ The heuristic (“a means of investigating reality, a way of learning about things”) and representational or informative patterns were also dominant.¹⁷ These latter functions provide ways for children to learn from each other. The children did not engage in other complex language use, thus environment and tasks must vary to promote the full range of language development.

Special Needs

The use of specialized computers and software for very young children with disabilities is especially important because it allows them equal learning opportunities. An adapted curriculum “resulted in positive effects on emergent literacy knowledge and skills” of children ages three to five with mild to moderate disabilities in one particular study.¹⁸ There are numerous other studies documenting the benefits of using technology with special-needs children.

While these studies show positive

benefits, and researchers continue to develop new studies, many researchers point to the need for continuous and broader research, with some proposing that past studies not be duplicated, but focus instead on innovative ways for very young children to use computers.

What Can We Do?

Since technology is a daily part of many children's lives, we cannot ignore concerns, but neither can we assume it's realistic to keep children, even ages 0–3, away from computers. We must share guidelines with parents on developmentally appropriate software and suitable ways of introducing computer use to their very young children. Competitive and aggressive games should be discouraged, while software allowing “children to paint and draw, design things, create picture stories, or think logically” are considered appropriate for ages 0–6.¹⁹

Donald Shifrin, former chair of the AAP Committee on Communications, said, “Most companies realize that money spent doing research would not change the reality that parents rely more on other parents' experience [with DVDs and games for infants and toddlers] than on studies or ‘expert advice.’”²⁰ As librarians, if we can convince or influence parents in our own communities, they can become the experts we need to spread the word.

Warren Buckleitner is a parent who has done this not only in his own community but beyond. He developed the Mediatech Foundation (www.mediatech.org), which does an excellent job of evaluating computer software for children, matching products with a child's developmental growth, and offering tips for parents. PBS lists several easily accessible parental guides on their website, including guides on computers and video games for preschoolers (www.pbs.org/parents/childrenandmedia). ALSC provides many great websites for children, with age guidelines (www.ala.org/greatsites).

For parents who are hesitant in allowing their children to use computers, Jan Lacina suggests a suitable introduction

for toddlers—exposing them to “multiple forms of literature [such as] online stories and postmodern picture books.”²¹

Another way to help is by providing computers for children to use when they don't have one at home. In the study of Head Start students, “the effect of computer use at school was strongly enhanced by the children's home computer experience.”²² Libraries can serve as community resources in addressing the existing socioeconomic and racial divides that leave the less affluent, less educated, and some minority families lacking access to computers and the Internet.²³

Technology for very young children will continue to expand—librarians can be strong allies in supporting parents in teaching their children how to be media literate. ☺

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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 ABCs of Advocacy

The Role of Children's Managers in Public Libraries

Meg Smith

Listen to the MUSTN'TS, child,

Listen to the DON'TS

Listen to the SHOULDN'TS

The IMPOSSIBLES, the WON'TS

Listen to the NEVER HAVES

Then listen close to me—

Anything can happen child,

ANYTHING can be.

—Shel Silverstein, *Where the Sidewalk Ends*.

Shel Silverstein is right; anything can happen, but in the world of children's librarianship, it takes advocates within the profession to make it so. A true advocate for children ignores the naysayers and pessimists, and instead actualizes Anne Carroll Moore's "Four Respects" of children's librarianship:

1. Respect for the children
2. Respect for the books
3. Respect for the children's librarian as an integral element in the library's organization
4. Respect for the professional status of children's librarianship¹

For these four respects to be institutionalized within the public libraries, children's librarians must become advocates for the services and resources that our children deserve. To develop a

background in advocacy, we start with our ABCs.

A is for Activism—*what* advocacy is within our libraries and communities

B is for Books—*why* advocacy is necessary within our profession

C is for Communication—*how* to advocate to the next level

By learning these cornerstones of advocacy, youth services professionals can ensure that anything is indeed possible as they promote library services for youth.

A Is for Activism

Children's library services, resources, policies, and programs must be effectively promoted instead of passively ignored. Michael Sullivan, author of *Fundamentals of Children's Services*, emphasizes that children are significant library users. According to Sullivan, in public libraries, 37 percent of library users are twelve or younger, they ask more than 50 percent of reference questions, and more than 51 million children attend programs each year.²

Children's librarians have an important responsibility to advocate for these patrons who benefit so greatly from the pub-

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lic library. Active and engaged library employees have more outlets through which to advocate for these patrons' interests and resources. A library activist begins his or her own involvement within the individual library system. Become an involved library employee by volunteering to serve on system-wide committees and working community events. Share youth services initiatives with your director and board of trustees regularly. Actively engage all library patrons by promoting your library services and resources.

While activism within the library system is essential for bettering children's services, youth librarians should also collaborate with community agencies. By becoming involved in professional organizations, at the local, state, or national level, the library becomes a more visible consultant in promoting literacy.

According to *Outstanding Library Service to Children: Putting the Core Competencies to Work*, "active membership in professional librarian groups, unions, or community groups raises the visibility of children's library services and staff and makes the children's librarian a "player," one whom others consult on issues relating to children, literacy, and library issues."³ Youth services staffers are the voice for children within our libraries and communities, for those who do not have the power or resources to speak for themselves.

B Is for Books

Children will only develop a life-long love of reading and public libraries when youth librarians advocate for their child patrons. Anne Carroll Moore's tenets of respect for the children and respect for the books are at the heart of this advocacy. Youth services professionals must provide a variety of reading materials for both girls and boys. They must also share the importance of childhood reading with parents, educators, and community officials.

Sullivan, author of *Connecting Boys with Books: What Libraries Can Do*, emphasizes the importance of reading for young males. He wrote, "Reading develops

the power of language and higher-level thought, giving younger boys the tools to envision their place in society and to express themselves in a satisfying manner."⁴ Youth librarians play a critical role when promoting this reading to area youth.

Youth services librarians must not only advocate for the availability of youth materials, but they must also promote programs that encourage participants' reading as well. Carole D. Fiore's *Summer Library Reading Program Handbook* describes the important relationship between Summer Reading Clubs and increased reading.

Fiore explained that research shows that children who read for approximately thirty-eight minutes a day will read more than two million words per year and score in the ninetieth percentile on standardized tests, but children who read approximately one minute a day will only read "0.05 million words" during the year and score in the tenth percentile.⁵ Librarians must advocate for adequate staff and funding to create these literacy-based programs as a necessary step in developing library services for youth.

C Is for Communication

With an understanding of what advocacy is and its importance in providing superior library services for youth, youth librarians must develop exemplary communication skills when working with fellow library staffers and patrons. Department reports, grant proposals, and professional writing provide an outlet to promote youth services, according to *Outstanding Library Service to Children: Putting the Core Competencies to Work*.⁶ Through oral and written communication skills, youth services professionals effectively promote child-centered initiatives.

Youth librarians strengthen these skills through public speeches or informal transactions. All youth services staffers should develop central concepts and talking points, utilized in a concise elevator speech, to share with community members when promoting library initiatives. Consider developing answers to some of these questions, found in

Outstanding Library Service to Children: Putting the Core Competencies to Work, to share with fellow library staffers, parents, and community leaders.

- How many nursery schools and daycare centers are served by your library?
- How does your library help families?
- How does an investment in educational programs for children pay off for the community?⁷

By developing concrete answers to these, and similar questions, youth services professionals develop stronger communication skills.

When youth librarians become youth services advocates, they are actively involved in their library systems and communities. They understand the importance books and literacy-based programs have in the lives of their young people, and they develop the communication skills required to promote these initiatives. They don't listen to the MUSTN'TS, the IMPOSSIBLES, and the WON'TS. They agree with Shel Silverstein's classic poem, "Listen to the MUSTN'TS," that anything can be. In children's librarianship, this begins with the background in advocacy's ABCs. ☺

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Tots to Tweens

Age-Appropriate Technology Programming for Kids

Madeline Walton-Hadlock

In recent years, the library world has been abuzz with news about gaming and technology programming. Knowing that young people are attracted to tech features in the library, librarians across the country have been scrambling to stay current by acquiring video game consoles, MySpace pages, extra computers, and cool software. We know that many teens relate to cell phones and iPods more than they do to reference desks and book drops, and for the most part our society is comfortable with and accepts as status quo the close relationship between teens and technology.

However, teens have often been the *only* target for technology programming. When it comes to offering such services for younger kids at the library, some librarians have been slow on the uptake. Many of us have witnessed the sad sight of a dozen elementary-aged bystanders enviously watching the teens' video gaming tournament hosted at our library, but we have not, in general, engaged these younger children with technology programming of their own.

According to a survey administered in spring of 2008 by the ALSC Children and Technology Committee, less than one-fifth

of librarians currently offer technology programming for children under age 12.¹ Librarians who took part in the survey were found to have many questions about the benefits of technology programming, the effects of technology on childhood development, and what kinds of programming would win the support of library administrators, parents, and other stakeholders.

Why Bother?

Some librarians are reluctant to add technology programming. After all, we already provide a cadre of important and popular services that do not require any technology. Librarians also sometimes associate technology with children staring blankly at screens, addicted to meaningless games. But most children love exploring technology, and, indeed, there are many meaningful ways to use technology and many benefits to including it in your service plan for children:

- Technology is exciting for children, and it may draw new young people to the library.
- Technology can enhance learning by engaging children in problem solving, team work, decision making, and the development of fine motor skills and coordination.²
- Libraries can provide technology to children who may not otherwise have access to it.
- Libraries can empower parents to use technology with their children in meaningful and safe ways.
- Technology can make the library more fun and pertinent to today's children!



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08 committee members include chair Chris Borawski, Gaye Hinchliff, Amber Creger, Bethany Lafferty, Bradley Debrick, Patty Saidenberg, Celia Huffman, Teresa Walls, and Kim Hurson.

According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), “Technology plays a significant role in all aspects of American life today, and this role will only increase in the future . . . educators have a responsibility to critically examine the impact of technology on children and be prepared to use technology to benefit children.”³ It is especially important for librarians—who are responsible for providing equitable access to information technology in their communities—to help form beneficial and healthy relationships between children and technology.

ALSC, in its *Statement of Commitment to Excellence in Library Service to Children in a Technological Age*, affirms that children’s librarians in the twenty-first century are committed to, among other things,

- providing collections, services, and assistance that encourage and support children in exploring the world of ideas and information and in developing the knowledge and skills they need to live, learn, work, and govern in a democratic society;
- selecting and guiding children to age-appropriate materials in print, video, and online;
- providing instruction for children and parents about online searches and other techniques to ensure a positive Internet experience;
- educating parents about the Internet and encouraging them to take an active role in guiding their children’s use;
- compiling and recommending quality websites for children; and
- taking an active role in developing Internet policies and programs that help parents protect their children from inappropriate material and ensure children’s access to information they need.⁴

While this statement does not specifically suggest that librarians provide technology programming for children, it clearly implies that librarians need to provide

more than just books and storytimes.

Providing Developmentally Appropriate and Safe Technologies

A significant body of research has shown that technology can indeed be beneficial to young children as long as it is developmentally appropriate. So, the question is not so much whether or not to include technology programming, but what types of technology programming should be offered, and to whom.

Children Two and Under

Babies and toddlers thrive on contact with other human beings, so library programs for this age group should focus on educating the parents and caregivers about what kinds of technology are appropriate. In its policy statement on Media Education, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that children under two years of age watch *no* television. The AAP’s statement goes on to say that “research on early brain development shows that babies and toddlers have a critical need for direct interactions with parents . . . for healthy brain growth and the development of appropriate social, emotional, and cognitive skills.”⁵

While computer screen exposure should also be avoided, electronic games or toys are fine if they are used to facilitate direct interaction and play between children and their caregivers. Electronic toys on their own will not make babies any smarter than old-fashioned wooden blocks, but parents may be more prone to interacting with their babies using electronic toys as an interface. Music CDs, a very simple form of technology, are great for this age group since music and singing have been shown to encourage early literacy skills and parent–child bonding.⁶

Preschool and Early-Elementary-Aged Children

Many games, including computer software, Internet games, video games,

handheld games, and toys, have been developed for this age group. Developmentally appropriate technology for children ages 3–7 should encourage collaborative play, creation, conversation, problem solving, and mastery learning (i.e., incremental growth in difficulty as problems are solved).⁷ For example, some libraries now offer special computer stations for preschool-age children that feature early learning games, such as matching shapes, simple mazes, identifying letters, and so forth. At these stations, children can work together with their parents, siblings, and



Ashley and her mother listen to a digital story on the Peek-a-Book Computer at the Alum Rock branch of the San Jose Public Library.

young friends. This enhances the learning process through conversation and collaboration.

Children Ages 8–11

According to Warren Buckleitner, editor of the *Children’s Technology Review*, appropriate technologies for older elementary students should encourage socialization, expand a child’s skills and knowledge, provide multiple levels of challenge, be easy to use, and make connections to books and other media.⁸ Gaming programs are often extremely popular among this age group, but one must take care to avoid negative, violent, and addictive games. There are many nonprofit groups that provide valuable information to help parents, teachers, and librarians choose the best interac-

tive media for kids. For example, the Entertainment Software Rating Board (www.esrb.org) rates games on the basis of content and ALSC's Great Websites for Kids Committee maintains a list of recommended websites (www.ala.org/greatsites) that are sorted by subject and age-appropriateness.

Too Much of a Good Thing?

We know that developmentally appropriate technology can be a positive addition to the education and entertainment of children, but how much technology is too much? Is there a cumulative effect when you add up all of the input children receive from television, music, computers, cell phones, and electronic toys?

Parents and educators often worry that too much technology will lead to problems such as poor socialization, short attention spans, and even childhood obesity. Most experts agree that a child's exposure to technology should be meaningful, involve collaboration with other people, include time limits, and moreover should not be a substitute for outside play, exposure to print, and personal interactions. While different families may develop their own limits, the Center on Media and Child Health recommends no more than two hours of screen exposure per day for any child over the age of two.⁹

Libraries are in a great position to inform parents about both the benefits and



Aden, 10, and Freddie, 12, think computer camp is a scream at the John A. Howe branch of the Albany Public Library.

shortcomings of technology for children. By offering technology programs, libraries can remain relevant to modern children, and at the same time help them and their families to form healthy relationships with technology.

Ideas from the Showcase of Success and Beyond

When the ALSC Children and Technology Committee put out a national call for technology program ideas in the spring of 2008, we were surprised by how many librarians responded by saying they didn't have any ideas, and, in fact, they *needed* them! Fortunately, some librarians had come up with good ideas to share with us. The technology program ideas the committee received were compiled on the ALSC ChildTech Wiki (<http://wikis.ala.org/alsc>) as part of the Children and Technology Committee's *Showcase of Success: Best Practices in Technology Programming for Children Ages 12 and Under*. Showcase ideas were also featured during the committee's gaming program, *Hey! I Want to Do That, Too! Gaming and the Elementary Age Child*, at ALA Annual Conference 2008. Below are some technology program ideas, many taken from *Showcase*, to help you get started.

Games

If you ever want to make five hundred new friends in ten seconds, invite an assembly full of elementary school students to come to your library and play your new Wii, Xbox 360, or PlayStation 2. They will applaud and scream, you will feel like a rock star, and most importantly, many of them will be enticed to visit the library for their first time.

It worked like a charm at the Dr. Roberto Cruz-Alum Rock Branch of the San José (Calif.) Public Library. After I announced the arrival of these new tech "toys" during K-5 school assemblies to promote the Summer

Reading Celebration, countless new faces soon appeared at the library to play the games. While they were there, they also explored the stacks and took home reading logs.

Many librarians have found that purchasing video game consoles and age-appropriate games is a relatively easy and inexpensive way to introduce technology programming at the library. Jane Cronkhite of the San José Public Library offers weekly *Wii Wednesdays*, where kids participate in multiplayer games that require high levels of physical movement, such as *Wii Sports*, *Super Mario Party 8*, *Rayman Raving Rabbids*, and *Wii Play: Dance, Dance Revolution (DDR)—A Whole Family Event*, offered by Melanie Lyttle of the Madison (Ohio) Public Library, has also been popular. This DDR event, which is attended by second through sixth grade children and their families, promotes cross-generational teamwork and physical exercise, as friends and families work together to qualify for the championships.

Workshops

Workshops for parents, children, or parent-child teams are another simple way to introduce technology programming. Libraries across the country offer Internet safety classes for parents and how-to classes for school visits on a variety of computer-related subjects, such as searching the online catalog and the Internet. Other good workshops might focus on the use of new library technologies, such as free Web-based homework tutoring, laptop check-outs, and ESL software.

Tech Exploration and Manipulation

Librarians who feel more comfortable manipulating technology, or have the money to hire outside educators, may consider offering sessions in which children can explore technology on a deeper level or use special tools to create their own technologies.

Jennifer Nelson of Hennepin County (Minn.) Library has offered a program called *Scratch for 8-11 Year-Olds*, using



Tatjana, 9, works on a fun project at computer camp, run by librarian Scott Jarzombek at the Albany Public Library.

a free online program called Scratch (<http://scratch.mit.edu>) that allows young people to create a diverse array of media projects, such as animations, music, and games. Scott Jarzombek of Albany (N.Y.) Public Library runs an annual two-week computer camp targeted at kids ages 9–14. In this free camp, students learn about collaborative online experiences through Web 2.0, create and write in their own blogs, learn about successful and safe Internet searching, and “develop an understanding of how the digital world impacts their lives.”¹⁰ Librarians might also consider inviting a local high school robotics team to showcase their creations for younger kids.

Online Storytime and Reader’s Advisory

An increasing number of libraries are making their storytimes available digitally, thus enabling them to reach out to families who are unable to come to in-house storytimes. Digital storytimes can be offered in a number of different ways. The Johnson County (Kans.) Library posted audio clips of staff members telling stories online and made CD recordings available at branches. The Cuyahoga County (Ohio) Public Library’s *Read with the Browns* project involves a partnership with the Cleveland Browns football team, in which athletes are recorded telling multicultural stories, and these recordings are made available to the

public via telephone and online video. *StoryTubes*, a by-kids-for-kids reader’s advisory program created by the Gail Borden Public Library in Elgin, Illinois, invites children in grades 1–6 to participate in a contest in which they make short videos about their favorite books and post them online.

@ your library

To figure out what types of programs would work best in your community, talk to the kids you see every day. They may have creative ideas far beyond the imagining of librarians! At the very least, they can probably help you translate terms like “Webkinz” or “PS2” and tell you about their interests.

And remember: technology programming for children doesn’t have to be just for kids. It can involve anything from educating parents about the benefits and pitfalls of modern technology to entertaining and educating whole families while helping them establish meaningful connections to technology, to using the tech expertise and the interests of the children themselves to benefit the library and its greater community. &

References

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9. Center on Media and Child Health, “Media and Your Students,” www.cmch.tv/mentors_teachers/ (accessed Aug. 2, 2008).
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Board Major Actions

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

VOTED, to approve the nomination of Betsy Orsburn to fill out a three-year board term that was left vacant due to a resignation. (July 2008)

VOTED, to approve funding of the Education Committee's proposed "ALSC Core Competency Brochure" project in the full amount of \$1,500 from the Children's Library Services Endowment, to be applied to the FY09 budget and expended by August 31, 2009. (August 2008)

VOTED, to adopt the Policy for Service on ALSC Media Evaluation Committees. (September 2008)

VOTED, to co-sponsor in name only a GLBTRT (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgendered Round Table) program at the 2009 ALA Annual Conference in Chicago on censorship of picture books that include homosexual content. (September 2008)

Preconference to Address Right to Read

The ALSC 2009 preconference, "Meeting the Challenge: Practical Tips and Inspiring Tales on Intellectual Freedom,"

will be held Friday, July 10, before ALA Annual Conference in Chicago. The event will emphasize the right to read as an essential foundation of library service to youth. Focusing on strategies for addressing complaints and stories to strengthen resolve, the preconference will offer pragmatic advice and passionate perspectives on intellectual freedom.

"There will always be people who attempt to 'censor' what children read and view," says ALSC President Pat Scales. "The best ammunition to use in fighting the 'censorship war' is knowledge. It is our responsibility as librarians to inform ourselves and transmit this knowledge to the young patrons we serve."

Melba Beals to Keynote President's Program

Join us for a moving and inspiring address by Melba Pattillo Beals at the Charlemae Rollins President's Program on Monday, July 13, 8:00 to 9:30 a.m., during ALA Annual Conference. Pattillo Beals was one of the courageous Little Rock Nine—the students who faced down furious segregationists, the Arkansas National Guard, and the Governor of Arkansas in order to integrate Little Rock Central High School and avail themselves of the opportunities within. You won't want to miss the opportunity to hear directly from this brave civil rights warrior. "Melba Beals walked her way into the history book in 1957," says ALSC President Pat Scales. "She is truly an American hero, and I'm

thrilled that she is delivering the Rollins Lecture. This is one program that every librarian should attend."

Online Continuing Education

ALSC is offering four online continuing education courses this February, including "Reading Instruction and Children's Services," "The Newbery Medal: Past, Present, and Future," "The Technology Enhanced Library Professional," and "Sharing Poetry with Children."

The courses, selected by the ALSC Education Committee, will begin in February and run between four and six weeks, depending on the course. All courses will be taught in an online learning community using Moodle. Future sessions are scheduled for summer 2009.

Course registration information is available on the ALSC website at www.ala.org/alsced. Course fees are \$95 for personal ALSC members, \$145 for personal ALA members, and \$165 for nonmembers. For more information, contact ALSC Deputy Director Aimee Strittmatter at astrittmatter@ala.org.

2009 Slate of Candidates Vice-President/President-Elect

Viki Ash, San Antonio (Texas) Public Library
Julie Corsaro, Chapel Hill, N.C.

Division Councilor

Clara N. Bohrer, West Bloomfield (Mich.)
Township Public Library
Rhonda K. Puntney, Lakeshores Library
System, Waterford, Wis.

Fiscal Officer

Revital (Tali) Balas, Ethical Culture
School, New York
Heather Rimany, Marvelwood School,
Kent, Conn.

Board of Directors

Ellen Riordan, Enoch Pratt Free Library,
Baltimore, Md.
Shawn Brommer, South Central Library
System, Madison, Wis.
Ken Settington, Toronto (Ontario,
Canada) Public Library
Maureen White, University of Houston
at Clearlake, Tex.
Cecilia McGowan, King County Library
System, Issaquah, Wash.
Jennifer Ralston, Harford County Public
Library, Belcamp, Md.

Caldecott Committee, 2011

Mary Beth Dunhouse, Boston Public
Library
Marilyn Taniguchi, Beverly Hills (Calif.)
Public Library
Robin Smith, Ensworth School,
Nashville, Tenn.
Ruth Anne Champion, Enoch Pratt Free
Library, Baltimore, Md.
Megan Lambert, Eric Carle Museum,
Amherst, Mass.
Veronica L.C. Stevenson-Moudamane,
Danbury (Conn.) Public Library
Deborah Vaden, Irving (Texas) Public
Library
Vaunda Nelson, Esther Bone Memorial
Library, Rio Rancho, N.M.
Carolyn Angus, Claremont (Calif.)
Graduate University
Debra Nelson, Prince George's County
Memorial Library, Largo, Md.
Pam Sandlian Smith, Rangeview Library
District, Northglenn, Colo.
Gail Nordstrom, Stillwater (Minn.)
Public Library
Julia Karell, Portland, Ore.
Barbara Chatton, University of
Wyoming, Laramie
Kay Gooch, Gullett Elementary School,
Austin, Texas
Karen Nelson Hoyle, University of
Minnesota, Minneapolis

Newbery Committee, 2011

Susan Allison, Richardson (Texas) Public
Library
Madeline J. Bryant, Los Angeles Public
Library
Nancy J. Snyder, Public Library of
Charlotte & Mecklenburg County,
N.C.
Lisa Sizemore, Louisville (Ky.) Free
Public Library
Louise Capizzo, Falmouth (Maine)
Memorial Library
Pat Callahan, Jericho (N.Y.) Public
Library
Kelly Vikstrom, Friends School,
Baltimore, Md.
Bina Williams, Bridgeport (Conn.)
Public Library
Blair Christolon, Prince William (Va.)
Public Library
Peg Ciszek, Northbrook (Ill.) Public
Library
Jean Gaffney, Dayton (Ohio) Metro
Library
Jackie Gropman, Burke, Va.
Molly Schaaf, Hennepin County Public
Library, Minneapolis, Minn.
Dan Darigan, West Chester (Pa.)
University
Jana Fine, Tuscaloosa (Ala.) Public
Library
Kathryn Shepler, Aurora School,
Oakland, Calif.

Sibert Committee, 2011

Dara La Porte, Politics & Prose
Bookstore, Washington, D.C.
Elisabeth M. Simmons, Elsmere Public
Library, Wilmington Del.
Carol A. Doll, Old Dominion University,
Norfolk, Va.
Helma Hawkins, Kansas City (Mo.)
Public Library
Sharon Rawlins, New Jersey State
Library, Trenton
Ernie Cox, St. Timothy's School, Raleigh,
N.C.
Sally Miculek, Austin (Texas) Public
Library
Patricia Cole, East Greenwich (R.I.) Free
Library
Randall Enos, Ramapo Catskill Library
System, Middletown, N.Y.
Ty R. Burns, Clear Creek Independent
School District, League City, Texas

2008 ALSC Midwinter Schedule

(as of October 23, 2008)

AASL/ALSC/YALSA Jt. Exec. Committee
Thursday, January 22, 4:30–6 p.m.

**AASL/ALSC/YALSA Jt. Intellectual
Freedom Committee**
Saturday, January 24, 1:30–3:30 p.m.

**AASL/ALSC/YALSA Jt. Legislation
Committee**
Sunday, January 25, 4–5.30 p.m.

**AASL/ALSC/YALSA Jt. Membership
Reception**
Monday, January 26, 6–8 p.m.

**AASL/ALSC/YALSA Jt. Youth Council
Caucus**
Monday, January 26, 9–10 a.m.

**ALA Youth Media Awards Press
Conference**
Monday, January 26, 7:45–9 a.m.

All Committee Meetings I and II
Sunday, January 25, 8:00–11:30 a.m.

All Discussion Group Meetings I and II
Sunday, January 25, 4–6 p.m.

**ALSC/BWI Summer Reading Program
Grant Committee***
Saturday, January 24, 8–10 a.m. and
4–6 p.m.

**ALSC/REFORMA Jt. Executive
Committees**
Saturday, January 24, 6–7 p.m.

Arbuthnot Honor Lecture (2010)*
Saturday, January 24, 8–10 a.m.

Batchelder Award Committee (2009)*
Friday, January 23, 8–11:30 a.m.
Saturday, January 24, 8 a.m.–12:30 p.m.
and 8–10 p.m.
Sunday, January 25, 8 a.m.–12 noon

Batchelder Award Committee (2010)
Sunday, January 25, 10:30 a.m.–12:30
p.m.

Bechtel Fellowship Committee*
Sunday, January 25, 8–10 a.m.

Belpré Award Committee (2009)*

Friday, January 23, 8–11:30 a.m.

Saturday, January 24, 8 a.m.–12:30 p.m.
and 8–10 p.m.

Sunday, January 25, 8 a.m.–12 noon

Belpré Award Committee (2010)

Sunday, January 25, 4–6 p.m.

Board of Directors

Saturday, January 24, 2–5:30 p.m.

Monday, January 26, 2–5:30 p.m.

Tuesday, January 27, 2–5:30 p.m.

Budget Committee

Sunday, January 25, 10:30 a.m.–12 noon

Tuesday, January 27, 10:30 a.m.–12 noon

Caldecott Award Committee (2009)*Friday, January 23, 8 a.m.–12:30 p.m.
and 8–10 p.m.Saturday, January 24, 8 a.m.–12:30 p.m.
and 8–10 p.m.

Sunday, January 25, 8 a.m.–12 noon

Caldecott Award Committee (2010)

Saturday, January 24, 4–6 p.m.

Carnegie Award Committee (2009)*

Saturday, January 24, 8 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

Sunday, January 25, 8 a.m.–12 noon

Carnegie Award Committee (2010)

Sunday, January 25, 4–6 p.m.

Distinguished Service Award*

Sunday, January 25, 8:30–11:30 a.m.

Division LeadershipSaturday, January 24, 9:30 a.m.–12:30
p.m.**Executive Committee**

Thursday, January 22, 2–4:30 p.m.

Geisel Award Committee (2009)*

Friday, January 23, 8–11:30 a.m.

Saturday, January 24, 8 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

and 8–10 p.m.

Sunday, January 25, 8 a.m.–12 noon

Geisel Award Committee (2010)

Saturday, January 24, 4–6 p.m.

**Great Interactive Software for Kids
Committee**

Saturday, January 24, 1:30–5:30 p.m.

Sunday, January 25, 8 a.m.–12 noon and
1:30–5:30 p.m.Monday, January 26, 10:30 a.m.–1:30
p.m.**Hayes Award Committee***

Sunday, January 25, 8–10 a.m.

Newbery Award Committee (2009)*Friday, January 23, 8 a.m.–12:30 p.m.
and 8–10 p.m.Saturday, January 24, 8 a.m.–12:30 p.m.
and 8–10 p.m.

Sunday, January 25, 8 a.m.–12 noon

Newbery Award Committee (2010)

Saturday, January 24, 1:30–3:30 p.m.

Notable Children's Books Committee

Friday, January 23, 1:30–4:30 p.m.

Saturday, January 24, 1:30–4:30 p.m.

Sunday, January 25, 1:30–4:30 p.m.

Monday, January 26, 1:30–4:30 p.m.

Tuesday, January 27, 8 a.m.–12 noon

**Notable Children's Recordings
Committee**

Friday, January 23, 1:30–5:30 p.m.

Saturday, January 24, 1:30–6 p.m.

Sunday, January 25, 8 a.m.–12 noon and
1:30–6 p.m.**Notable Children's Videos Committee**Friday, January 23, 1:30–5:30 p.m. and
7:30–10 p.m.**Odyssey Award Committee (2009)***

Friday, January 23, 8 a.m.–6 p.m.

Saturday, January 24, 8 a.m.–6 p.m. and

8–10 p.m.

Sunday, January 25, 8–10 a.m.

Odyssey Award Committee (2010)

Saturday, January 24, 1:30–3:30 p.m.

Past Presidents' Breakfast

Saturday, January 24, 7:30–9 a.m.

**Penguin Young Readers Group Award
Committee***

Sunday, January 25, 8 a.m.–12 noon

Priority Group Consultants' Meeting

Saturday, January 24, 8–9 a.m.

Sibert Award Committee (2009)*Friday, January 23, 8 a.m.–12:30 p.m.
and 8–10 p.m.Saturday, January 24, 8 a.m.–12:30 p.m.
and 8–10 p.m.

Sunday, January 25, 8 a.m.–12 noon

Sibert Award Committee (2010)

Sunday, January 25, 1:30–3:30 p.m.

Storytelling Discussion Group

Monday, January 26, 8–10 p.m.

Wilder Award Committee (2009)*

Friday, January 23, 8 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

Saturday, January 24, 8 a.m.–12 noon
and 1:30–5:30 p.m.

Sunday, January 25, 8 a.m.–12 noon

For an up-to-date list of ALSC meet-
ings, visit www.ala.org/alsc and click on
"Conferences and Events." Always con-
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*Denotes closed meeting &

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MAY HILL ARBUTHNOT LECTURE, continued from page 15

surgery, I also attended a couple of major operations. For one, a pancreatectomy, I stood against the wall for about seven hours and tried to absorb not only the process but the colors and textures. My slowly dwindling energy level was not helped by the smell of barbecue created by the necessary cauterizing of countless blood vessels before the pancreas and spleen could be safely removed.

I also discovered, in the school's store, a wonderful book called the *Molecular Biology of the Cell*, and on the bottom shelf, almond M&Ms (small bags only). Unlike *Gray's Anatomy*, which I think is written for people who already know everything about the body but like heavy books, *Molecular Biology of the Cell*, all fourteen hundred pages of it, is written by scientists who really want people to know how cells work. Although I found the book incredibly accessible, I have not been able to locate larger bags of almond M&Ms.

Over the next couple of years, Anne and I would meet every few months, usually on Saturdays. I'd lay my sketches out on the floor and around her dog and whine about not knowing enough, about never knowing enough. All the whining and worrying that happened in between these meetings was tolerated with remarkable patience by my dear wife even when it seeped out on our increasingly less frequent date nights.

By this time, our kids were both in the early years of private school, chugging along a somewhat rarified and increasingly expensive path. Ruthie and I, both products of public school, decided for educational and practical reasons to enroll them in the best public school we could find, but it had to be in a real town and not a suburb. So, with the end of the book still nowhere in sight, we headed north. Norwich, Vermont (also known as 1950), is part of the school district that includes Hanover, New Hampshire, and therefore Dartmouth College.

Needless to say, education is pretty much a priority. It's a one-industry community

after all. We take the fact that the kids are generally off around 7:30 in the morning for the very short bike ride to school and don't have to be there until 8:15, as a sign that we made the right decision.

Studio 13 is a large airy space attached to the house. A two-minute walk from Dan and Whit's [General Store], five minutes from the bookstore and post office, seven from the library, and ten from the school, and directly over Ruthie's studio so coffee and conversation can be easily and frequently shared. It also happens to be the finest work space I've ever had. Vertical walls, windows with a view, and plenty of storage.

With the kids all sorted out and an ideal work environment to play in, the only thing now complicating my ability to concentrate on the book, besides the subject matter, was the fact that we hadn't been able to sell the house in Rhode Island. Since we'd been clever enough to buy it at the height of the market, we now had two hefty mortgages. It was empty, which required more expensive insurance. And it was heated by oil, which is like attaching a vacuum cleaner to your bank account and leaving it on.

I wondered if Sisyphus had ever found time to illustrate.

By mid-summer of 2006, and still just settling into Vermont life, I approached Houghton Mifflin about the possibility of finding an experienced writer to work with me. I had learned a lot by this time, and with Anne's help had even worked out a reasonable flow for the book, but I still lacked the confidence, not to mention the time, to produce both the words and the pictures single handedly.

By November, through various connections, they had located a fellow with a PhD in Biology and a string of accessible body books to his name. Richard Walker was hiding out in London, minding his own business and completely unaware of the Wagnerian opera that had become my life. Although we had never met, he knew my work and was intrigued

enough to shelve a couple of contracts and join me in the campaign. It was absolutely the right decision.

Roughly sixteen months after our first meeting in Boston, and much to everyone's great delight and enormous relief, the book was finished. And incredibly, I think it works, and this October you will be able to judge for yourselves.

At the moment, studio 13 is more or less clean and quiet. The jar is empty, my books are shelved, and even my toy soldiers are finally unpacked and on display. But the calm, though much appreciated, is only temporary, and the next six-year adventure is already beginning to take shape. How could it not be and how could I not welcome it? This life is simply too much fun.

My thanks to Deborah Stevenson and her committee for selecting me in the first place.

To Shawn Brommer and everyone at the South Central Library System for bringing us together in Madison.

To everyone at Houghton Mifflin, whose names I have not mentioned but without whose help over the years I wouldn't be here.

Also my thanks to the independent booksellers who actually know books even when the computers are down.

To all those teachers who know that real learning comes from asking questions, not from checking off standardized answers.

And finally to the true guardians of homeland security—the dedicated librarians—who fight ignorance and fear with information and protect freedom through their commitment to literacy.

We're all in this together, and there is so much to be done.

Thank you. ☺

Children and Libraries

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Prepared by Janet Russell

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THE LAST WORD

The National Text Messaging Bee?

Marilyn Sobotincic

Each month on our children's reference desk, I host a riddle contest for children of any age. It's always fun to see what they come up with for their answers. All the child has to do is write down his or her answer to an easy riddle question. The difficulty level is not the point; it's all about having some interaction with the kids at our desk. I must say over the years they have come up with very creative and delightful answers. The following is a typical riddle.

Where do rabbits learn to fly?

- A. Kindergarten
- B. The Hare Force
- C. Sesame Street

Rather than keep you in suspense, I'll reveal the answer. It's B.

Last month's riddle was a little more open ended but equally lame.

I start with G and end with E

When my neck stretches high,

My head's in the sky.

I am as tall as a tree

Can you name me?

Now, as you may have already guessed, the answer is giraffe.

All entries were correct except one (how did one child guess "elephant?"); however, I was amused by the fourteen ingenious ways the correct answer was spelled. Here's a sampling: *garaph*, *graijfe*, *giraff*, *girraff*, *jeraf*, *geraff*, *giraijfe* and *draff*.

I know elementary children are being instructed in different



spelling strategies. There is phonemic awareness method, the applying the sound symbol system, the multi-sensory way, the photographic approach, the "spell what you hear" technique, and I assume many more methods that are given a whirl each year by enthusiastic teachers. Each school year there are new and cutting edge methods for teaching our eager students how to spell. Spelling bees are still used to help children memorize their spelling words and every year the best of the best spellers take a trip to Washington, D.C. to vie for national honors.

That got me to thinking how the Scripps National Spelling Bee contestants would fare if they used some of the above mentioned strategies. Would the winning word in this year's sixteenth round have been spelled G-e-r-r-d-o-n-e or G-u-r-d-u-n?

I wonder if the contest is too "old school" for today's savvy pre-teen. Maybe it would be more relevant to have a text-messaging spelling bee. At least there would be no excruciating long pauses, or hyperventilating children who sound like they are seconds away from breathing their last. The judge would have to come up with the language of origin for the word, however. Would he have to say, Circa, L.A. 2007? If we had a text-messaging national spelling bee then the relaxed spellers would be LOL kids and the judge could GTAWTKHTS (give them a word they know how to spell).

As for me, I will just go back to poking out letters on my keyboard and hit spell check and hope it catches all my misspellings. I don't want to be disqualified in the first round—that would not look good on my résumé! ☹

Marilyn Sobotincic (sobotincic@mccl.info) is Children's Department Supervisor at Medina County (Ohio) District Library.

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.