Children & Libraries

the journal of the Association for Library Service to Children

Volume 15 Number 4 Winter 2017 ISSN 1542-9806

Association for Library Service to Children

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Early Literacy Practices
Couples Who Collaborate

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ON THE COVER: Librarian Stephanie Bange surrounded by her collection of literary dolls, which she recently donated to the de Grummond Children's Literature Collection, McCain Library and Archives at The University of Southern Mississippi. See her story on p. 27. Photo courtesy of Stephanie Bange.

WINNER 2017 APEX® AWARDS FOR PUBLICATION EXCELLENCE

Editor's Note
The Comfort of Books

By Sharon Verbeten

If you're like me, bookstores are your third home (after your real home and the library, of course!) I'm lucky to live in an area with a "big box" store, a welcoming independent shop, a half-price joint and even a large Goodwill store with an abundant and excellent used books section. Most weekends, you'll find me at one, or more of those places.

That's why I was so confused when someone asked me why, since I was a librarian, I frequented bookstores so much. "Don't you get all your books at the library?" he asked.

I was impressed that this person realized libraries are still vital—since all too often we hear the opposite, "Does anyone *even go* to the library anymore?" But I was still surprised at the comment. Of course librarians buy books, but I think more than that, it's simply the need to be *around* books—no matter where we are.

I relish in the smell of crisp new books—with my hands first to grab the stiff spine and delicately turn the pages. I even can sense that well-worn book smell before I enter the used bookstore—eager to see what's available and what stories the books might share about their previous owners (maybe they left behind a bookmark or, better yet, a photograph!). I could spend hours poring over the vintage treasures at the used bookstore, and I'm often the only one digging through the overflowing boxes of books at a rummage sale.

Quite simply, I can't imagine myself without books or a bookstore—to hang out in, scanning the shelves and losing track of time. Heck, I might even meet an author or two—like when I recently attended a reading by children's book author Barbara Joosse.

Here's hoping your weekends—or any free time for that matter—include plenty of trips to bookstores . . . even if you don't buy anything! &

I met children's book author Barbara Joosse during her recent visit to A Reader's Loft, an independent bookstore in Green Bay, Wisconsin.

Children & Libraries
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Circulation

Children and Libraries (ISSN 1542-9806) is a refereed journal published four times per year by the American Library Association (ALA), 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611. It is the official publication of the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC), a division of ALA. Subscription price: members of ALSC, $20 per year, included in membership dues; nonmembers, $50 per year in the U.S.; $60 in Canada, Mexico, and other countries. Back issues within one year of current issue, $15 each. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Children and Libraries*, 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611. Members send mailing labels or facsimile to Member Services, 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611. Nonmember subscribers: Subscriptions, orders, changes of address, and inquiries should be sent to *Children and Libraries*, Customer Service—Subscriptions, 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611; 1-800-545-2433, press 5; fax: (312) 944-2641; e-mail: subscriptions@ala.org.

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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. It also serves as a vehicle for communication to the ALSC membership, spotlighting significant activities and initiatives of the Association. (From the journal's "Policies and Procedures" document adopted by the ALSC board, April 2004, revised, 2014.)

Production

ALA Production Services: Chris Keech, Tim Clifford, and Lauren Ehle.

Advertising

Bill Spilman, Innovative Media Solutions, 320 W. Chestnut St., PO Box 399, Oneida, IL 61467; 1-877-878-3260 or (309) 483-6467; fax: (309) 483-2371; e-mail: bill@innovativemediasolutions.com. The journal accepts advertising for goods or services of interest to the library profession and librarians in service to youth in particular. It encourages advertising that informs readers and provides clear communication between vendor and buyer. The journal adheres to ethical and commonly accepted advertising practices and reserves the right to reject any advertisement not suited to the above purposes or not consistent with the aims and policies of ALA. Acceptance of advertising in the journal does not imply official endorsement by ALA of the products or services advertised.

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Children and Libraries is indexed in *Library and Information Science Abstracts* and in *Library Literature and Information Science.*

Children and Libraries is indexed, abstracted, and available in full text through EBSCOhost. For more information, contact EBSCO at 1-800-653-2726.

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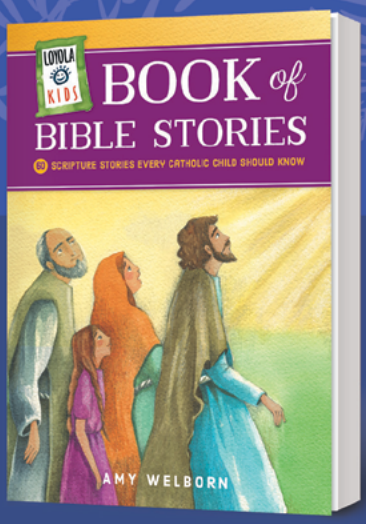

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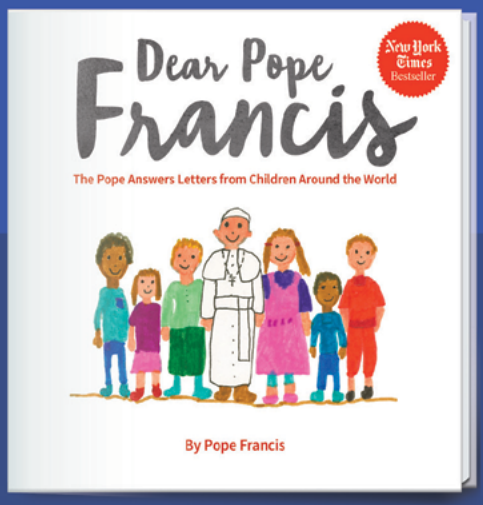

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Last Child in the Library?

A Survey of Use of E-books versus Traditional Books

CLAUDIA MCVICKER

Do kids even read books anymore? Don't kids just read on tablets these days? Why do we still have libraries?

Those flip remarks can be heard in many communities these days, from large cities to rural areas. But contemporary librarians should not fear. Recent reports of books being obsolete have been greatly exaggerated. One recent survey found that digital natives still prefer real books to electronic ones on their tablets.[1]

With the advent of one-to-one tablet initiatives in the public schools, tablet usage in the classroom has become increasingly widespread. The essentials of reading instruction have recently and rapidly changed with the appearance of tablets in elementary schools. Although recent tablet research reports describe their many educational benefits, e-book reading has yet to be realized and formally evaluated.[2]

Despite the possible benefits of tablets, research is lacking that supports the enthusiastic claims that they will "revolutionize" education.[3] Even so, it is not surprising that teachers and students alike rushed to use tablets for reading. Hoping for improved comprehension during electronic-text reading, a serious question from teachers has emerged: is reading better or worse in e-books?

There has been a sense of urgency to prove reading books on tablets is better. After all, the children of the twenty-first century love tablets and technology in general. Fittingly, it must be valuable to learn and read on one. School classrooms are purchasing e-books in lieu of more expensive traditional books and anthologies.[4]

Now teachers, librarians, and some parents have lingering questions. Is it better to have students read exclusively on tablets? Are e-books less or more comprehensible than traditional books? Should students be required to do one or the other? What do kids prefer and should they be allowed to choose?

Who Are Digital Natives?

Children in elementary schools today belong to the digital-native generation—those who were born during the age of digital technology and have been familiar with computers, smartphones, tablets, and the internet from an early age.[5]

Claudia McVicker *is an associate professor and reading researcher at William Jewell College in Liberty, Missouri, whose research has always studied young readers' spontaneous response to literature. Her most recent study investigated the format preferences, traditional vs. electronic books, of nearly one hundred ten-year-olds. The results of this research have been accepted for presentation at international and national literacy conferences in 2017 and 2018.*

"I read iBooks for fun and tBooks for Reading Workshop in school."

Aware of this, teachers and researchers recognize that proliferation of tablets in the classroom will only keep accelerating. With these powerful mobile devices come a lot of possible benefits for teachers and students alike. Current research delineates the benefits in the K–12 classroom.

One such research study, conducted in a kindergarten, found students using tablets scored much higher on literacy tests than students that didn't use the device.[6]

Tablet technology in the classroom can be a powerful tool for learning. Utilizing it for e-book reading was a natural leap for most elementary classrooms where teaching students to read and improving reading skills is how teachers spend the majority of their instructional day. Some schools have even stopped using any paper and pencils of any kind.

E-books or Traditional Books?

Much has been written in support of reading e-books, and we already knows what is effective for reading traditional books. But the effects of a book's format on reading should be considered. Louise Rosenblatt's foundational transactional theory of reading states that the reader, the text, and the poem (a metaphor for the context), make up the reading act.[7]

This means readers bring their experiential background to a book, interacting with the text's content and make meaning from within the context. Reader, text, and context simultaneously interact in every reader's transaction with text.

In my recent research,[8] the contextual setting was a traditional book in the hands of the reader or an e-book on a tablet. To better understand children's preferences and reading behaviors with tablet e-books, my recent study sought to compare the two, informed by digital natives themselves—fourth-grade students.

Plugged and Unplugged Reading

Five classrooms of fourth-grade students, who are independent readers and have read a wide range of traditional books since kindergarten, participated. The responses of ninety-four fourth graders in four classrooms in a school district on the west side of Kansas City, Kansas, were collected and analyzed. They were also surveyed to determine their perspectives on reading, such as viewing it as an academic pursuit, recreational activity, or a combination of the two.

Then the students passed through three phases. During the first phase, every student read a traditional book (unplugged reading). In the second phase, tablets were introduced into the classroom, and all students read an e-book (plugged reading). All students completed a tablet-usage survey, which found that all but a handful had prior experiences with tablets in their homes, but not in school. They reported they used tablets for games, video viewing, and other activities. Although a handful had read on a tablet, most had no knowledge of being able to read a book on a tablet.

After the first two phases, small focus groups were held to allow young readers to provide their insight and opinions about the two formats. At the end of each conversation, they made a choice for phrase three—reading an e-book or a traditional book. Surprisingly, the students did not hesitate to answer. Each had clear and distinct preferences for one or the other, as I'll discuss below.

Plugged Reading: Pros and Cons

As we move forward into the twenty-first century, we need to allow digital natives to read in electronic formats. As I will describe below, students as young as fourth grade can already articulate why they prefer it. They want to read e-books because they are so familiar with viewing information on a screen.

Remember, digital natives grew up with computer technology and are fluent in the digital language of computers, video games, and the internet. Reading electronic text feels natural for them, unlike for those of us who are digital immigrants—not born into a digital world.[9]

Today's children want and expect features like highlighting, immediate definition pop- ups for unknown words, and bookmarking for their reading. Most students in my study located these within minutes of being introduced to an e-book. They are quick to explore an app or screen to discover what it might have to offer.

Digital natives inherently understand the convenience of electronic storage and often mention how they can have multiple books, magazines, and newspapers archived or bookmarked for reading online. More than one student mentioned how much lighter her backpack was now that she has an electronic bookshelf on her tablet.

Most important to note, several students in this study who had reported they had become blasé about reading for recreation said that reading electronically had jump-started reading for fun at home and school. Several boys and girls admitted their parents limit their tablet time at home each school night. One boy brightened when this discussion began and shared, "My parents doubled my iPad use if I am reading a book half of the time."

Despite the electronic features available for marking text, the main complaint students had for reading electronically was revisiting text to find evidence for an answer during teacher-led reading groups. You can swipe back through the pages to reread, but it isn't the same as turning pages.

Another issue was the effects of changing the font. Changing the font size reflows the text, so students couldn't report a universal page number to answer the teacher's question so everyone in the group could reread too. Other children chimed in at this point and all agreed the page-turning "tap" is too sensitive, and may turn multiple pages if the reader's finger lingers too long on the edge of the tablet.

She's a plugged reader; he's unplugged.

Unplugged Reading: Pros and Cons

An interesting phenomenon happened when this study reached the third phase—the choice between the two formats. Thirty-six out of ninety-four, more than a third of the students, chose a traditional book.[10] Their reasons were mostly aesthetic. They liked holding a real book. One little girl lovingly hugged a book she had been reading, saying, "Sometimes when I just love a good story, I want to hold it. You can't hug an iPad."

Unable to articulate why, most just said things like "I just like how real books feel when you hold them." Unwittingly, they informed the main assertion of this study: reading electronically is not better or worse, just different. They could sense it, and it didn't feel right to some.

Students who preferred unplugged reading had complaints about the tablet navigation as well. Their main concern with reading on tablets was a feeling of distraction. One boy said, "Well, I try to stick to my reading, but then I start wondering if there is a good show I can watch on Netflix or maybe I can beat my highest score on one of my games, or I get a text that pops up. And then I have lost my place because I started thinking about other stuff I usually do on my iPad instead of reading." Even at this age, he could voice a concern about his ability to attend to text and comprehend while reading electronically.

Same, but Different

Classroom teachers, parents, and librarians everywhere are aware of the enthusiasm for electronic devices and are working to shift their thinking. The children of today's generation are no longer mini-versions of ourselves.[11] What we know from our past literacy development may no longer be relevant. So we continue to find ways to teach and inspire literacy with digital devices.

In this study, the teachers enthusiastically worked alongside the students to support their reading. Unsolicited, one of the teachers commented, "When it is time to come to the reading group with me, they get so excited because they know I will have them reading on the iPads."

Others used the tablets for their required silent reading time, reading more for social studies units, and even finding directions for projects in their makerspace.

Once e-book reading was introduced in the classroom, both students and teachers were motivated to find ways to integrate reading in this format. But they have not turned completely away from traditional books.[12]

Hopefully, children's libraries will always have traditional book collections available, especially for young emergent readers. I predict one day, the education world will look back and know learning to read must begin with traditional books; once a reader is independent, e-books can be introduced.

As one perceptive fourth grader said, "Real books helped me learn to read, but now it's fun to jump out of them and read on an iPad."

And what of those who just do not like reading electronically? A choice should be allowed. We need our traditional book shelves for both kinds of readers. &

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From left, Josephine Lee, Erika Lee, and her son, Billy, at the Gene Yang event. Erika and Josephine are both Asian-American Studies professors at the University of Minnesota.

St. Kate's MLIS students with Gene Luen Yang. Both photos by Katherine Warde, owner of Addendum Books.

On July 12, 2017, the St. Catherine's University Master of Library and Information Science Program hosted National Ambassador for Young People's Literature, MacArthur Genius, and award-winning graphic novelist Gene Luen Yang, where he spoke about Asian Americans in graphic novels.

Sharing the Secret Sauce

Engaging Early Childhood Educators in Library Storytime Practices

LORI ROMERO AND LAURIE ANNE ARMSTRONG

If you peek into Kirsten's preschool classroom in suburban Denver early on a Tuesday morning, you'll quickly notice that the eager three-year-olds are not the only ones enthusiastically singing, "Go Bananas!"

The students bring up flannelboard pieces for Karen Beaumont's *Dini Dinosaur* while answering, "What do you think will happen next?" In another story, *Ding Dong Gorilla* by Nicola O'Byrne, Kirsten and her children gather around the "library lady" who is visiting the classroom.

Kirsten knows she is in for a treat from Arapahoe Libraries early literacy trainer, Laurie Anne, who shares a love for books while reading a fun story for the children. Laurie Anne also strategically models ways for Kirsten to build vocabulary, background, and print knowledge.

During the storytime, Laurie Anne skillfully pauses to directly address the teacher: "Kirsten, notice how engaged the children become when I ask open-ended questions and give them time to think and answer. That's exactly how we develop comprehension."

Kirsten knows that the Reading Readiness Outreach program will help her understand the "why" behind the strategies and materials that are shared each time she receives a visit. She also knows that written tips and a practice kit will be left with her, and that the trainer will return to her classroom to help make it all stick! Through these encounters, Kirsten gains a mentor, support, and partner in early literacy. These are the perfect ingredients for reading readiness.

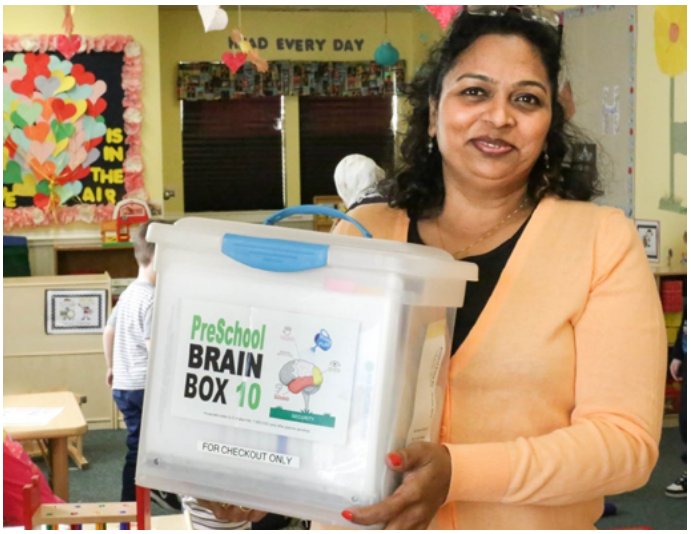
Our Story

Early childhood literacy is certainly a hot topic in libraries throughout the country, and for good reason. According to the National Kids Count 2015 report, 65 percent of children at the end of third grade are reading below proficient levels.[1] Intervention in the early years of a child's development is critical to changing that dynamic.

According to the Center for the Developing Child at Harvard University, "Early environments and experiences have an especially strong influence on brain architecture."[2] The Arapahoe Libraries believes we can have a great impact on education in

*Reading specialist **Lori Romero**, MA, Ed, is the coordinator and supervisor of the Child & Family Library Services department for the Arapahoe Libraries in Colorado. **Laurie Anne Armstrong**, MA, Ed, a former preschool educator, is an early literacy trainer for the Arapahoe Libraries.*

Laurie Anne and a classroom teacher collaborate during storytime.



Classroom teachers now use library materials and resources regularly.

the early years so that children are not at risk of falling behind by the time they start kindergarten.

Arapahoe Libraries is determined to be "all in" when it comes to setting the stage for children in the community to be motivated and ready to learn to read when they enter kindergarten. That means a strong library commitment to early literacy in eight libraries and on our bookmobile.

Is there a better early literacy resource and platform for reaching caregivers and young children than storytime-based programs at the library? We don't think so!

We realized, however, that we can also spread the early literacy message to adults who are directly involved in young children's lives outside the library walls. We recognized the potential to reach audiences who are unfamiliar with library storytimes or don't have access to a local library.

In our planning stage, we spent time in several early childhood settings where teachers see young children every day. It became clear that supporting preschool educators in a deeper, more intentional way through storytime could be the catalyst needed to jumpstart an early literacy ripple effect in our community. The Reading Readiness Outreach Program was born. The focus? Teachers.

In coordination with our state preschool learning guidelines, Reading Readiness Outreach work is grounded in the skills and practices outlined in the research-based Every Child Ready to Read (ECRR)[3] initiative. The library's early literacy trainer demonstrates effective strategies for reading, singing, playing, talking, and writing with preschool teachers in a way that makes an empowering and lasting mark. These teachers are deepening their understanding and refining techniques for turning everyday moments throughout a preschooler's day into powerful literacy experiences, beginning with effective literacy-based storytimes.

Laurie Anne currently works with fifty-one teachers in eight preschools. Arapahoe Libraries took deliberate steps to make sure we were hitting the mark by targeting sites with the highest needs.

Since there are many preschools within in our library service area, we had to limit our scope while maximizing our effect in the community. We developed a matrix that considers teacher education and experience along with reading test scores and free/reduced lunch data at nearby elementary schools. Armed with this information, and an established relationship with the preschool site director, we began working with both teachers and families in the chosen locations. Our goal? To bring powerful and intentional school-library-home early literacy connections to the table for a winning initiative.

Making School Connections

To be clear about the program's scope, it was important to have a defined early literacy curriculum based on ECRR skills and practices. The early literacy trainer's role is enhancing teachers' expertise in promoting early literacy. Along with an all-staff training, we ask each participating teacher to take a short pre-survey about their background knowledge.

Our trainer then visits the classrooms and observes the teachers' storytimes, revealing their strengths and exposing areas that need support through modeling, coaching, and follow-up conversations.

After the initial observation, our trainer then begins providing storytime demonstrations and having conversations in designated classrooms twice a month. She chats with teachers one-on-one, and leaves printed tip sheets that include book titles and songs. She also leaves practice materials in a kit, including a copy of the picture book modeled during storytime.

A parent and child check out book bags to share at home.

Laurieanne is frequently delighted at follow-up visits because enthusiastic teachers and kids can't wait to share. After she had demonstrated using objects in a box as props for storytelling, the children and teacher were excited to show her that they had made their own storytelling boxes later in class!

Another teacher excitedly remarked, "I remembered you teaching me that adding motions along with singing a song helps kids remember the words, and I have noticed the kids are asking to sing more and more often!"

Finally, one teacher showed Laurie Anne a great follow-up activity she and the children had done a few days after an introduction to the book *I Love Cake* by Tammi Sauer. They had baked a cake and created recipe books!

Laurie Anne sings the teachers' praises to the directors, keeping them in the loop about the growth she's documenting and shares what to look for as they supervise and evaluate their staff.

Making Library Connections

After realizing many of the teachers and directors had never been to the library before, we invited them to take a field trip to the library for a kick-off overview event. The Arapahoe Libraries early literacy team introduces the Reading Readiness Outreach program, issues library cards, demonstrates using the website, and provides a library tour to highlight materials, resources, and services for teachers to use. The effect of adding this component has been tremendous. Suddenly, more teachers are becoming library users.

Preschool teachers have begun showing our trainer the materials they are checking out to use in their classrooms each day and have mentioned they had no idea that the library has so many resources for teachers. It's clear how much the staff appreciates these off-site experiences.

Making Home Connections

The ripple effect of the program is strongest, of course, if parents are aware of what's happening at preschool and can follow up at home. We aim to build relationships and support for families as they get their children ready to learn to read.

First, a strong home connection was made when we began providing circulating book bags at preschools as a part of the Reading Readiness Outreach program. We purchased an inexpensive shelf for entry ways where families now gain access to motivating, age-appropriate books along with library information. The circulation of the book bags has tripled, and more families have begun to come to the library.

Second, each time our trainer visits and models early literacy skills for teachers, she also provides a handout for parents and caregivers. The handout includes early literacy tips, book titles, words to songs or fingerplays, and practical ideas.

Finally, a home-library connection is built with the preschool community because we attend family festivals, literacy nights, and informally meet parents during pick-up times. We are thrilled to promote library programs and resources, and parents are excited to see an enthusiastic face from the library partnering with their school.

What's Next?

The next leg of our journey is solidifying program outcomes. We now provide progress check points, along with pre- and post-storytime observations and surveys reflecting teachers' knowledge about early literacy skills. In addition, we are capturing anecdotal success stories throughout the program that can be shared with library board members and stakeholders in the community.

One preschool director says she realizes that it is so very important for her teaching staff to have a practical understanding of early literacy skills and the ability to apply these skills daily in their classrooms. She now includes questions about early literacy when interviewing prospective teachers.

To the director's amazement, the preschool teachers she has interviewed have had limited knowledge they could share with her. She knows the Reading Readiness Outreach program will be invaluable as she trains new hires.

Laurie Anne gives a first-hand account of the improvement one of her teachers has made:

> When Sarah and I first began working together, she was struggling with fostering conversation and participation

during storytime. After several visits modeling, coaching, and practicing, she has made remarkable progress. The children are excited and engaged, and are now being allowed to contribute ideas and ask questions throughout storytime. Sarah does a nice job balancing reading and asking open ended questions while listening and responding to the children. The teacher, Sarah, also commented, "The Reading Readiness program has made a huge difference in my planning for storytime and incorporating literacy into daily activities. I now use songs and fingerplays during transition times and leave flannelboard storyties and puppets out for children to retell stories."

Adding the Secret Sauce

Storytimes are indeed magical and feed minds, hearts, and bodies in libraries from coast to coast. Many children's librarians are equipped and on the lookout for opportunities to take the storytime show on the road through preschool and community outreach.

While this is important and wonderful, at the Arapahoe Libraries, we wanted to take an extra step. With our goal of supporting every child's early literacy success in mind, we hoped that adding an ongoing and focused staff development plan for early childhood educators could be the "secret sauce" that makes the difference for far-reaching success. The Reading Readiness Outreach Program was designed to share early literacy strategies with targeted early childhood educators outside the library.

Our early literacy trainer works hard to develop trust and strong relationships with teachers, directors, and families at preschool sites. Her passion is very clear. She dives in by inviting teachers to the library, modeling effective storytime techniques, being present for parents at events, and fostering consistent reflection with early learning providers throughout the year.

The Reading Readiness Outreach Program is bringing the library to preschools in a big way, and we believe this partnership of school, library, and home is a connection that will improve school readiness and help create lifelong readers.

Want to get started? Review your library's strategic plan. Consider whether your early literacy goals are aligned with your library's vision. Start small. Most youth services staff have at least one person who is knowledgeable and passionate about early literacy, storytimes, and ECRR, and can share valuable information about your library.

Connect with a preschool site and together discuss the kinds of specific support you might offer. Your library's commitment to early literacy, a manageable plan, and willingness to make friends outside of the library will give your program credibility and staying power! &

References and Note

1. "Fourth Grade Reading Achievement Levels," Kids Count Data Center, last modified November 2015, http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/5116-fourth-grade-reading-achievement-levels#detailed.
2. National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, "The Timing and Quality of Early Experiences Combine to Shape Brain Architecture," working paper, Center on the Develping Child, Harvard University, February 2008, http://46y5eh11fhgw3ve3ytpwxt9r.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2007/05/Timing_Quality_Early_Experiences-1.pdf.
3. Every Child Ready to Read is a project of the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) and the Public Library Association (PLA), divisions of the American Library Association. ALSC and PLA have developed early literacy materials and programs to help every child become a successful reader. See http://www.everychildreadytoread.org/.

Expanding Early Literacy Services

A Quick Bibliography of Resources

DARCY ACORD

Public service to families with small children has long been a traditional and respected role of public libraries. Storytimes for preschool children and collections of books for that age level have been mainstays in public library youth services since the 1940s.

However, in recent years, public libraries have moved beyond their role as resource providers, becoming, in addition, centers for early literacy education. Public libraries now provide intentionally focused storytime experiences, physical space and activities that support early literacy development, educational programming and interactions for adult caregivers, and outreach programming for high-needs families to ensure school readiness for young children.

This recommended, but not all-inclusive, bibliography explores the various ways public libraries actively support early literacy development, moving public service to this population group beyond traditional storytimes and material collections.

Association for Library Service to Children and Public Library Association. *Every Child Ready to Read, 2nd ed.* Chicago: ALA Editions, 2011.

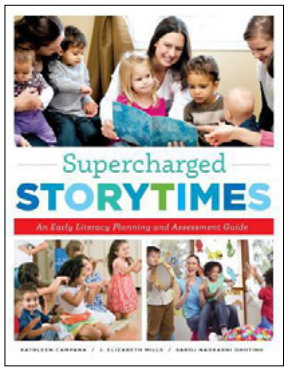
This cooperative publication from ALSC and PLA provides background information, reproducible training workshops, and supplemental resources to support the American Library Association's Every Child Ready to Read (ECRR) initiative. This initiative, a result of research such as the 2000 National Assessment of Educational Progress, responded to a need to increase kindergarten readiness, particularly early literacy. It moved public libraries' early literacy programming from being child-centered to focusing on parent and caregiver education. In 2004, ALSC and PLA published the first manual for implementing the initiative, but since then, that manual has been revised and updated.

While the first edition of the ECRR manual focused on programming to develop six early literacy skills, the second edition focuses on programming to experience five early literacy practices—talking, singing, reading, writing, and playing. The ECRR2 manual explains that research demonstrated that these five practices are more natural and comprehensible for adult caregivers.

The manual provides a valuable resource for libraries implementing or updating their early literacy programming, particularly for those libraries targeting education of adult caregivers. While the first section summarizes ECRR, ensuing sections provide scripted workshops, explaining the five early literacy practices. These latter sections are designed for delivery to parents and caregivers with or without children present, to library staff, and to community partners. Finally, the last section provides lists of early literacy milestones, booklists to supplement the five practices, and reproducible evaluation forms.

***Darcy Acord** is the Youth Services Librarian for Campbell County Public Library in Gillette, Wyoming. She is a former teacher, mother of six, and grandmother of one. She lives in Weston, Wyoming.*

Campana, Kathleen, J. Elizabeth Mills, and Saroj Ghoting. *Supercharged Storytimes: An Early Literacy Planning and Assessment Guide.* Chicago: ALA Editions, 2016.



Even as libraries incorporate early literacy theory into space allocation, patron interaction, and outreach activities, preschool storytimes retain their importance as the foundation of early literacy programming. The authors of this guide advocate planning those storytimes so that children receive the maximum early literacy exposure possible during their library experience. According to the authors, preschool storytimes can and should incorporate early literacy behaviors, both in the presenter's actions and in the children's responses.

Specifically, the authors advocate incorporation of the six early literacy skills presented in the first edition of the ECRR manual, although their recommended practices apply the five early literacy skills presented in ECRR2.

The authors advocate using intentionality, interactivity, and community to focus on these early literacy behaviors, thus enhancing traditional preschool storytimes. Intentionality involves careful planning of storytimes to maximize the early literacy experience, as well as being deliberate in the presentation of the activities prepared and in the educational comments directed at the adult caregivers in the audience. Interactivity involves using activities that encourage child participation. Community refers to collaborating with other storytime planners to both share and receive ideas.

While their guide offers many ideas for incorporating specific early literacy skills into storytime presentations, the authors advocate that children learn best through play. According to the authors, the best storytime sessions are intentionally planned so that children can playfully engage in a variety of activities and librarians can articulate early literacy connections to adult caregivers.

Dickerson, Constance. "The Preschool Literacy and You (PLAY) Room." *Children & Libraries: The Journal of the Association for Library Service to Children* 10, no. 1 (2012): 11–15.

Funding from a Museum and Library Services grant allowed a branch of the Cleveland Heights (OH) Public Library System to renovate a separate room of their children's department to create a space entirely devoted to early literacy learning activities. Dickerson's article describes the various activities incorporated in the development of the Preschool Literacy and You (PLAY) Room and details the planning and decision-making process of the librarians designing the space.

Important elements included props and activities that encourage imaginative play; a baby-safe station geared toward prewalkers; installations of free-standing early literacy stations; age-appropriate technology and computer stations; durable, child-friendly furniture; and flexible room dividers to allow for larger programs. In addition, librarian-created games and interactive activities highlight the five early literacy skill builders. Librarians have also created many hint sheets to help adult caregivers use the various early literacy stations as well as incorporate early literacy activities at home.

Dickerson presents a list of the items purchased for the PLAY room, along with vendor contact information, in a sidebar to the article. She then provides many ideas for low-cost alternatives to some of the more expensive elements, making this article a valuable resource for any library attempting to enhance its early literacy on-site activities.

Feinberg, Sandra and James R. Keller. "Designing Space for Children and Teens in Libraries and Public Places." *American Libraries* 41, no. 11–12 (2010): 34–37.

To establish early literacy programming, a library must have adequate space to accommodate materials, storytimes, and interactive learning activities. The authors walk through the process of designing a library space for children or teens; although the age groups differ, the process of design is the same. For this bibliography, the focus will be on the parts of the article that address library space for preschool children.

The authors recommend beginning with a community assessment to establish the number of young families with children. It should include methods of determining information about library accessibility and utilization. Input from potential users can help librarians determine how the library space should look and function.

Additional recommendations for designing a library space to promote early literacy include visiting other libraries (either in person or online) to gather ideas of what does and does not work, perusing catalogs to determine what products are feasible, and looking at architectural plans to assess how space can be allocated for early literacy and other services. The authors strongly recommend that librarians who serve children be included in planning meetings. The authors' recommendations about planning a children's department that can accommodate early literacy programming are valuable for any library considering new construction or renovation projects.

Foote, Anna. "Helping Children Learn the Six Skills, and Helping Adults Help Children." In *Six Skills by Age Six*. Denver: Libraries Unlimited, 2015.

Foote explores how libraries can help children achieve the six early literacy skills needed to ensure kindergarten readiness. The entire book provides expert advice for the development of an early literacy program at a public library, relying on the writing of early literacy consultant Saroj Ghoting. However,

chapter three is of particular relevance, as it explores the ways librarians can utilize preschool storytimes, the library's physical space, and librarian-parent interactions to help develop early literacy skills.

Regarding physical space, Foote offers advice for large, medium, and small libraries. Suggestions range from weeding the collection to free shelf space that can be used to house small bins of blocks, crayons, and manipulatives to installing interactive early literacy stations that encourage free play within the library setting. Foote explores the concept of free play extensively, defining different types of play and suggesting ways for libraries to use physical objects to encourage each type. Suggestions again range from those that are inexpensive and easy to incorporate into existing space to those that require a larger investment of money and space.

Steins, Jenny, and Valerie Kimble. "Growing Like a Read: Tailoring an Early Literacy Program for your Community." ***Texas Library Journal*** **90, no. 2 (2014): 66–69.**

Librarians at central Oklahoma's Pioneer Library System recognized that although their library preschool storytimes provided early literacy skill-building activities, these isolated sessions did not provide the routine and repetition truly needed to foster brain development in preschool children. Therefore they developed a program to assist parents and adult caregivers in incorporating early literacy skills into the daily and hourly routines of their children.

The article focuses on the development of the program, called Growing Like a Read, or GLAR. The foundation of the program included the ECRR manual, as well as input from local experts. These sources were used to develop sets of age-appropriate activities targeted at children from birth to age four; the sets of activities change at six-month intervals during this period. The article describes the adult education efforts, community partnerships, program incentives, grant applications, and staff training that were involved in the launch of GLAR.

Once the program was developed, librarians distributed the materials to adult caregivers who signed up at preschool storytimes. The librarians then focused their efforts on outreach services. The authors go on to document the use of the library website, efforts to reach underserved populations, and goals for further outreach that were part of the second stage of GLAR.

Stoltz, Dorothy, Marisa Connor, and James Bradberry. ***The Power of Play: Designing Early Learning Spaces.*** **Chicago: ALA Editions, 2015.**

In this guide, the authors focus on the best practices in play-and-learn destination design. Content includes a summary of the research supporting the importance of play in child development, a review of the best models of play-and-learn spaces in children's institutions, a guide to designing a play-and-learn space, and an appendix of useful resources and tips.

In the section "Mindful Planning and Creative Design," the authors not only provide a step-by-step plan for designing a play-and-learn space, but also offer chapters about pre-planning assessments; universal design considerations; design for small, medium, and large libraries; advocacy in the community; and activity planning, including instructions for adult caregivers, in the play-and-learn center.

The sample materials included in the book, including reproducible staff and community surveys, add to the value of this resource for public libraries considering a play-and-learn center. Although a separate center may not be feasible for many libraries, this well-organized guide helps libraries of any budget incorporate more early literacy activities into their existing library space.

Stoltz, Dorothy. "A Smorgasbord of Possibilities." ***Children & Libraries: The Journal of the Association for Library Service to Children*** **12, no. 2 (2014): 21–25.**

Stoltz reports on collaborative efforts by the Maryland Department of Education, the Maryland Ready at Five initiative, and Maryland libraries to increase kindergarten readiness among Maryland preschoolers. The first part of the collaboration focused on training public librarians about childhood brain development so that librarians would then, through daily interactions, train other librarians and adult caregivers with this information. These efforts led to a research project that demonstrated a correlation between adult training in childhood brain development and kindergarten readiness, underscoring the importance of librarians' role as early literacy experts and the importance of relationship-building between libraries and families.

Maryland libraries then capitalized on these relationships in their efforts to help high-needs families. The state's Early Childhood Learning Council applied for Early Learning Grants from the US Department of Education, targeting in their grant proposal the development of library family councils at ten public libraries serving high-needs populations. These library family councils offered educational programming about early literacy development, home environment, and lifelong learning. In addition, the ten libraries established community resource kiosks within their children's library spaces to provide information about social services to families. With appropriate training, librarians serving these high-needs populations were able to offer referrals to these social service agencies.

In these ways, Maryland public libraries offer quality programming to support all families while targeting additional resources to support high-needs families. This multiyear, multilayered effort demonstrates the role of public libraries in partnering with education and social service agencies to promote early literacy education. &

A Dance of Organized Chaos

Using a Village to Run a Children's Program

LAURA PITTS

I found myself laughing at the baffled faces of my library volunteers the first morning of our newly formed preschool reading time, Destination Library Tails.

I warned them that we would have a lot of people show up. These two volunteers had jumped at the chance to head an ongoing preschool reading time—one that could take place in the morning for parents with small children and for homeschool families. I was thrilled to have someone in the community who cared enough to dedicate two days a month to providing this service, especially because it would be an ongoing program. I just needed them to trust me when I said a lot of kids would show up.

I recognized a few months into my position five years ago that there was a serious need at our library to offer a story hour for preschool-age children. Providing programs during summer reading alone was not going to cut it, especially if we wanted to see the library grow with young faces eager to check out books and learn.

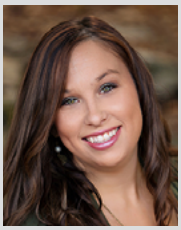
Over the past five years, we have been able to offer occasional storytime programs, but nothing regular. We are a small library with limited staff, and while our Friends of the Library organization is heavily involved in volunteer efforts, they can't do everything.

Having two parents offer to assist us with a program was a blessing in disguise—one that I was not going to let pass.

As with any library story hour, the programs take time to develop. Some program themes work and some dates and times do not work. Even the day's weather condition can hinder everything, including attendance—rainy days can be full of attendees or a bust.

Allie practices her coloring skills.

We created Destination Library Tails to incorporate many different levels of learning and topics to keep the interests for not only the children, but also the parents. The program is aimed at kids three years old through kindergarten, and the theme



Laura Pitts *is the director of the Scottsboro (AL) Public Library.*

Gemma is proud of her engineering work!

Adrien studies the plans carefully.

centers around our children's department mascot, my yellow Labrador retriever Leonardo da Vinci.

It's through the tales of his tail that we learn about several different topics—what it means to not be a bully, how to have good manners, and my favorite, taking a summer exploration around our community. Leo is a good mascot and the children love him. That is why I knew we would have a steady group of children and parents attend the programs.

The first program was very simple—read a book, do some type of fun craft, eat a snack, and have some play time with Legos and other building blocks from our STEM lab. We used the library's Facebook page to promote the program.

The volunteers (some adults and some preteens) expected us to have ten people show up; we had sixty. "Is it always this busy during a children's program?" one of the volunteers asked. I nodded as I ran to and from, herding all the kids to the back room, clearing my throat for the reading of our story and getting ready to be a kid myself.

Then, as if everyone around me realized the importance of what we were doing, all the parents began helping as needed, working with all the children to cut and glue and create their pieces of art. Each time we meet, the parents are so helpful with the children. The dance of organized chaos is one to embrace, and when your community has as great a need as ours does for literacy programs for children, that village sure does come in handy.

Calling Your Village of Volunteers

Each community is different, but the mission we all share is to help our communities reach their potential through our programs and services. It's important to realize that if you are planning recurring programs for children you don't have to do it alone. Sometimes the need to have extra hands on deck is crucial to having people continually attend the program.

Parents are watching to see how organized you are, and the children are looking for something fresh each visit. Consider sending out a call for program volunteers, being specific about your needs. Would a former teacher or someone who is currently working part-time in a school setting be the best help?

Librarian Laura Pitts poses with eager readers and man's best friend Leo.

What about that homeschool mother looking for a place to volunteer her talent? Having a good volunteer policy in place that lists certain do's and don'ts and requirements of volunteers (for example, completing a background check or having no criminal history) can help fend off the volunteers who simply will not be appropriate. Utilize your official library social media platforms and in-house fliers to spread the word.

Making It All Work

Understand that everyone brings some type of talent to the group. However, in my experience, I have learned that talent is sometimes not something you see from the outside. Occasionally you have to bring it out of people, and when you do, something beautiful develops.

The same can be said of the hidden talent of the parents and grandparents. One of your regular adults might be a very outgoing storyteller. Another adult might be extremely crafty and can help you plan activities and develop bulletin boards and fliers. You might even have an adult who works with children at a local church and will be willing to help lead fun story songs and rhymes for the kids.

Don't underestimate the power of a volunteer, especially one for a children's program. Volunteers for these types of programs mostly know what they are getting themselves into. It is no surprise to them to have a child come up with a runny nose, ask to go to the bathroom, or worse—as has happened to us before—find that the shaving cream art project made its way from the paper to the child's skin. (Yes, that child was green for a few days, but he just got to pretend to be a dinosaur.) Volunteers, especially those who are parents or have worked with children before, know what to expect.

Embracing the Chaos

Some days, your programs are going to go exactly as you planned. Other days, your programs are going to take place, just without as many volunteers or as much help as you need. Life gets in the way sometimes. Amid the planning, figure out a way to make your volunteers feel special. A special snack can make a parent's day just as much as a new pen or a notebook.

One of the most important things is to find a way for an adult to engage in a creative activity with a child. This not only provides a time for the parent to spend quality time with the child,

Working together is fun!

but also reinforces the idea of parent involvement that will be drilled in their heads once their child officially begins school.

Without volunteers to help us with our story times, we would be lost. They allow us to give all the children at our programs as much attention as we can.

Literacy programs for children have the power to inspire learning and creativity on so many levels. Having enough hands in the fire to provide that extra assistance makes the job even more rewarding as a librarian. It's one thing to have people attend a program, but another for them to take time out of their lives to pour into the lives of other children. Don't let those opportunities pass you by. Instead, figure out ways to nurture the volunteers you have and work hard to recruit more as needed.

Couples Who Collaborate

Picture Book Authors Miranda and Baptiste Paul

JENNIFER GIBSON

As in many fields, the myth of the lone creative genius simply does not hold true for those creating children's books.

While in traditional publishing, the writer and the illustrator of picture books are normally not in contact, both must work collaboratively with their editors and art directors on book projects and often rely on feedback from critique groups of their peers to enrich their creative work.

Yet what happens when your partner in life is also a writer or illustrator? *Children and Libraries* introduces a new series, Couples Who Collaborate, looking at the dynamic duos in children's publishing. We begin our series with Wisconsin-based husband-and-wife team Baptiste and Miranda Paul.

When Miranda, who grew up in Wisconsin, and Baptiste, who grew up in the Caribbean island of St. Lucia, began sharing their poems while dating in college, they never would have dreamed they would go on to become published authors.

Miranda attests, "Sixteen years ago, neither of us had an inkling that we would become authors or coauthors. Our family are trailblazers in that we come from families who have no background in writing. Navigating the industry has not been easy."

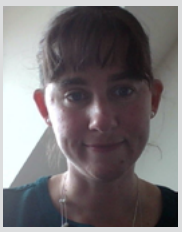
It may not have been easy, but their career paths have indeed blazed a trail—one not only of beating the odds, but of championing voices often excluded from publishing. Their upcoming book *I am Farmer* (scheduled for 2019 by Lerner/Millbrook), the story of Farmer Tantoh Nforba Dieudonne of Cameroon,

Baptiste and Miranda Paul, photo courtesy of the authors.

took years of research, including visiting the West African nation. Successful in both their individual projects and as collaborating coauthors, the Pauls have also paid it forward along the way through initiatives such as We Need Diverse Books.

You both have lived in different cultures. Miranda, you lived and worked as a teacher in Gambia. Baptiste, you were raised in St. Lucia and attended college abroad. How has this impacted your writing?

Miranda: Living in different places has given us an appreciation for what we know we don't know. We know there is always something more to learn about a culture or experience. In Cameroon, for example, there were so many things we could



Jennifer Gibson *is an illustrator and a High School Equivalency Instructor through Geneseo Migrant Center in upstate New York.*

only have learned by being there. Not knowing puts you in a place of humility, and that has informed what we do with our diverse books.

We know that no matter how much research you do, an outsider will never be able to have done *all* of the research.

In nonfiction there are rigorous standards, and what you find is that if [a topic] doesn't have a lot of sources, people say they can't write about it. But they are kept alive in oral history. It also feeds our curiosity; we will never run out of things to write about. We always have ideas.

Baptiste: The last time we were in St. Lucia, given that Creole is more of an oral language, I took some time and talked to many elderly people in the community. The older people are dying, and the young people are not as eager to listen to or share these stories.

When I grew up, during wakes or weddings or other events in the community, elderly people would come and be surrounded by kids, and just tell stories and everyone would sit and listen. I want to go back in time and just relive those moments.

What books or individuals influenced you both growing up?

Baptiste: Through my elementary years, I read the Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew. When I was a little younger, I learned that the classics—*Beauty and the Beast* and the *Three Little Pigs*—could be strong and powerful.

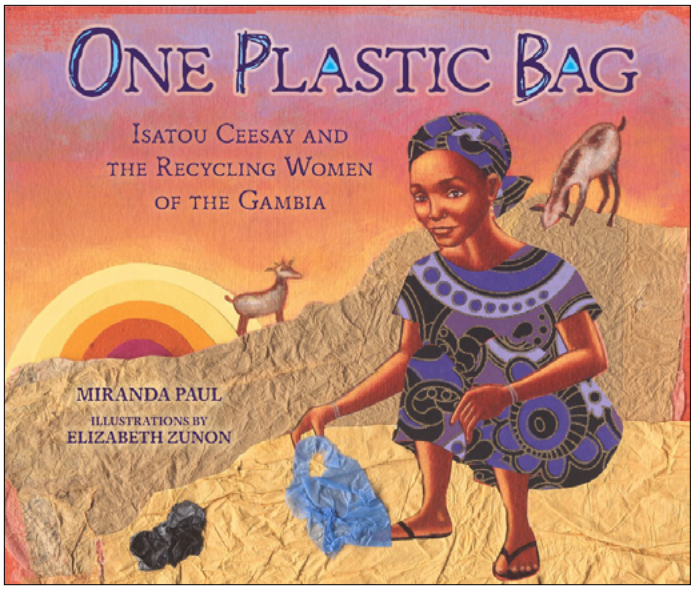
Miranda: I was an early reader; I was reading before I started school. I had teachers who recognized that . . . so they challenged me. I am really grateful for that kind of encouragement.

My favorite book was *The BFG* by Roald Dahl. Then [Lois Lowry's] *The Giver* came out, and I hear people now talk about that book and not liking it, but for me it was special because the child had a better moral compass than the adults . . . thinking that something is wrong, and then being able to call it out or act differently and change a cycle. Also, I feel very privileged to have found characters that looked like me or thought like me.

Baptiste: You saw yourself in books. I *never* saw myself in books growing up. Right now, my goal is to write for kids who are diverse. We are a mixed family, and we want to see all kids represented in books. We don't want kids to be left out; we want to offer material to which they can relate.

Baptiste, has bilingualism impacted the language in your writing?

Baptiste: With [my first] book *The Field*, I wrote in both languages [English and Creole]. Everyone in my country speaks Creole and English. It is a bilingual book and has a nice glossary as well to learn how to pronounce words for librarians and schools. It is important; some kids need an introduction



to another language. By doing that, I am creating curiosity in kids' minds.

And kids need to see themselves in books. I am the only one from my village who has written a book to be published. It will bring joy to the kids' faces. I am showing them that "Hey, you can do this too."

Tell us about your collaboration process for *I Am Farmer*.

Miranda: We met environmentalist Tantoh Nforba Dieudonne eight years ago. That is how long we have been back and forth and communicating with him and watching his work and what he has been doing. When we say nonfiction takes longer, we mean years.

Interviewing him via email, prior to our trip to Cameroon, we discussed how . . . we feel strongly about appropriate cultural representation, so we wanted to work on it together, to have multiple eyes on the manuscript, and to work directly with Farmer himself.

This primary research would be very difficult to do individually. *One Plastic Bag* [Lerner/Millbrook, 2015] for example was a story twelve years in the planning. It was very important to collaborate because of the level of primary research.

Baptiste: It is certainly important that we met Farmer's family and teacher—the people in the book. Also, we didn't stay in a hotel, but at his house. We ate the same food, etc., so as to be as true as possible to the culture.

Miranda: I don't think it is right to just write stories without understanding a culture from some sort of inside lens. We lived with Tantoh, we shared in daily activities with his family and kids, and we tried to be as authentic as we could representing him and his people.

These two spreads are from the upcoming *Adventures to School* by Baptiste and Miranda Paul, published by little bee books. Photos courtesy of and used with permission of little bee books.

How do your creative work and initiatives impact young readers?

Miranda: Not long ago, I got a letter from children who won a recycling challenge involving pounds of plastic bags turned into a bench. I have had kids meet with their local city council to discuss banning them. Kids are going and participating in their local government about trash issues and recycle issues. This is encouraging—they are taking on leadership roles. That is what my book *One Plastic Bag* is about. Everyone is a leader. You see something too big to ignore, you do something. The kids are inspiring the adults, making change. As children's authors, we know kids are smart and can change the world, but as a society we don't always honor and recognize how intelligent and passionate young people are.

Tell me about your diversity initiatives in publishing like We Need Diverse Books. Do you feel that the children's publishing industry is becoming more inclusive?

Miranda: I think that for a long time it has been an intention of many people to really change things. Stats don't reflect intentions, though.

In 2014, some colleagues and I did a social media campaign. Now, We Need Diverse Books is a nonprofit organization. But we are not the first people to take action—we are standing on the shoulders of many in the industry and have been keeping the conversation alive and turning that into action. I run the mentorship program for WNDB, but there are many other wonderful programs that are shifting parts of the industry or keeping conversation alive.

On a personal level, when you read books to your own kids at night, you want your kids to feel represented. Interracial and biracial children are the fastest growing groups; you would think that would be represented in the new books coming out, but we still have to improve.

What can librarians and others working with children do to support "being the change" and the social and environmental justice ethos behind so many of your projects?

Miranda: Kids gravitate towards certain subjects and things. If the librarian has taken the time to put them in a display, that's important. Displays matter! Also, being inclusive in your collection. We Need Diverse Books has an app [Our Story] where librarians can help patrons find diverse books.

Baptiste: Librarians have a lot of power!

How do you carve out time for creativity?

Miranda: We just make it happen. Baptiste works fifty hours a week. For the early part of my career, I was working as a teacher. The way we work together has looked [different] on every project.

Baptiste: We have worked on four books together, and each of us has different strengths, but we have the same core values and the same overall vision for the work.

Miranda: For us, it is doing the research and coming together. We email each other, sometimes we text each other from separate rooms in the house! Sometimes we are in separate rooms working on the same books. We both enjoy keeping quiet when we are working.

Baptiste: Whether working with a family member or not, we don't have time for egos; we are working parents and just make it happen.

What's next for you both? Any dream creative projects on the horizon?

Miranda: We are always working on multiple things. So *Adventures to School* comes out in June [little bee, 2018]. We are in the final stages for *I Am Farmer*, which will have the same illustrator as *One Plastic Bag* [Elizabeth Zunon]. I am playing around with a number of ideas; I am very interested in wordplay, language, and poetry, so I am toying with a poetry anthology book.

Baptiste: Memoirs! Some of my childhood experiences. More stories about me as a kid growing up in St. Lucia, more for younger children. I want to bring as much of my culture to kids in the US. Even though I grew up really poor, life was good. Just because you grow up poor, you still have fun. And I want people to understand that as well.

Miranda: I think that came up a lot with the book *Adventures to School*—our editor came to us with this project and asking us to write about kids, most of [whom] live in remote places. Even though a handful of kids have what many would consider dire situations, we know that kids are fun and having adventures and their stories don't deserve to be down-in-the-dumps sad stories. It may not be normal to who is reading it, but what is normal?

We wanted to show a well-rounded story for each of these kids. Sometimes they have a borderline dangerous way to get to school, but we didn't want to make a judgement over them; rather we wanted to share a sense of adventure that all kids share around the world. &

Watch for the Spring 2018 issue of CAL for another Couples Who Collaborate article featuring Candace Fleming and Eric Rohmann!

Building Upon the STEM Movement

Programming Recommendations for Library Professionals

ANNETTE SHTIVELBAND, LAUREN RIENDEAU, AND ROBERT JAKUBOWSKI

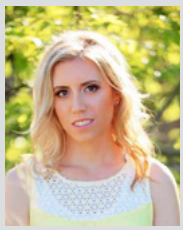
This material is based upon work supported by the National Science Foundation under Grant Number DRL-1421427 for the STAR Library Education Network: Phase 2 program. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation. Special thanks to Paul Dusenbery, Keliann LaConte, and Anne Holland (all at the Space Science Institute's National Center for Interactive Learning) for their help in reviewing the manuscript and Amy Koester (the Youth and Family Program Supervisor in the Learning Experiences Department at Skokie Public Library) for her insightful feedback.

A growing body of evidence is showing that youth develop their interests in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) through participation in activities across the informal and free-choice learning environments found in libraries.[1] Many libraries have joined a national movement in which libraries deliver STEM programming to youth.[2] Public libraries are a place for STEM learning,[3] and children's librarians are uniquely positioned to promote a love of STEM learning among youth through such programs. The benefits of STEM programming in public libraries are promising.[4] For example, participating youth can become proficient in key STEM content and skills, such as critical thinking and engineering design processes.

It is critical to youth and community success that these existing STEM programs continue to grow and expand. Public libraries are an ideal location for these programs. They provide a familiar and trusted learning environment for diverse and underserved families.[5] Providing children's librarians with a "six strand" framework will help guide the successful expansion of these fun and engaging STEM programs.[6] This article provides specific recommendations and resources to help prepare and support librarians feel in adopting and implementing STEM in their programming.

STEM as Part of Lifelong Learning and Community Engagement

Humans are natural scientists at birth, discovering and exploring their world and trying to make sense of it.[7] Yet research demonstrates that by the time youth reach fourth grade, a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third of all students have lost interest in science; and by eighth grade nearly half of students have deemed science and technology as irrelevant to their future career plans.[8] Students from under-resourced communities face considerable barriers in developing STEM skills,[9] such as limited school resources and inadequately prepared teachers. Therefore STEM education needs to be promoted in public libraries.

In fact, public libraries are becoming a natural and promising place for all youth to actively engage in free-choice STEM learning.[10] John Baek observed that libraries can become "on-ramps" to STEM learning by creating environments that welcome newcomers to the community.[11] Increasingly, libraries' missions, initiatives, and services reflect their role in improving scientific literacy and supporting STEM learning and education standards,[12] especially for those underrepresented in STEM fields.[13] Providing high-quality STEM community-learning programs with high participation can also increase community support and funding for the library itself. For instance, nearly all parents (96 percent) expect libraries to be important to their children's learning, with major reasons being the availability of information, resources, and digital media not otherwise accessible at home, programs and classes available, and cultivating a love of learning in a safe environment.[14] Now is a great time for children's librarians to create, implement, and improve informal STEM education programs, as there are significant funding resources available to support librarians in this pursuit (for example, the National Science Foundation, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, and private foundations).

The STEM Learning Movement in Libraries

Results from a national survey conducted by the STAR Library Education Network (STAR_Net) found that STEM programming is offered at least somewhat frequently in public libraries.[15] Of the 455 responding librarians, 29 percent offer STEM programming "frequently" (more than once per month) and 26 percent offer it monthly. When librarians in this study were asked what age groups they would like to reach with STEM programming, the following trends were observed: elementary students (396, 89 percent), middle school students (380, 85 percent), prekindergarten (328, 73 percent), and high school students (317, 71 percent).

Increasing numbers of librarians report that they want to see their patrons not just *consume* STEM information, but actively *create* projects via facilitated activities. The development of exciting and engaging STEM programs in public libraries aligns with the broader field of out-of-school-time STEM learning, which is not restricted to purely academic goals or subjective learning outcomes. The National Research Council developed a "six strand" framework to guide these informal STEM programs and describe what learners might experience:

Strand 1: Interest in Science. Experience excitement, interest, and motivation to learn about phenomena in the natural and physical world.

Strand 2: Science Knowledge. Generate, understand, remember, and use concepts, explanations, arguments, models, and facts related to science.

Strand 3: Scientific Reasoning. Manipulate, test, explore, predict, question, observe, and make sense of the natural and physical world.

Strand 4: Reflection on Science. Reflect on science as a way of knowing; on processes, concepts, and institutions of science; and on their own process of learning about phenomena.

Strand 5: Scientific Practice. Participate in scientific activities and learning practices with others, including using scientific language and tools.

Strand 6: Identification with Science. Think about themselves as science learners, and develop an identity as someone who knows about, uses, and sometimes contributes to science.[16]

Librarians can use this "strand" approach to cultivate STEM interest and skills in youth rather than simply being limited to more narrow academic standards or outcomes. Implementing these strands can help youth engage and practice their newfound skills with other youth. They also encourage librarians to mentor youth and build their STEM identities. This type of STEM-focused mentoring can help youth picture themselves as the purveyors of science knowledge and in real careers in STEM fields. Librarians getting started with the strand approach can be further supported by the following recommendations, which are intended to complement the strand model.

Recommendations

1. **Get to Know Children and Mentor.** Develop and maintain strong, supportive relationships with children. Library professionals can act as mentors and be inspirational to children considering pursuing STEM education and careers. To learn more, use the Techbridge Role Models Matter Online Training Toolkit at http://www.techbridgegirls.org/rolemodelsmatter/.

2. **Encourage Diverse Participation.** Emphasize and facilitate participation by children from groups historically underrepresented in STEM. This includes girls, minorities, those with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged individuals. Libraries already provide a familiar and trusted environment for underserved audiences, so libraries are an ideal environment to help such children connect with STEM.

3. **Expand Access**. Go the extra mile whenever possible to ensure that programs offered are truly accessible to all children.[17] Are they welcoming? Are program promotional materials provided in the languages commonly spoken in the community? Can you work with others in the community to provide transportation to and from the library? Many library professionals note the value of meeting children

where the children are—it is worth the time and effort to go beyond library walls!

4. **Find Support and Get Inspired.** Seek out professional development and support around creating, implementing, and improving STEM education programs. Join STAR_Net at http://www.starnetlibraries.org/ to participate in free webinars, access hands-on activities, and interact with other library professionals who offer—or are interested in offering—STEM learning experiences to their patrons.[18]

5. **Collaborate.** Seek out and collaborate with STEM stakeholders in the community engaged in informal children's learning.[19] This can include community-based organizations such as the Girl Scouts or Boy Scouts, STEM professionals, leaders in the community, and other libraries with STEM programs.

6. **Network.** Reach out to organizations that serve children to establish mutually beneficial partnerships.[20] The extra support and resources are shown to increase the effectiveness of STEM programs.

7. **Get Help with Program Evaluation.** Evaluate and track STEM program outcomes, including how your program influences the educational outcomes of the children served. Program evaluators can help support this recommendation. Visit the evaluation section of STAR_Net (http://www.starnetlibraries.org/stem-in-libraries/evaluation/) for information about how to get started and access resources from the Center for Advancement of Informal Science Education (http://www.informalscience.org/center-advancement-informal-science-education-caise).

8. **Share Your Program's Impact.** Share program evaluation results with child-focused community stakeholders to show how STEM programs positively affect your community. Also provide these results to other library professionals to help inspire their own STEM efforts. Your successes matter.

Children's librarians can support the movement by helping youth actively engage in STEM learning and programming. This engagement can help youth connect with STEM topics, develop STEM aspirations and interests, and consider STEM careers in the future. The "six strand" framework along with the eight recommendations described in this article provide children's librarians with useful information and resources to start or expand their STEM programs.

While more research is needed to understand the long-term effects of implementing STEM in children's libraries, this type of informal education institution provides a place that can capture the hearts and minds of today's youth in STEM learning. &

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Biscuit and Peter and George—Oh My!

Tales of a Children's Book Doll Collector

STEPHANIE BANGE

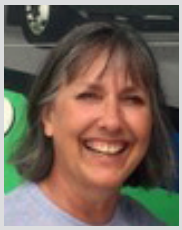
My name is Stephanie, and I am a collector. What are my favorite things to collect? That's easy—dolls! I bought my first Barbie when I was six years old. I was given a doll from Morocco at age seven. To this day, I continue to collect both Barbies and international dolls, but my third collection now numbers eight hundred dolls. During my first year as an elementary school librarian in 1979, I began to collect dolls based on characters from children's books.

I wanted to add some zip and zing to class visits at my school library. The previous school librarian had plugged boys and girls into listening stations with worksheets each time they came to the library. I felt my students were missing out by not hearing fantastic tales from exotic places and visiting magical worlds of wonder.

Bottom line, I wanted them to experience the joy found within the covers of books. That's when the first dolls from children's books—Corduroy, Curious George, the Cat in the Hat, and Winnie-the-Pooh—found their way into my shopping basket and my storytelling repertoire.

Photos courtesy of Stephanie Bange.

I acted out Corduroy's story by tucking the corner of his overalls so the button was hidden, then "sewing" the button back on (slyly unfolding the corner at the same time)—and *voila!* The button "magically" appeared. The kids were hooked. Then I donned a yellow hat and talked to and about Curious George,



Stephanie Bange *has worked in all kinds of libraries—school, public, special, and academic—during her library career and been an active member of ALSC since 1997. She served on the 2015 John Newbery Medal Committee and is currently a member of ALSC's Special Collections and Bechtel Fellowship Committee.*

Dolls Enhance de Grummond Collection

Ellen Hunter Ruffin

I will never forget the day Stephanie Bange drove from Ohio to Mississippi in a huge U-Haul truck. Up until that August day, we had experienced a mild summer—in Mississippi terms. That day, however, was one of those hot, humid days, and I had warned the de Grummond staff to wear "sweat clothes." I didn't really know what we were facing, but I knew it involved unloading a U-Haul, and we needed to be prepared.

Stephanie notified us when she was ten minutes away. We gathered our student workers, other special collections staff members, and we were all waiting under the loading dock when the truck appeared. When Stephanie opened the back of the truck, we were amazed—it was completely filled with plastic containers of dolls.

"Plastic containers" doesn't really describe what she brought. They were those Rubbermaid bins that had been carefully packed for travel. The contents were all kinds of dolls, all in mint condition, representing years of a dedicated collector's work. Each one was a storybook character connecting to books in the de Grummond. Some came with the books they belonged to, and some came in the original containers. I was stunned by what we found.

Even more amazing was the collection's organization. Stephanie kept records on every single doll, noting what book the doll appeared in, where the doll was purchased, how much it cost, and the date purchased.

I have met many collectors over the years and have seen well-kept records, but Stephanie's record-keeping topped them all. She had essentially done our job for us.

Of course, we *did* need to accession the dolls to see if the records agreed; they did. Our job is to sort, to organize, and to arrange donations in all conditions. But she had done the organization for us; we simply needed to decide how we would house them in an archival-safe manner and how they would be stored.

Some of my favorites in the collection were the anniversary-edition *The Lonely Doll* by Dare Wright, the Curious George Barbie, all the *Hunger Games* books and dolls, along with the *Twilight* characters—all eye-catchers, especially for traditional college students. Stephanie had even collected the Happy Meals that highlighted L. Frank Baum's *Wonderful Wizard of Oz* characters.

Since the donation has been with us for a year, we have used the dolls in many exhibits, such as during Banned Books Week and the holiday season.

Stephanie Bange, left, and Ellen Hunter Ruffin

The University of Southern Mississippi has several colleges that connect to the de Grummond Collection. Along with the School of Library and Information Science, the School of Education offers a children's literature course for preservice teachers and childcare workers. The Bange Doll Collection adds to the experience in those classes.

The dolls also enhance the college's graduate program in children's literature. Fifty years from now, the dolls and books will be considered historic and will contribute immeasurably to the study of children's literature.

It should be noted that our collection doesn't generally collect dolls. Our focus is on American and British children's books and original artwork and papers of the creators. But this collection adds to our holdings in a unique manner.

I often say we are a "library with museum tendencies," which is true of most children's literature collections. Stephanie's gift is something that will complement our holdings, and there is no end to what it will augment.

The best part of the donation is that Stephanie still has the collecting bug. She has a most-wanted list, and we at the de Grummond wait patiently for her to complete her collecting!

Ellen Hunter Ruffin *is an Associate Professor and Curator of the de Grummond Children's Literature Collection at The University of Southern Mississippi. Ruffin served on the 2009 John Newbery Medal Committee and the 2015 Wilder Award Committee, and is currently serving as the Councilor for the State of Mississippi on the ALA Council.*

relating stories of his many adventures to my young listeners . . . well, you get the picture.

I began to seek out other dolls featured in storybooks and used them when storytelling, reading books, and setting up displays in both the school and public libraries. Before the internet, I combed the shelves of toy stores in Rhode Island and Ohio until I finally owned all seven of the vinyl Babysitter's Club dolls.

Imagine my delight in 1993 when I discovered a small company named MerryMakers was manufacturing dolls based on children's books! Then, in 1995, another company, YOTTOY, also began to manufacture dolls from children's books. Searches became more focused as I scoured high-end department stores, toy stores, bookstores, and conferences looking for dolls from these two niche companies and a few others. Not that this collection became an obsession, really; rather it was an extension of my love of children's books and sharing them with others.

In 1995, I displayed most of my doll collection at work, in the children's room of the Portsmouth (RI) Free Public Library. It was so well received that I left the display up until I moved to work at Dayton (OH) Metro Library.

After settling into the new workplace, I missed not seeing and sharing my collection with all my young reading friends, so I once again put them on display, arranging them alphabetically by author and hanging them on the wall above the section of shelving where their books would be found. Readers found Curious George hanging over the books by H. A. and Margret Rey, Biscuit was at home near the books by Alyssa Capucilli, and Strega Nona hovered over Tomi DePaola's books. When I transferred to a different branch, the dolls came down from the walls of the old building and immediately went up in the new one. Once again, they made a ring around the room that delighted both youngsters and grownups.

I discovered this last group of admirers quite by accident. When taking them down in preparation to work at Wright State University, a mother asked me, "Where are you taking *our* dolls?"

At Wright State University, I did not have a place to share my collection. Although I was still actively adding to the collection, they were packed away, carefully stored in air-tight boxes in my basement.

During a tour of the de Grummond Children's Literature Collection at the University of Southern Mississippi in 2011, Ellen Hunter Ruffin was showing the group some of Ezra Jack

From left, Merrymakers' President Clair Frederick, Ellen Hunter Ruffin, and Stephanie Bange.

Keats's materials that they were setting up for a museum show in New York. I remarked that I had two Peter dolls that would have fit into the display nicely—and a light bulb went on in my head. I asked Ellen if the de Grummond might be interested in my doll collection, and she said yes.

In August 2016, I delivered the collection of more than 750 dolls, driving them down to the de Grummond collection in a U-Haul truck after spending my summer catching up on cataloging them (yes, I documented each doll and have copies of many receipts in six four-inch binders) using the same crude means (handwritten notes with photos pasted in) I employed since I set it up as a collection. Just before I dropped them off, I added a rare Rotten Ralph doll that had eluded me for years, and I'm still on the hunt for a *Rhinos Who Surf* doll.

MerryMakers' President Clair Frederick has been following my collection for the last ten years or so, watching it grow. I have been working closely with her as she realizes the importance of the collection to the history of children's literature and wants to ensure that as many of their dolls as possible are included in this collection.

In April 2017, I drove my car back down to Mississippi to attend the Fay B. Kaigler Children's Book Festival with approximately fifty more dolls to add to the collection, though I am still on the hunt for that elusive *Rhinos Who Surf* doll. Now that the dolls are ensconced at the de Grummond, I plan to continue building the collection in the future because I have not completed it yet. After all, I *am*, first and foremost, a collector!

Book Bonanza!

Celebrating Ten Years of the Bookapalooza Program

CORINNE DEMYANOVICH AND COURTNEY JONES

Florence County (SC) Library System staff, 2011 Bookapalooza recipient. Photo courtesy of Paula Childers.

Got books? The winners of the Association for Library Service to Children's (ALSC) Bookapalooza Program do. But where do all those books come from? Each year, ALSC receives thousands of books, videos, audiobooks, and recordings for the various children's book and media awards. The Chicago office fills up with books—and they all need good homes.

In 2007, ALSC Executive Director Aimee Strittmatter created the Bookapalooza Program to donate each year's award submission materials to three libraries in need across the United States.

A decade later, we celebrate ten years of donating thousands of book and media materials to deserving libraries.

The Bookapalooza Program is administered by ALSC's Grants Administration Committee (GAC), which also selects for three other grants: the Penguin Random House Young Readers Group Award, the Maureen Hayes Author/Illustrator Award, and the Baker and Taylor Summer Reading Program Grant.

However, Booklapalooza is the most intensive grant for the committee because it is the most popular. The committee reviews the applications and consider each library's needs, demographics, and budget, as well as how the libraries would incorporate the materials into the collection. Using these metrics, among others, to score the applicants on a grid, they select the three highest scorers as recipients.

Behind the Scenes: An Intern's Perspective

As the awards intern for ALSC, my largest and most important project was the Bookapalooza Program. When I first arrived in the office, I did not realize that the massive, floor-to-ceiling bookcases full of books and media would be all mine. I was tasked with splitting the whole collection into three sets of boxes, and I ended up packing roughly forty boxes for each library.

Though I enjoy exercising, the Bookapalooza process was physically tiring. It was quite the task to grab armfuls of books and load them into each box. Because it was such a lengthy process, completing Bookapalooza was a celebration! It felt great to pack up the last box and send off all the boxes to the mailroom.

The most helpful part about the process was determining the specific needs of each library. Judy Card, from the First Regional Library in Hernando, Mississippi, a 2012 Bookapalooza recipient, has a similar recommendation for future applicants: "Be specific about your needs and the impact the books will have on young lives."

Where Are They Now?

As ALSC reflects on a decade of the Bookapalooza Program, the office reached out to past recipients to follow up on how the grant helped their libraries. It was exciting to hear from our oldest recipients because it gave an insight into Bookapalooza's long-term effects.

"I was so excited that I could not contain myself," recalls Dona Helmer from the Anchorage (AK) School District College Gate

Corinne Demyanovich *is the 2017 ALSC awards intern, and* ***Courtney Jones*** *is ALSC awards coordinator.*

Display of books sent to Maricopa Public Library, 2015 Bookapalooza recipient.

Librarian Stephanie Charlefour, Gay-Kimball Library, Troy, New Hampshire; 2017 Bookapalooza recipient. Photo by Bill Ganade, *Keene Sentinel* Staff.

Elementary Library, a 2007 recipient. "The collection was old and did not adequately represent the student population," Helmer said. Many small libraries like theirs do not have the funds to update their collections. Bookapalooza gives libraries the opportunity to create a "more well-rounded collection," Helmer noted.

Like Helmer, Card remembered, "It was like Christmas every time some new books arrived." The First Regional Library was not the only beneficiary of the grant; Card explained that they were able to send titles to other branches in need. One of the branch libraries used the new books to start a summer reading Drop Everything and Read program that continues today.

Commenting on the wider effect of the Bookapalooza Program, Card said it "certainly spiffed up our collections."

The Talahi Community Elementary School library in St. Cloud, Minnesota, also created a summer reading program with their materials. school employee John Bowden said, "With 96 percent [of students] on free and reduced meals, they are students who come from home settings that are tough and they are in so much need." He also noted that reading rates went up at the library after receiving the new materials.

In 2011, the Florence County (SC) Library System received the Bookapalooza grant. "Our material budget was limited," explained Paula Childers. "We knew it would make a difference in our communities."

Because the winner was a library system, Childers explained that they went through the materials to see which location needed them most. Besides receiving an influx of materials, there was the unexpected benefit of receiving audiovisual materials that helped patrons with learning disabilities. The materials were also used for day cares, schools, and other children's agencies. Childers recommends that everyone apply for the grant: "You have nothing to lose, just lots of materials to gain that will make a difference in your community the way it did in ours."

David A. Howe Public Library in Wellsville, New York, a 2016 Bookapalooza recipient, was thrilled to receive the grant. "I honestly was flabbergasted, and it took me a few days for me to believe it was true!" Keturah Cappadonia remembered. "The rest of our library staff, being geographically and professionally isolated, did not understand the magnitude and significance of this award until the day when we received the delivery of more than thirty boxes of free brand-new youth materials."

However, the award also presented a challenge for this small library. "It took an entire year for us to process and catalog the items and put them all into our collection," Cappadonia said. But that hard work greatly benefitted the library. Cappadonia said that the new materials were featured in topical displays for library programs, including the summer reading program, Banned Books Week, Teen Tech Week, and Picture Book Month.

Another 2016 recipient, Nora Sparks Warren Library in St. Paul's Valley, Oklahoma, reported that the average age of material in its children's collection was more than thirty-six years. "When the boxes came, we felt like it was Christmas. We enjoyed digging in and seeing what came," said Shari Kendall. Because condition of the collection and the lack of resources, a lot of people stopped coming to the library. Kendall happily reported that the award "definitely impacted the number of patrons that come to the library."

The most recent Bookapalooza grant was awarded to the Yakama National Library in Toppenish, Washington. ALSC caught up with Merida Kipp to hear how her library is processing the grant.

"We are so happy! Even the boxes get hugs!" Kipp said. "The award has helped our library take a huge leap in expanding our

ALSC awards intern Corinne Demyanovich prepares the 2017 Bookapalooza award for shipment. Photo courtesy of ALSC.

children's collection. It probably could have taken up five years to purchase that many books for our children's collection."

One challenge of small libraries is the lack of space to intake such an enormous collection. Sara Martini of Talahi Community School in St. Cloud, Minnesota, a 2014 winner, said, "The books came in twenty-seven huge boxes and contained more than 1,350 items, worth around $24,000." That's a lot for a small library to handle!

While Bookapalooza certainly introduces some challenges like this, it solves many more. A very different challenge for small libraries is not having enough books for their patrons. "We physically did not have enough books for every child to check out two books," said Kristal Petruzzi of Northwood Elementary School in Crestview, Florida, which won the grant in 2014. "This will also allow multicultural literature to fill our shelves, which I'm really excited about, and also some modern non-fiction," she said.

Advice for Future Applicants

Some libraries may be hesitant to apply for the grant. But Shari Kendall of Nora Sparks Warren Library said, "Don't be intimidated . . . just because you are a small city library that no one has ever heard of because you may just win."

To make your application stand out, former GAC chairs have the following advice:

"Tell a compelling story," says 2017 GAC chair Susan Poulter. "Paint a picture of your community and library using statistics."

2010 GAC chair Linda Ernst recommends giving yourself time because grant writing is hard. "Be honest in presenting facts and be creative in how this grant would benefit your community," said Ernst.

Once the grant is yours, the committee chairs recommend showcasing your award to your community. For example, you could have an unboxing or launch party, like the 2011 recipient, the Florence County (SC) Library System. Make it fun and include your community!

For application information, visit http://www.ala.org/alsc/bookapalooza-program.

Are You Ready to Play Outside?

Jenna Nemec-Loise

Jenna Nemec-Loise *is Head Librarian at North Shore Country Day School in Winnetka, Illinois. She serves as ALSC Division Councilor and Member Content Editor of the Everyday Advocacy website and e-newsletter. Contact Jenna via e-mail at jnemecloise@outlook.com.*

Friends, this is my last Everyday Advocacy column for *Children and Libraries*. (*I'm not crying. You're crying!*)

It's been awesome sharing my light-hearted (if not slightly irreverent) take on promoting the purpose and value of strong Youth Services, but it's time for me to move on so Everyday Advocacy can, too. As I take my leave, I hope you'll indulge me in a look back on the spark that kindled my advocacy flame—play.

The Joy of Play

When I was a little girl, I was ready to play outside because of my grandmother, Anna Nemec.

Grandma was made of sunshine, and my young days rose and set with her. Summers were especially glorious because we got to spend them in her flower and vegetable gardens, where I always had a special job to do.

Somehow Grandma always needed my expertise! How many roses had bloomed since last night? Could I help Grandpa fill the watering cans? Tell her again: Which ones are the weeds, and which ones are the new shoots coming up? Now why are these geraniums looking so droopy today? I loved Grandma's questions because, of course, I always had answers to match them.

Outdoor play was never a grander adventure than in the Wisconsin Northwoods, where my grandparents had a cottage in Eagle River. How many hours did Grandma and I spend wandering wooded trails watching for wildlife, gathering wild mushrooms, and playing I Spy? I was always at the center of Grandma's quiet games and gentle challenges, and she was the center of my world.

My grandma showed me the joy of play.

The Dimension of Play

When I was 10 years old, I was ready to play outside because of my mom, Kathy Nemec.

As leader of Great Blue Heron Council Girl Scout Troop #349, my mom helped me and my five best friends—Kerri, Valerie, Chris, Jenny, and Jenni—play outside our own experiences with countless field trips and activities that got us thinking and doing in the world around us.

Mom was the epitome of "active learning and engagement" before the term even existed. As part of our World Neighbors badge, we baked, sang, and danced our way through Jamaica, live and direct from the halls of our church basement.

Mom was the original intergenerational programmer. Holidays always included special visits to Menomonee Falls Nursing Home, where we sang songs, performed skits, and played games with folks eight decades our senior.

And Mom was always at the forefront of diversity education. We spent an entire day at the Curative Rehabilitation Center in Milwaukee learning about physical and developmental disabilities. Through various simulations led by the center's staff, we got a very real, albeit small, sense of what it might be like to live with limited mobility, sensory capacity, or cognitive function. Together we learned how to celebrate developmental differences and become more compassionate world citizens.

My mom showed me the dimension of play.

Are you ready to play outside expectations by championing the role of play in twenty-first-century learning, in STEAM-based education, in Common Core, and in an increasingly digital world?

The Power of Play

When I was 17, I was ready to play outside because of my high school drama coach, Mr. Cummings.

My teenage years were heavy and dark, an overcoat that didn't fit but couldn't be unworn. The word *home* was synonymous with *volatile*, *unstable*, and *painful*. The fights were unimaginable. The fear was all consuming. Emotional safety and comfort were ever elusive.

I wanted to play outside myself. I *needed* to play outside myself. Play—and quite literally, *a play*—saved me.

In my senior year, my friend Mary suggested I try out for the school play because she was, and she was, I quote, "sick and tired of Jenny Z. always getting the lead." She thought I had a shot, and she was right.

I didn't land the lead, but I still ended up with the best role—Mrs. Banks opposite my friend Mike's Victor Velasco in Neil Simon's *Barefoot in the Park*. Rehearsals were at once fun and hard. Mr. Cummings pushed us. Mr. Cummings pushed me. "Where were you three years ago?" he asked with regret. *Lost*, I thought. *But not anymore*.

Each time I stepped on stage, the world around me fell away. In becoming someone else, I un-became the powerless girl who worried, who cried, who wondered if this is all there is for her. Life didn't hurt for Mrs. Banks. Maybe there was hope for me.

Mr. Cummings showed me the power of play.

The Magic of Play

When I grew up and became a professional librarian, a funny thing happened on a very ordinary morning at my branch. I *wasn't* ready to play outside because of a mother and her chubby-cheeked, giggly baby.

She'd come in just after the library opened and sit with her son in our children's room, watching as other families arrived and dove right into our board books, wooden blocks, and LEGOs. As the play became increasingly more boisterous and exuberant (my favorite kind!), I took up my usual spot on the carpet so I could join in the fun with the infants, toddlers, and preschoolers visiting that morning.

As our regular families scattered in favor of lunches and naps, I heard a soft, "Excuse me." I turned to find this same mother still sitting at a table, her son squealing with glee and banging a blue plastic cup.

"Yes?" I said, smiling.

She paused for a full minute before asking her question: "Could you . . . do you think you can show me how to play with my baby?"

"Surprised" didn't even begin to cover it. I had a lifetime of positive play experiences to call upon and a dozen years in as an early childhood specialist, but in that moment, I was confounded. She had an adorable baby sitting on the table in front of her, laughing and cooing. Surely she knew how to play with him?

But this was genuine. For the very first time, I was being asked to play outside my comfort zone as a children's librarian and model what came quite naturally to me. Where would I even begin with a beginner?

The cup, I thought. *Let's start there*.

"I'd be happy to help!" I said.

As soon as I walked over to the baby, he laughed and handed me the cup in his hand. I smiled and thanked him, then pretended to drink from the cup, rubbing my belly and saying, "Mmmm!" Then I handed the cup back to him. To my delight as well as his mother's, he put the cup up to his mouth and squealed. He handed the cup back to me, and as you might imagine, we continued to trade delicious drinks and enthusiastic responses for several minutes.

In an instant, I became the adult—the grandma, the mom, the Mr. Cummings—who helps shape play experiences for a child, and maybe even for a child or a teen like me.

A mother and her baby showed me the magic of play. So how about you?

Are You Ready to Play Outside?

Are *you* ready to play outside? (*Oh, I'm sure Mo Willems won't mind if I borrow his title.*)

Are you ready to play outside the reference desk and join in the fun of imaginative play with the youth and families who visit your library?

Are you ready to play outside the traditional roles of youth librarians by serving as a play facilitator and play mentor to parents and caregivers?

Are you ready to play outside your own professional service philosophy by reshaping it to include relationship-based approaches to play?

Are you ready to play outside expectations by championing the role of play in twenty-first-century learning, in STEAM-based education, in Common Core, and in an increasingly digital world?

Are you ready to play outside the library building by bringing messages about the value of play to stakeholders in your community?

Are you ready to play outside your comfort zone by advocating passionately and unapologetically for the critical role of play in the lives of all youth, from toddlers to teens?

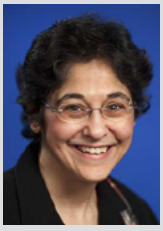
Yes? Well, good. Because now it's down to brass tacks.

Be informed. Engage with your community. Speak out. Get inspired. And now more than ever, share your advocacy story. Write those elevator speeches so you can get out there and do this thing.

It's been my honor to be your Everyday Advocate. Go make me proud!

Building Bridges to Early Childhood Educators

Saroj Ghoting, Pamela Rogers, and Dorothy Stoltz



Saroj Ghoting *is an Early Childhood Literacy Consultant who offers training on ECRR and early literacy and storytimes at www.earlylit.net;* ***Pamela Rogers*** *is an Early Literacy Trainer and* ***Dorothy Stoltz*** *is Director of Community Engagement for Carroll County (MD) Public Library.*

The more we librarians can be a part of [our partners'] world, the more our partners help us shape library services to be responsive to the community," says Mary Hastler, CEO of Harford County (MD) Public Library.

More than twelve years after its inception, the Every Child Ready to Read @ your library initiative (ECRR) continues to expand in response to our needs. To help library staff strengthen and deepen our connections with our community partners, the Public Library Association and the Association for Library Service to Children have enhanced the content in a new downloadable toolkit (https://www.alastore.ala.org/detail.aspx?ID=11997) targeting early childhood educators.

Developed as a parent-education initiative in 2004, the original toolkit offered library staff workshops and resources to reach parents and families to help their children (newborn to age five) enter school ready to learn to read. It has since been used to train staff, boost early literacy in a variety of programs, enhance library environments, and work with partners.

The second edition of ECRR, released in 2011, updated the early literacy research and structure and responded to feedback from library staff and workshop participants. By leading with the five practices—talking, singing, reading, writing, and playing—to develop early literacy skills throughout the day, the early literacy information became more easily understandable.

The workshops thus far have provided content and used wording directed at parents and caregivers. The term "caregivers" is used to include grandparents, foster parents, and others who may be the primary caregiver of the child. The context for activities, the wording in the slides and notes pages of the slideshow presentations, and the photos in the presentations have been in a home setting and one-on-one with a child.

As we learned more about early literacy and partnered with early childhood agencies and organizations, we found yet another opportunity—to offer trainings to childcare providers, Head Start staff, home-visiting staff, and other early childhood educators. Early childhood educators share common goals with public libraries—school readiness and supporting the family to help children be ready to learn in school. The development of the ECRR Toolkit for Serving Early Childhood Educators (ELE ECRR Toolkit) is in response to these shared outcomes.

This new digital toolkit for training early childhood educators is primarily aimed at public library staff as a how-to manual to train family childcare providers, childcare-center staff, Head Start teachers, preschool teachers, home-visiting staff, and others in early childhood education. Meeting the needs and requirements of these partners is challenging because of different training requirements across states and agencies. However, it is also an exciting opportunity to support our early childhood partners and the families we serve in yet another vital way.

The ECE ECRR Toolkit provides the structure and information to make it easier for you to plan trainings as you become familiar with the requirements for your state and federal Head Start early literacy standards.

How does this toolkit differ from the ECRR2 manual and workshops aimed at parents?

Because early childhood educators' trainings require more rigor around early literacy skills, the ECE ECRR Toolkit workshop slideshow presentations are structured around these skills. The basic workshop looks at oral language (listening skills, speaking skills, and communication skills) as a basis for all later literacy and then addresses the early literacy skills that lead to later reading. Phonological awareness, print awareness/conventions, and letter knowledge most directly support the reading skill of decoding while vocabulary and background knowledge most directly support comprehension. The suggested activities around the five practices focus on the childcare setting. The toolkit also provides you with both a pre- and post-assessment survey, which is often needed by the training agency.

Many of us who have trained early childhood educators have found that they often think of early literacy specifically in terms of sharing books with children, such as at circle time or storytime. Some of the suggested hands-on activities help early childhood educators become more intentional about early literacy around routines and activities, expanding their thinking by discussing ways to support early literacy development as we talk, sing, read, write, and play with children throughout their day.

The digital ECE ECRR Toolkit includes the following:

- planning guides
- basic workshop—slides and content in notes pages
- supplemental slides and content in notes pages
- icebreakers to use in the training
- handouts to use during the training, including a booklist and activities for each skill
- links to videos that can supplement your presentation that are based in a group setting rather than one-on-one with a child
- participant pre- and post-assessment surveys
- training evaluation form
- resources specifically aimed at working with early childhood educators

All the slides are customizable—you can add and delete slides as well as change the text and notes in the slide presentations.

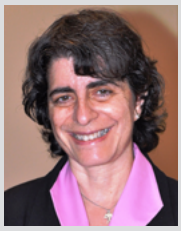
The ECE ECRR Toolkit is designed to be more than a timesaver for those who were adapting the ECRR2 Manual workshops for early childhood educators. In using the Toolkit content and going through the planning process, library staff deepen our own understanding of early literacy and our ability to interpret what we do and what we offer in ways that boost our value to early childhood educators.

In addition, this Toolkit can catapult us to yet a higher level in our early childhood communities as we all work together toward our common goals of helping all children enter school ready to read, ready to learn, and to be enthusiastic about both.

Brain Research

Who, What, When, Where, Why?

Betsy Diamant-Cohen and Annette Y. Goldsmith



Betsy Diamant-Cohen *is an early literacy trainer and Executive Director of Mother Goose on the Loose, Baltimore, Maryland.* ***Annette Y. Goldsmith*** *is a lecturer at the University of Washington Information School who teaches online from her home in Los Angeles, California.*

Within the past twenty years, it has become more common for children's librarians to look at brain research to explain the importance of what they are doing, since "the exceptionally strong influence of early experiences on brain architecture makes the early years a period of both great opportunity and great vulnerability for development."[1]

Responsive caregiving, like a volleyball game, involves reciprocal interactions (often referred to as "serve and return") that affect intellectual, social, emotional, physical, and behavioral development. This is especially important during the first three years of life when children depend on the adults in their lives for safety, survival, and socialization.[2] Science tells us that healthy children develop in an environment of loving reciprocal relationships with the important adults in their lives; because of this, library programming has expanded to include children under age three, and preschool programs now include adults as well as children.

Knowing about child development, the ways children learn, and the importance of parents in their lives affects the type of program that we plan and implement. Certain organizations, websites, and conferences are helpful for finding relevant information that can give us research findings and citations to support our work, spark programming ideas, and create developmental tips that explain to parents and caregivers the value of talking, reading, singing, and playing with their children.

The Institute for Learning & Brain Sciences (I-LABS) (http://ilabs.washington.edu/) at the University of Washington is an interdisciplinary brain research center that specializes in early learning and brain development. Their key areas of research are language, social and emotional development, cognition, and brain development. I-LABS provides free twenty-minute online training modules (http://modules.ilabs.uw.edu/outreach-modules/) to help parents and librarians understand different topics in the science of child development.

The Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University (https://developingchild.harvard.edu/) features many useful resources. The Resource Library (https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/) contains easily understandable information in the form of videos, other multimedia presentations, policy briefs, working papers, and reports. Their brief "Five Numbers to Remember about Early Childhood Development" (https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/five-numbers-to-remember-about-early-childhood-development/) includes these facts:

1. More than one million new neural connections are formed per second in the first few years of life.

2. At eighteen months old, disparities in children's vocabulary begin to appear.

3. Adversity breeds developmental delays; 90 to 100 percent of developmental delays occur when children experience six or more risk factors

such as poverty, caregiver mental illness, child maltreatment, single parent, and low maternal education. These can lead to delays in language, cognitive, or emotional development.

4. Adults who have had seven to eight adverse childhood experiences have 3:1 odds of developing adult heart disease.

5. There is a four-to-nine-dollar return for every dollar invested in high-quality early childhood programs. In addition to participants in early childhood programs benefiting from increased earnings in adulthood, public savings included lower expenditures for special education, welfare, and the costs of crime.

The May 2017 issue of *Young Children* (http://www.naeyc.org/yc/pastissues/2017/may), the Journal of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, is dedicated to the role of brain science in the development of young minds. Articles explain how brain science supports early childhood development, how caring relationships are at the heart of early brain development, how reducing parents' stress can boost preschoolers' self-regulation and attention, and how guided play and scaffolding can empower infants' and toddlers' learning, as well as providing us with a peek inside the brains of bilingual learners.

Learning & the Brain (www.learningandthebrain.com) provides professional development opportunities that connect educators with the latest research on the brain and learning and its implications for education in easily understandable language. Children's librarians are informal educators; we can benefit by participating in professional Learning & the Brain conferences, one-day seminars, and summer institutes. These events frame the information so it can be geared toward practical use by educators working with children.

The Dana Alliance for Brain Initiatives (www.dana.org/About/DABI/) is a nonprofit organization committed to advancing public awareness about the progress and promise of brain research and to disseminating information on the brain in an understandable and accessible fashion. They coordinate Brain Awareness Week, publish books, report on progress in brain research and allow you to sign up to have the latest neuroscience news delivered to your inbox. They also host the free online Girl Scouts Healthy Brain Initiative (www.dana.org/Publications/Scouts/) to help scout leaders create programs that encourage brain healthy lifestyles.

"Changing Brains" (http://changingbrains.uoregon.edu/watch.html) is a series of free videos that feature leading researchers describing keys to healthy brain development. The two-to-ten-minute videos focus on brain plasticity, imagining and development, vision, hearing, motor system, attention, language, reading, math, music, emotions, and learning.

PubMed (http://pubmed.gov) is the US National Library of Medicine's premier search system for health information, and it can be accessed free online. It comprises more than twenty-seven million citations to biomedical literature and online books as well as many links to full-text content.

Butterfly Wings: Laughing and Learning with Littles (www.butterflywingsearlyyearsconsultancy.com.au/laughing--learning/) is maintained by two Australian Early Years consultants. Although the offerings are limited, this is a joyful and useful site. Clicking on the menu for "Rhymes" takes you to great brain-based developmental tips and creative programming ideas to accompany rhymes such as "You Are My Sunshine" and "The Veggie Macarena."

References

1. Jack P. Shonkoff, "Breakthrough Impacts: What Science Tells Us about Supporting Early Childhood Development," *Young Children* 72, no. 2 (2017): 9.
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Index to Advertisers

Pitching Poetry

Laura Purdie Salas

Libraries are a place to walk on the wild side, to try something new. As a reader, when I walk into a library, I feel like an adventurer setting off on a grand expedition of discovery. As a writer, I love it when librarians guide young adventurers off the well-traveled highway and down the small, shady path toward poetry.

Poetry gives so much to readers! It makes them feel something, and it connects readers to both the world and to each other. Its powerful, concentrated language builds better readers and writers, and, frankly, it's just a whole lot of fun. That's why poetry comes first, both in my heart and in my Genre Chant poem. Who can you lead down the poetry path today?

The Genre Chant

Ready to read?
What mood are you in?
Limitless choices!
Where to begin?

poetry
(lines to crack world's heart)
picture books
(words, swirled with art)
informational
(factual—please, tell me more)
realistic fiction
(it's the girl next door)
fantastic fiction
(weird worlds—wow!)
contemporary fiction
(it's happening now)
biography
(life of one human being)
modern fantasy
(teens and the ghosts they are seeing)
historical fiction
(about a time gone by)
science fiction
(it's possible pi-in-the-sky)
folklore
(passed down age upon age)

They all wait for you.
Turn the page. &

Laura Purdie Salas *is a children's writer, poet, and visiting author. Her many poetry and nonfiction books include* If You Were the Moon, Water Can Be…, *and* BookSpeak! *A printable mini-poster of The Genre Chant is available at http://tinyurl.com/y8geb923, and you can visit the author at www.laurasalas.com.*

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

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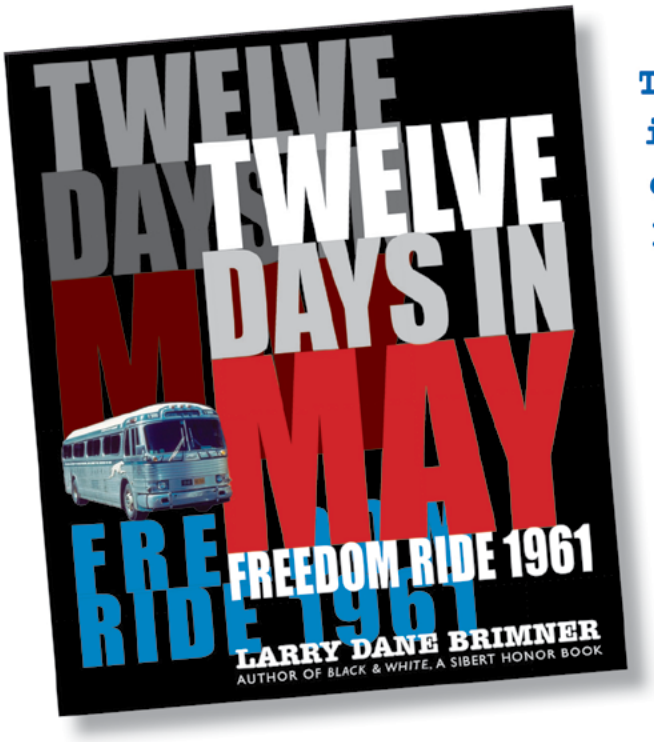

The first Freedom Ride unfolds in riveting and well-researched detail in this book by Sibert Honor recipient Larry Dane Brimner, author of many award-winning civil rights titles.

★ "An engaging and accessible account . . . Brimner . . . presents a straightforward narrative approach to the subject that will appeal to readers. . . . An essential part of civil rights collections and a worthy addition to all nonfiction shelves."
—*School Library Journal*, starred review

★ "Brimner, whose books on the civil rights era include *Birmingham Sunday* (2010) and *Black and White* (2011), presents a tightly focused, present-tense account of what happened during the May 1961 Freedom Rides. . . . A memorable presentation of inherently dramatic and historically significant events."
—*Booklist*, starred review

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—*Kirkus Reviews*

"An excellent resource on this historic event and its participants."
—*School Library Connection*

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