

# Children & Libraries

the journal of the Association for  
Library Service to Children

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Association for Library Service to Children

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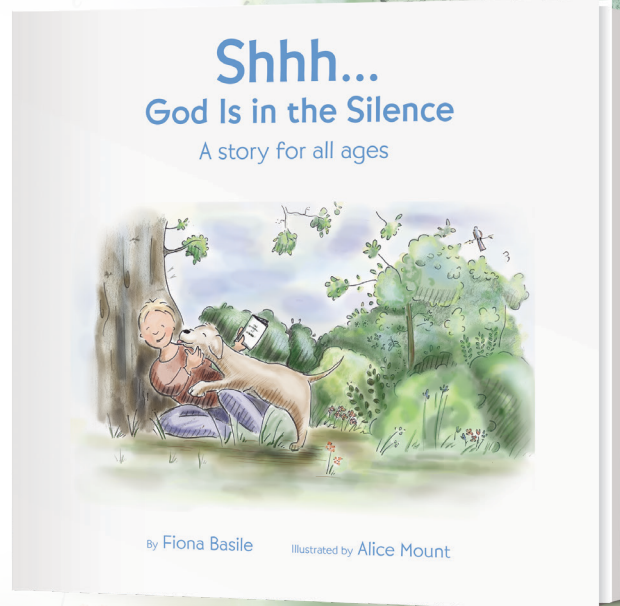
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## Editor's Note Wilder, the Mass Media, and Social Media

By Sharon Verbeten

It's a big deal when the library world gets in the national news. I mean, it doesn't happen every day. And usually, when it does, the news is not positive.

This summer, the children's library world burst into the national news—and into swift social media discussion—with the ALSC board's unanimous decision to change the name of the Laura Ingalls Wilder Award to the Children's Literature Legacy Award.

The decision was not taken lightly by the board, but it was rousingly greeted by the 900-plus attendees at the Newbery Caldecott Legacy Banquet held in June at the ALA Annual Conference in New Orleans.

Public stances have varied greatly in the mass media—often by pundits and those not familiar with either Wilder's work or the mission and goals of the library world. Social media has been abuzz ever since, and opinions even within children's librarianship have been discordant and, at times, heated.

As ALSC members, we should keep in mind the hard work our board does to keep the mission and strategic goals of the association forefront. And whether you agree with the name change or not, it's still arguably a good thing that the decision is getting a lot of press.

No publicity is bad publicity—and if this change gets people talking authors, libraries, books, and, yes, diversity, then I call it a win-win for everyone.

I'm sure we've all noticed an uptick in copies of Wilder's books circulating after this decision. That's great—those who want to know more about the decision and her works are right to do their own research and make up their own minds.

Controversy is healthy when discourse is done in a respectful way. This decision, and the media coverage it wrought, keeps libraries front of mind, and I believe we could use a bit more of that in the mainstream media today.

Librarians are a living, breathing source of knowledge; we're hardworking and critically thinking individuals looking out for not only our membership but also, and more importantly, those we serve.

Kudos to the ALSC board for making this decision, and congratulations to all of you who have added your voices to the debate—*no matter what side you're on.* ☺

# Children & Libraries

the journal of the Association for  
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# Facing the Black Child

## The Bold Direction of Twenty-First-Century Picturebooks

MICHELLE H. MARTIN

Years ago, as a Clemson University assistant professor of English, I assigned a service learning project to my students, all of whom were upper-class education majors who would become classroom teachers within a few years of taking my Children's Literature course. Each student visited our local Head Start for three quarters of the sixteen-week semester to read one-on-one with a child.

To gain a deeper understanding of both the children and the project, I participated as well and read with two four-year-olds, Taneal and Shawndre, to whom I became so attached that I continued working with them through elementary school.

My most memorable encounter with these two girls was our reading of Doreen Rappaport and Bryan Collier's *Martin's Big Words* (Scholastic, 2001). When I read, "On his second day there, he was shot. He died," Taneal asked why.

Her grandma had told her Martin Luther King Jr. was a good man; why would someone shoot him? I assured her that he was a good man, but people didn't like that he was trying to make life better for African Americans like us. Accustomed

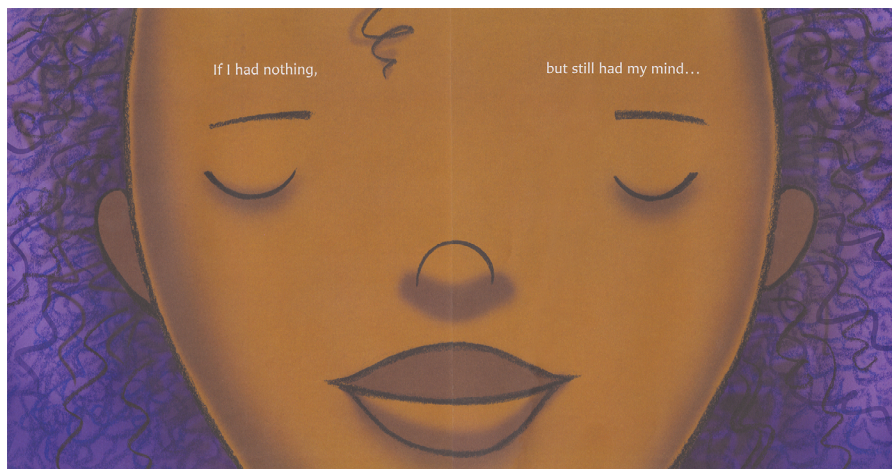
to looking for the photo of the author and/or illustrator on the back flap, Shawndre asked if she could see a picture on the flap of the person who had shot Martin Luther King Jr. What stayed with me even more was our discussion of Bryan Collier's image of the young black girl whose face and torso appear over a fragmented image of the American flag.

The young readers commented on the girl's stern expression and direct gaze, and I asked them why they thought she was frowning. One answered, "Maybe she's not happy with the way America is treating her," and a discussion about discrimination ensued—one much more complicated than I had thought possible with four-year-olds.

Committed to exposing my book buddies to "mirror books," in Rudine Sims Bishop's terms,<sup>1</sup> I usually made sure the girls' readings included lots of books by and about people of color. But as an African American reader born in the mid-1960s, I had grown up with (almost exclusively) white children looking out at me from between the covers of the books I read. Hence, this confrontational gaze of the black child struck me as unusual and innovative.



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From *What If . . .* by Samantha Berger, illustrated by Mike Curato, copyright © 2018. Reprinted by permission of Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, an imprint of Hachette Book Group, Inc.



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I was accustomed to seeing images like Sophie's from Molly Bang's *When Sophie Gets Angry—Really, Really Angry* (Blue Sky Press, 1999), which won a Caldecott Honor in 2000 and features a white, blonde-haired, blue-eyed sibling who gets so angry in a tussle with her sister over a stuffed gorilla that her whole face interrupts the story. Shown right of center, spanning the gutter and filling up nearly the entire page, her face illustrates just how much anger Sophie has. Sophie's piercing gaze, set against a bright red background, feels inescapable.

In Kes Gray and Nick Sharratt's *Eat Your Peas* (Abrams, 2006), a similar moment occurs. As Daisy, with brownish-red hair and a sugar-bowl haircut, insists more and more fervently that "I don't like peas," her mother just as fervently makes increasingly more ridiculous promises of what Daisy will earn if she will only eat her peas. Eventually, this promise involves "every supermarket, candy store, toy store, and bike store in

the world," the moon, and Africa (really?), among other impossible bribes.

As the encounter progresses, Daisy's pink-cheeked face gets bigger and bigger, eventually taking up so much of the right page that only part of her hair fits onto the page. Having kids like Sophie and Daisy "in my face" to make a point felt normal, while having a black child meet me with a confrontational gaze felt bold.

I write book reviews regularly for professional journals, and within only the last several months, I have reviewed an unusual number of picturebooks by and about people of color in which illustrators insist that readers face a child of color—not from a profile or rear view but from a face-front or even full-body view and typically at the climax of the plot.

This phenomenon occurs in Vanessa Brantley-Newton's picturebook *Grandma's Purse* (Knopf, 2017); Matt de la Peña's *Love*, illustrated by Loren Long (Putnam, 2018); Samantha Berger's *What If . . .*, illustrated by Mike Curato (Little, Brown, 2018); and Derrick Barnes's *Crown: An Ode to the Fresh Cut*, illustrated by Gordon C. James (Bolden/Agate, 2017). Each of these stories makes an important contribution to contemporary picturebooks by and about people of color, and I believe it's no mistake that they all make the faces of black and brown children the center of focus at the highest point of emotional intensity in each story.

In *Grandma's Purse*, the protagonist enjoys her Mimi's visits so much, in part because of what she finds in Mimi's purse each time she comes. This purse, a patchwork of colors with what look like multicolored ribbons bursting out of it (but could represent the purse's magic), contains items like lipstick, bobby pins, and candy, but it also carries photos of family members Mimi holds dear.

The last item that the protagonist pulls from the purse is a miniature version of Mimi's purse—a gift just for the granddaughter. The face-front image of this young girl appears after she has donned absolutely everything she finds in Mimi's purse—bobby pins, lipstick, earrings, "smell-good," and more. Taking up the majority of the right page, she smiles out at the reader, face swallowed up by Mimi's sunglasses, clearly happy to be in the admiring presence of and spending quality time with her Mimi. Her brown face and nappy, barretted hair, along with Mimi's kente cloth skirt and black doll, remind readers that this isn't just any girl—she's a black girl,



and one whose Mimi affirms her identity as a child of color.

In *What If* . . . the young brown-skinned protagonist with purple hair asks what would happen if her drawing pencil disappeared. She says it wouldn't matter. She'd draw in the dirt, tear wallpaper, carve wood, and even create art out of the contrasts between darkness and light. As she goes on an imaginative journey—a type of journey, it should be noted, afforded very few black and brown protagonists throughout the history of African American children's picturebooks—she uses her art materials and her imagination to travel to faraway places. Yet, when she returns home, observant readers will see that the objects integral to her fantastic journey all sit in her room. In the text accompanying the face-front image, the protagonist says, “If I had nothing, but still had my mind . . .,” whereupon readers open up the gatefold illustration to a four-page spread of her fantasies in full bloom. Hence, her closed eyes and peaceful expression suggest how comfortable she is with creating other worlds in her mind. Her broad lips, brown skin, and kinky hair give readers accustomed to seeing Fancy Nancy and Eloise as the poster children for imagination and imaginative play another option for who also belongs at the generative core of these flights of fancy.

In de la Peña's *Love*, both the author and illustrator emphasize how complicated love can be. Even when a little boy sits underneath the piano, head on his knees, snuggled up to his dog while his parents have a fight that seems to have turned violent, still the boy's parents love him. When something as catastrophic as a terrorist attack happens and nobody is explaining to the kids why everyone is staring at the TV in disbelief, love lives within that family.

As the image of the brown-skinned, brown-eyed girl directly addresses the reader visually, the narrator says, “And the face staring back in the bathroom mirror . . . this, too, is love.” The fact that this line culminates the commentary on many different types of love suggests the importance of self-love and self-acceptance, especially when the face looking back in the bathroom mirror is brown.



Reproduced with permission from *Crown: An Ode to the Fresh Cut* by Derrick J. Barnes, illustrations by Gordon C. James, © 2017, a Denene Millner Book, Agate Bolden.

Finally, in the “winner-take-all” picturebook of the 2018 American Library Association's Youth Media Awards, *Crown: An Ode to the Fresh Cut* by Derrick Barnes and illustrated by Gordon C. James, readers get not just the face but the full torso of the unnamed protagonist in a portrait spread that interrupts this landscape-oriented book. More than any other text in this article and perhaps even more than any other recent African American picturebook, the black male protagonist in this book positions himself in the reader's face from the first to the last page. Narrated in second person—“Every person in the shop will rise to their feet and give you a round

of applause for being so FLY!”—the narrator makes the readers’ participation inescapable; he is talking directly to you and often also looking directly at you. Steeped in bravado and hubris—“[A fresh cut] hooks up your intellectual.”—he exudes self-confidence.

Hyperbolic to the core—“He’ll drape you like royalty with that cape to keep the fine hairs off of your neck and your princely robes”—he raises a quotidian weekly or bi-weekly haircut to the level of an activity worthy of a standing ovation. Even more significantly, he also notes that many details of his haircut make him smarter and better prepared for academic excellence. Rare indeed is this connection in an American picturebook of any kind between a black kid’s self-care and scholastic aptitude.

Why are there so many books now that insist readers look at the black and brown child? Why are there so many books that position children of color as subjects at the center of their own small universes?

I believe these books would not have been possible without #BlackLivesMatter and probably #WeNeedDiverseBooks, #WeNeedDiverseReviewers, #ReadingWhileWhite, and other movements both within the children’s book industry and within contemporary American culture.

First, the appearance of this many picturebooks by and about people of color in this narrow a time span has only recently become possible. The Cooperative Children’s Book Center’s (CCBC) statistics have ceased to surprise us; we know how hard it is for authors and illustrators of color to publish within the mainstream children’s literature industry, especially first-time writers and artists. What these books bring into our 2018 conversations are reminders that not just white police but regular Americans need to see children of color. When white police officers don’t see them, they assume them armed and dangerous and shoot and kill them. When white children and their parents don’t see children of color, they stand aside and watch or walk briskly away instead of standing up and stepping in when they witness black and brown children suffering injustice. This bold new direction in twenty-first-century picturebooks addresses perpetrators of racism and bystanders alike with confrontational, proud representations of black and brown children who have stories they want you—all of you—to hear.

The average white American knows next to nothing about African American hair and the practices and rituals surrounding its care. In creating and publishing *Crown*, master craftsmen Barnes and James not only have joined Alexis De Veaux (*An Enchanted Hair Tale* [Harper & Rowe, 1987]), Natasha Anastasia Tarpley (*Bippity Bop Barbershop* [Little, Brown, 2002]), bell hooks (*Be Boy Buzz* [Jump at the Sun, 2002]), and a handful of others in moving something as sacred as the African American barbershop into the mainstream of children’s literature, but they also have made history by

winning both Coretta Scott King Awards as well as Newbery and Caldecott honors. As a result, people who, up till now, haven’t been listening to what black and brown children have to say, and people who haven’t been seeing them and their self-confidence and their pride, will have to sit up and start paying attention. And if you don’t get it the first time, authors of color will keep putting our children in your face again and again and again.

Given that in 2050, the minority will be the majority and that infant children of color are already in the majority,<sup>2</sup> here’s what the black and brown characters in these books are saying: *See us. We aren’t going anywhere!* 🗨️

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# Celebrating African American Children's Literature

## An "Eye of the Beholder" Workshop

KATE LUCEY

As an academic librarian at a liberal arts university, I was asked by our school's art museum staff to collaborate on programming for an exhibition by African American illustrators of children's books. The exhibition, called *Telling a People's Story: African-American Children's Illustrated Literature*, ran on campus through June 2018 as the first of its kind. To represent 33 different artists, the nearly 130 works on display included paintings, pastels, drawings, and mixed-media works. Artists included veterans like Jerry Pinkney, who has been illustrating award-winning books since the 1960s, and younger artists like Javaka Steptoe, whose *Radiant Child: The Story of Young Artist Jean-Michel Basquiat* won the 2017 Randolph Caldecott Medal.

Art curator Jason Shaiman and children's literature professor Brenda Dales considered more than six hundred books and fourteen thousand illustrations when selecting the impactful artwork for the exhibition. Shaiman wrote about the range of artwork in the exhibition:

Strong representation of events and milestones in the annals of African-American history, [including] . . . African Origins, Middle Passage, Slavery, Emancipation, Reconstruction, Harlem Renaissance, Segregation, and the Civil Rights Movement. Other themes draw attention to historical figures in politics, music, sports, arts, and entertainment.<sup>1</sup>

Walking through the galleries, I was moved by the powerful icons and cultural experiences depicted in the artwork—Billie Holiday with a gardenia in her hair; Miles Davis as a kid blowing his trumpet in a nightclub; Alvin Ailey's dance troupe in motion; Martin Luther King Jr. and his young son striding in identical suits—and I imagined that children of

color would feel pride and excitement when looking at the exhibition.

While surrounded by so many powerful and celebratory images of African Americans in the artwork, it was easy to lose sight of the fact that children's books illustrated by African Americans represent a very small fraction of the overall market. According to the Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC), which tracks diversity in juvenile literature, of the thirty-four hundred new children's books they received in 2016, only seventy-one—or 2 percent—of those titles were written or illustrated by African Americans.<sup>2</sup> This statistic is troubling if we consider the implications for young children of color. As Melanie D. Koss states, "Seeing self is critical, and not seeing self is even more critical because children may feel marginalized."<sup>3</sup>

Rudine Sims Bishop developed an extended metaphor to describe the impact of children's literature for young people. She began by comparing picturebooks to "mirrors" that can reflect aspects of a child's identity. She also suggested that stories can serve as "a sliding glass door" that supports children in encountering characters from different and



*Kate Lucey is education librarian at Miami University in Ohio.*

unfamiliar backgrounds.<sup>4</sup> Koss writes, "Picturebooks are written artifacts that convey cultural messages and values about society and help children learn about their world."<sup>5</sup> There was something for every child in this exhibition.

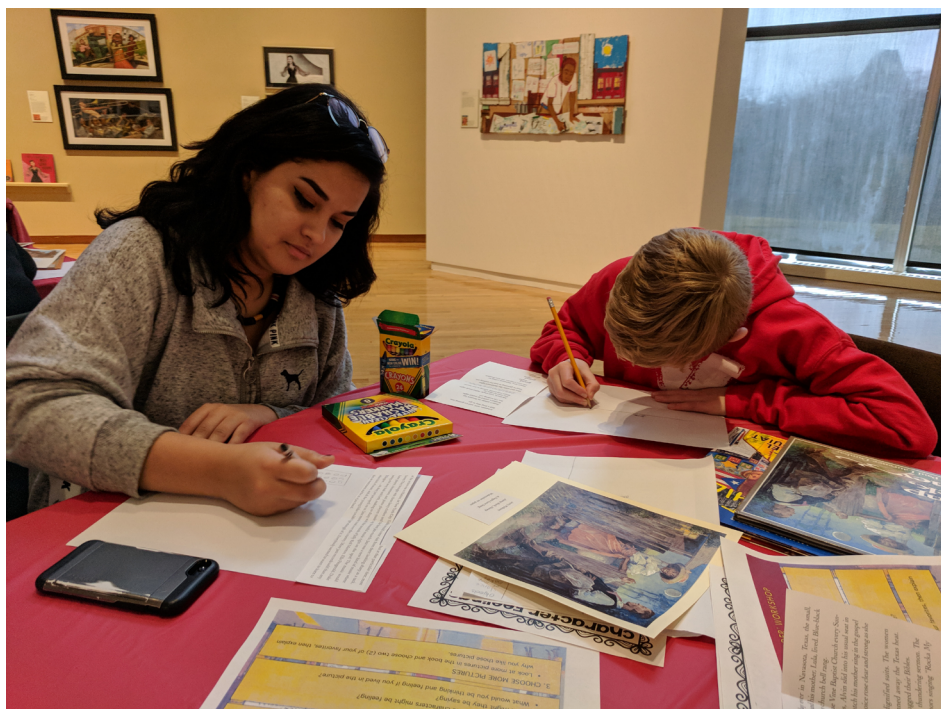
With that in mind, I planned an hour-long Eye of the Beholder workshop for community children and their caregivers. Since the workshop was being held in a gallery at the museum amongst the artwork, I wanted to encourage workshop participants to make connections between the artwork and the books that featured the artists' illustrations. I also planned to emphasize how the visual arts and writing can be used in combination to tell stories.

Having taught a book club for six- to nine-year-old children, I was somewhat familiar with the abilities and sensibilities of young people who engage with picturebooks. For the current workshop, I would be asking children to describe and build stories around the artwork in the exhibition. Since the activities would involve a certain level of abstract reasoning, articulation, and cross-think, I targeted a slightly older audience of seven- to eleven-year-olds. I would also require that a caregiver accompany each child to help facilitate the activities one-on-one.

To create the workshop, I needed to learn some fundamentals about art appreciation, so I turned to art educators and museums. Many of the online materials I found outlined a four- or five-step process—with minor variations—that involved viewing, describing, interpreting, and making personal connections.<sup>6</sup> Such a process provided a great framework for assisting children in their explorations of how pictures and narrative overlap. Based on the multiple steps for looking at art, I developed a three-part activity for the workshop as a way to scaffold the participants' experiences.

I planned to make the picturebooks available on the workshop tables so participants could see the artwork in context. The exhibition planners had requested a donated copy of each title from the publishers; I purchased any remaining titles with the understanding that they would be added to the juvenile collection once the exhibition ended. Otherwise, the expense of our workshop amounted only to drawing supplies.

To publicize the event, the university's art museum created a flier that we posted one month in advance on bulletin boards at the local public library and grocery store. The flier included my phone number and email address as a registration contact, and we indicated that space was limited to the first twenty-four registrants. The public library manager also



Photos by/courtesy of Jason Shaiman.

suggested advertising to Facebook groups affiliated with her library. Once we established a channel for web advertising, I developed an online registration form using Google Forms as another option for registering via email or phone. For those people who registered online, an automatic confirmation was sent, and I sent personal confirmations to those who contacted me by phone or email.

Only eight people, including children, registered for the workshop—with most registering on the day before the event. As it turned out, most did not show for the workshop, though many people who had not registered in advance showed up on the day. Seventeen people attended, including five children ages seven to eleven, three children under seven, four university students, and three women from the community who did not bring children.

For the first activity, Describe the Picture, participants viewed the featured artworks as images on cardstock. The artwork chosen for this activity possessed remarkable visual appeal and narrative qualities and captured significant moments from the stories, such as Kadir Nelson's oil painting from *Heart and Soul: The Story of America and African Americans*, published in 2011, and a collage by Ekua Holmes in *Voice of Freedom: Fannie Lou Hamer*, published in 2015. This activity asked participants to answer the following three questions:

- What do you see happening in the picture?
- What shapes and colors do you see?
- What other objects in the picture catch your eye?





Photos by/courtesy of Jason Shaiman.

To aid children in their observations, I supplied a color hand-out showing many adjectives they might use to describe the appearances, shapes, and sizes that they saw in the artwork, such as *elegant*, *old-fashioned*, *large*, *miniature*, *steep*, or *crooked*. This description activity prompted the children to use their eyes and voices together as they made sense of the artwork and started to “read” the picture.

The second activity, Live in the Picture, explored the narrative elements of character and dialogue as relating to the artwork. For this activity, participants viewed illustrations by Benny Andrews, Floyd Cooper, and Jerome LaGarrigue. Participants were asked the following three questions:

- What do you think the characters might be feeling?
- What might they be saying?
- What would you be thinking and feeling if you lived in the picture?

Building on the first activity where participants describe concrete elements in the artwork, the second set of questions encourages them to imagine what stories might lie beyond the more apparent visual details. In this way, they can increase their engagement with the artwork and also start to think like storytellers. As with the first activity, I provided a word list of emotions to prompt discussions.<sup>7</sup>

The third activity invited the children to look more closely at the actual books, select two additional illustrations that they liked, and explain why they chose the pictures as favorites. Books for this activity included Leo and Diane Dillon's *Jazz on a Saturday Night* (2007), which features a gouache painting of young Miles Davis blowing his trumpet, and Kathryn Lasky and Nneka Bennett's *Vision of Beauty: The Story of Sarah Breedlove Walker* (2000). To get at the heart of art appreciation, this activity encouraged the children to connect with the artwork based on their own experiences. The activity was also intended to promote a simple “interest in and enjoyment of books,”<sup>8</sup> also known as the early literacy skill *print motivation*.

For the final activity, children worked in reverse by blindly picking a text passage from a bowl that they then used to inspire their own drawings; I supplied markers, crayons, colored pencils, and drawing pads. This text-to-picture method reflects the standard way that authors and illustrators collaborate in children's picturebook publishing. Authors typically provide their stories and poems to the artists who then develop the artwork. I included imagistic excerpts of poetry and prose from several of the featured picturebooks.

According to the brief survey distributed toward the end of the workshop, everyone indicated that they “greatly enjoyed” the workshop. One person suggested that I also read aloud from a featured picturebook for any future workshops.

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# Couples Who Collaborate

Matthew Cordell and Julie Halpern

JENNIFER GIBSON

Considering the busy year this couple has had, *Children and Libraries* is lucky to have had the chance to interview current Caldecott Medal-winning author/illustrator Matthew Cordell and acclaimed YA author (and librarian!) Julie Halpern. The couple live in the Chicago area.

Cordell's 2018 Caldecott Medal for *Wolf in the Snow* (Feiwel & Friends, 2017), a near-wordless new take on the classic tale of a little girl in red and a wolf, tops an already prolific illustration career. He has illustrated, and at times written and illustrated, nineteen books, including the *New York Times* Notable Picturebook *Hello! Hello!* (Disney-Hyperion, 2012), *Dream* (Disney-Hyperion, 2017), *Wish* (Disney-Hyperion, 2015), and *Another Brother* (Feiwel & Friends, 2012). His crisp line and soft watercolor washes, such as in the recent *Rock and Roll Soul* (Abrams, 2018), written by Susan Verde, depict an energy and joy that are contagious.

Halpern's career as a novelist started off with a heartfelt and poignantly funny debut, *Have a Nice Day*, based on her personal experiences with mental health. Awards soon followed, including a Kirkus Best Teen Book of 2012, the Bank Street Best Children's Book of the Year, and YALSA 2013 Best Fiction for Young Adults. She has since penned seven novels on topics ranging from Dungeons and Dragons enthusiasts in *Into the Wild Nerd Yonder* (Feiwel & Friends, 2009), an ALA Best Book for Young Adults, to a cancer-ridden girl's bucket list in *The F-It List* (Feiwel & Friends, 2013), to predetermined soul mates in *Meant to Be* (Feiwel & Friends, 2017), all while keeping a fresh, funny, and relatable narrative voice for young adult readers.



We learned how the couple's love story is as unique as their respective creative works. Before meeting in person, Matthew actually knew Julie's work in zines and began writing to her when recruiting creators for his own zine release party. After a few initial emails, a zine party, and a sweet collaboration on a picturebook, their relationship and family has grown, as has both of their respective publishing journeys. The world of children's literature is all the better for it, and we can't wait for their next chapter.

**On her website, Julie outlines how zines brought you both together. Do you really owe it all to zines?**

**Matt:** We really do! I had just put together this zine with some friends, and we were having a release party in the loft I was living in at the time. So I thought I would reach out to some other Chicago zinesters that I hadn't met but whose zines I'd found and loved. (Chicago has an amazing comics and zines store called Quimby's.)

About a month before the party, I emailed Julie and her friend Liz, who co-wrote one of my favorites called *Cul-de-Sac*. The intention was simply to invite them, but Julie and I really



Freelance illustrator **Jennifer Gibson** is the Information and Archives Specialist at Keuka College in Keuka Park, New York.



clicked over our email exchanges. By the time the party came and we met face-to-face, the connection was inevitable, and we made our first date the week after. It was on Valentine's Day at a neighborhood café called Earwax.

**Julie:** I like to refer to our romance as “Hipsters: A Love Story.” I still have copies of *Cul-de-Sac*, but I don't think they're sharable. My writing from my twenties isn't exactly appropriate for a magazine with “children” in the title. I do, however, showcase the *Cul-de-Sac* covers when I present at libraries. Publishing zines was a great jumping-off point for my publishing career and, you know, the rest of my life.

**You have collaborated on one title together, the sweet picturebook *Toby and the Snowflakes* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2004). Tell us about that process.**

**Matt:** Way back when, children's books were not on my radar at all. I was working as a graphic designer and also drawing and painting and showing work in Chicago art galleries. But Julie saw an opportunity. She was a writer and a school librarian, and I was a visual artist, and she had the great idea that we could try and make a picturebook together and get it published . . . only it wasn't much of a great idea to me at first. I didn't know or remember much about picturebooks, and it didn't sound terribly cool to me—until Julie showed me many of her childhood picturebooks and brought home even more from the school library where she was at the time. At which point, I was hooked.

I was particularly inspired by the loose line drawings and watercolor of William Steig, Quentin Blake, Bernard Waber, and the like. The sketchy expression in their work was not too unlike the work I was doing at the time. So I settled on using those materials for the illustration samples that would accompany our proposal. We submitted to nineteen publishers.

**Julie:** There was a lot of waiting, until we received eighteen rejection letters and one “maybe.” One year and many revisions later (I couldn't believe how many revisions a thirty-two page story required!), we signed our first book deal. From there, Matt sent out a lot of work to various publishers and built his illustration career. I eventually began writing novels, a better fit for me than picturebooks. I enjoy the freedom of voice, story, and length of novels. I would love to work on something together again someday. We have toyed around with other ideas, but nothing has come to completion. Yet!

**You may not both be currently working on the same projects, but how does having a partner in the same field, being two professional creators for children's literature, influence your work?**

**Matt:** It definitely helps to be married to someone who can understand the peaks and valleys of publishing—someone who can really understand and relate and help celebrate when great things happen and help comfort when the not-so-great things happen too. And it helps to be married to the very creative, funny, talented writer and soul that is Julie.

I've always been inspired by the humor and razor-sharp wit in her writing. We are both very much go-getters in our own particular ways. And I think that that work ethic and passion for creating inspires and drives us both to strive for bigger and better things within our two different circles of children's books.

**Julie:** Our lives completely revolve around creating things and books. I have an MLIS and have worked in libraries for years, so even when I'm not technically working on a writing project, I am surrounded by books and bring them home every day that I work. Our house is a mess, but a lot of that mess is stacks of books. We also have art supplies in every room, and our kids are constantly inspired to read or create their own works. Even when we travel, we are always looking for new ways to be inspired at museums, rest stops, and weird tourist spots.

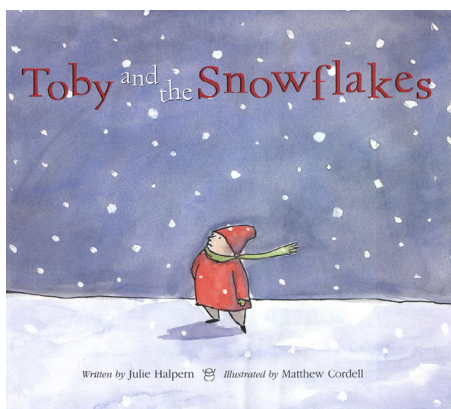
We both have totally weird schedules that revolve around our kids, deadlines, travel, and an occasional TV show. Since we both are at home a lot, and our home is pretty small, it's nice for me to have a part-time job out of the home and for

Matt to travel to give everyone some space. It works pretty well for us.

**Julie, do you feel your school librarian experience fueled your next step into writing your own stories, or did you balance writing while working as a librarian as well?**

**Julie:** I originally wrote *Toby and the Snowflakes* so that Matt and I could have a project together. It made sense to me. My young adult novels were inspired by the need to share my stories (in particular my first novel, based on my own experience with being hospitalized for depression). I was working in a grade school and really loved working with the middle schoolers the most, so I was reading a lot of young adult books. I thought my story fit in with that, and I wanted to tell it in a funny way. So much of the YA I was reading at the time (2000) was very dark.

Before kids, I wrote during my commutes on train rides back and forth. I also wrote during the summertime. Now, with two kids, I write when I can grab time. When both kids are in school full time, my writing life may get easier. Or the pressure to write may topple me! Time will tell.



**Matthew, how did you study or get into illustration, and who were/are your influences?**

**Matt:** I went to school for fine art and graphic design and never took a single illustration class. I never took a class in pen and ink or watercolor painting either (my chosen modes of illustration). It wasn't until I met Julie that I ever considered working as an illustrator. But once I lucked into it, I loved everything about it. I loved making the art that went into books. I loved making art for children. And I loved collaborating with the kind and talented folks at these publishers.

I have many influences, but the art that tends to make an impression on me is very free and scratchy and spontaneous in nature. I do gravitate a lot toward cartoonists and folks who dabble in pen and ink. Quentin Blake is certainly one of my art heroes. I also really love the work of John Burningham. One contemporary influence is David Ezra Stein. I love art and artists that jump around in style and tools and approach. I find that to be very brave and curious and inspiring.

**Matthew, congratulations on winning this year's Caldecott Medal for the wordless picturebook *Wolf in the Snow* (Feiwel & Friends, 2017). You outline your research process with the Yellowstone Wolf Project on your blog. Can you tell us more about how the plot of your book evolved with their help?**

**Matt:** Thanks so much! I still find myself in states of disbelief and utter happiness about it all. I was very fortunate to connect with a biologist from the Yellowstone Wolf Project, Kira Cassidy, as I was fine-tuning and fact-checking my story. I wanted things to be as real and respectful as possible, in terms of the behavior and biology of the wolves in the book. And there were some questions I had that were so specific that I wouldn't be able to easily find the information in books or films about wolves.

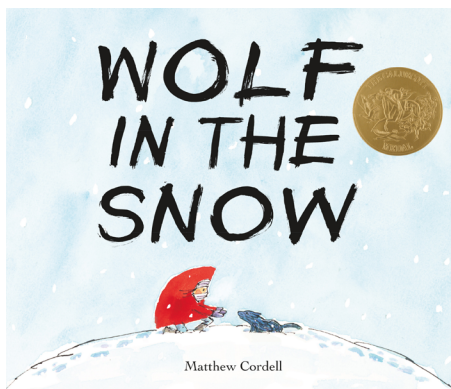
For instance, I wanted to know at what age a pack of wolves would first travel at long distances with a pup so I could accurately portray the size and physical appearance of the pup in the book. (Thickness of fur, proportions, etc.) I also wanted to confirm that it was reasonable to believe that a pup could get separated from its pack at a time like this, in the case of a blizzard.

There were many more questions and concerns I had, and Kira was an invaluable resource to me at this time. I'll be visiting Bozeman, Montana, for the Children's Festival of the Book in the fall, and also visiting Yellowstone. During this visit, I'm hoping to meet the team that looks after and studies the wolves of Yellowstone!

**Matthew, you have mentioned that you now have the bug and are working on a new wordless book. Tell us a little more about what it requires to make wordless books.**

**Matt:** In a wordless book, the pictures are doing all of the lifting in regards to the storytelling. Therefore, the pictures need to be as clear as possible to captivate and help guide the reader through the story. As the creator of the story and the pictures, I have to constantly question my choices for what goes into the pictures, page turns, and layouts.

Fine details like body language and expression are incredibly important in crafting a wordless book. I realize that no matter how clear the pictures are, there will still be some variance in individual interpretations of what is happening in the story. If there are no words to specify the events of the story and the feelings of the characters, the reader must use her or his best judgment to determine what's going on. And one person's interpretation may be slightly different than another's.



But I rather like that about wordless books. Living and learning need not always be limited to finite explanation. There is a lot to be said about a storytelling experience that can allow a child to infuse a little of herself—her imagination—into the reading and to look closely at the pictures to determine and judge and decide what is going on.

**Julie, *Get Well Soon* (Square Fish, 2009) is a hilarious take on hospitalization and mental health. Tell us about the impact this book has had.**

**Julie:** The book, my first, has been out for almost ten years now, and it is still the title of mine that draws the most mail from readers. I hear from a lot of other people who have dealt with or are dealing with depression, either their own or the depression of someone close to them, and the book helps normalize what it is like to live with it. It feels odd to say, but I have received my share of letters from readers telling me I have saved their lives. It's rather incredible, having such an experience as a teenager, one I did not choose, turn into a novel that helps others. It has also helped me immensely in not feeling as alone in my ongoing battle with depression.

**Julie, the narrative voice in your YA novels is so spot-on for the age group. How do you channel that voice?**

**Julie:** A lot of people say that reading my books is like listening to me talk. So maybe I talk like a teenager? I am a pretty straightforward, sincere person, and I try to write in that manner.

My characters always have a lot more hope as teenagers than I do as an adult, which I think is one of the main factors that sets us apart; they haven't experienced the crud which comes



with aging that makes adults so jaded. I also try to stay away from modern slang and pop culture references. Instead, I use older, nerdy fandoms and make up words. I've tried writing books for younger kids, but I don't find the voice as easy to bring forth as teen voices. Maybe because my life is All Kids, All of the Time, I need a little break.

**Tell us about inspiration from your children in your work—in Matthew's works *Wish and Dream*, and perhaps in Julie's *Maternity Leave*.**

**Matt:** Most of my success as a writer comes from observing the things around me and in my life. I've gotten so many of my book ideas from observing the fun, funny, and sometimes weird things that go on with kids and parenting. For instance, my book, *Hello! Hello!* (Disney/Hyperion, 2012), was directly inspired by an interaction I had with my daughter (who was two-years-old at the time) when she asked me to "stop checking email and play" with her.

My new picturebook, *King Alice* (Feiwei & Friends, 2018), was inspired by a day when my daughter and I decided to draw and write a book together. And sometimes, I've tackled more personal and heavy topics inspired by our struggles, like *Wish*, which depicts a couple who wants to start a family, but things do not go as they'd hoped. My family is the greatest blessing in my life, so I'm glad I can combine my love for family with my love of making and sharing books and art.

**Julie:** *Maternity Leave*, while not directly based on my experience with my son as a baby, sprang from my Facebook posts about the struggle I had as a mom in my son's early days. My publisher, Jean Feiwei, had seen the posts and thought I would make the perfect writer for a book about a not-so-great maternity leave. I will admit I am not a baby person. I find it really difficult: the lack of sleep, the constant boob troubles, and no ability to communicate. They do smell nice, though.

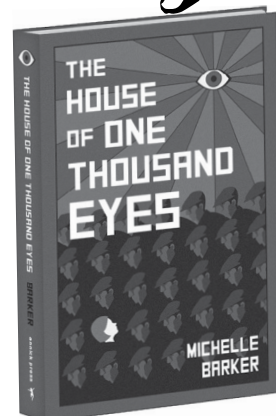
**What's a future dream project for you both?**

**Matt:** I someday hope to bring to life a graphic novel of sorts. The amount of drawing that goes into graphic novels is extremely intimidating, so I'm not sure I will ever pull it off. We'll see. In the meantime, I'll continue to dream about it!

**Julie:** I would love to write a graphic novel and see how someone else illustrates it. I have a story in mind, another "based on my own experience" tale, that I think would be great. Currently I'm working on a collaboration with Len Vlahos, trading chapters back and forth, and I'm really enjoying the process. Having seven novels under my belt, I'm ready to experiment a little more with format and collaborations.

And I would not say no to a TV show or a movie deal! It would be incredible to see my work interpreted and brought to life. 🐾

# Annick's Fall Stars



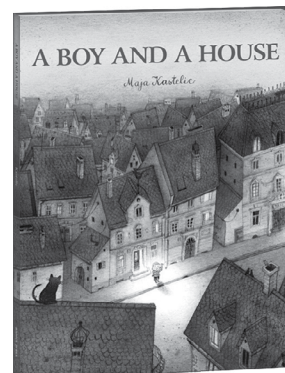
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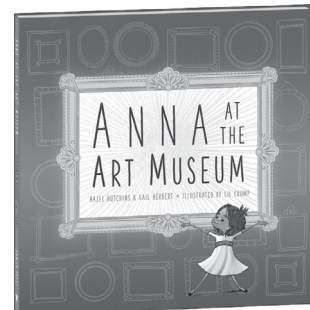
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# STEAM Success

## Utilizing Picturebook Biographies

KRISTIN MORGAN AND JAMIE ANDERSON COLLETT



STEM tools and picturebook biographies create a teaching tableau.

It can be challenging for children's librarians to see good books sit on the shelves. In many libraries, the biography section gets little use—except when a teacher assigns a book report or maybe during Black History Month.

Yet the value of learning about people who have achieved something extraordinary is immeasurable. Children need to find heroes and role models who can inspire and motivate them. Knowing this, librarians at Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh looked for a way to ignite children's interest in reading picturebook biographies.

STEM/STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Math) learning has been a significant focus for many out-of-school learning organizations since 2005, when a report from the US National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine showed that US students were not being prepared for future careers in STEAM fields with the same proficiency and preparedness as students in other countries.<sup>1</sup> Having worked on multiple STEAM learning projects at the library, using STEAM activities to connect children to picturebook biographies seemed like a logical way to take this learning to the next level.

In an interview with Edutopia, Mitch Resnick noted, "Roughly two-thirds of grade school students will end up doing work that hasn't been invented yet."<sup>2</sup> How can we as librarians better prepare children for success?

The library acts as a key player in out-of-school learning time. The informal learning experiences we offer at Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh are intentional, research based, and an important equalizer as we play our part in addressing the achievement gap. In Raj Chetty's research, *Who Becomes an Inventor in America? The Importance of Exposure to Innovation*, he remarks,

The model implies that increasing exposure to innovation in childhood may have larger impacts on innovation than increasing the financial incentives to innovate, for instance by reducing tax rates. In particular, there are many "lost Einsteins"—individuals who would have had highly impactful inventions had they been exposed to innovation.<sup>3</sup>

Our efforts include increasing access to technology and scientific materials; introducing STEAM thinking skills like



*Kristin Morgan is digital learning lead librarian and Jamie Anderson Collett is children's librarian at the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh.*



problem solving, design thinking, and higher-order concepts; addressing the achievement gap through free, high-quality learning opportunities; and exposing children to STEAM professionals by including STEAM biography read-alouds featuring underrepresented individuals in our programs.

We supported and enhanced the STEAM programming offered to children with staff trainings covering topics like connected learning and issues of equity, diversity, and cultural competency. After all, we are asking children to do the impossible—to prepare for skills and professions that we as educators cannot yet define for them. Through inclusive STEAM picturebook biographies, we offer them the opportunity to find the extraordinary heroes who will inspire them to pursue the unknown.

The following are some examples of STEAM activities with a few of our favorite connecting books. We sometimes use the same activity with several books and may use different activities with the same book. Our program planning depends on what skills we are hoping to develop and/or how the book may be relevant to attendees. We love looking at the new picturebook biographies when they arrive to see how they might inspire us to come up with new connecting STEAM activities.

## Science

Science activities, experiments, and inquiry are a great way to connect children to reading many types of books, especially picturebook biographies. There are many different types of scientists featured in picturebook biographies, but some of our favorites are scientists who studied animals or the natural world.

There is no better way to grab the attention of a room full of kids than showing them a shark tooth and letting them feel the serrated edge. We chose a few physical characteristics and facts about sharks to look at, study, and discuss. We asked the children, “How does this physical feature or adaptation help a shark survive and thrive in its environment?” They had some creative answers, a few misconceptions, and even a few correct answers.

Examining animal adaptations or the special features that let an animal thrive in its environment opens the door to sharing a book about a scientist who studied an animal and discovered unknown things about them. *Shark Lady: The True Story of How Eugenie Clark Became the Ocean’s Most Fearless Scientist* by Jess Keating tells the story of one such scientist who dared to study sharks at a time when many people were terrified of them. She disproved many myths about sharks through her study and research.

We played a game of “Myth or Truth” to ignite children’s interest in Eugenie’s discoveries. We challenged the kids to guess if



What’s under the microscope?

a series of statements were a myth or the truth about sharks, revealing the answers as we read the book.

Reptiles are another type of animal that intrigues children because they have the appeal of the gross, creepy, unknown, and dangerous—beloved topics for many kids. There are a number of options in Pittsburgh that provide opportunities for real animal encounters. But because we serve a diverse urban population, some of whom are living in poverty, many of the children who attend our programs have limited experience with seeing or knowing much about reptiles. This makes the topic of reptiles perfect for building skills of observation and inquiry.

We put a picture of a Komodo dragon on our large-screen TV and asked the kids, “What do you notice about this animal?” We then showed a quick video of the animal in the wild and asked the children more about their observations. Scientific observation is one of the more important skills that scientists develop. One of the best ways for children to notice detail is to ask them to draw something they noticed—like the dragon’s forked tongue, the scales of its skin, its curved claws, or powerful jaw.

These large Komodo dragons or monitor lizards were mysterious animals; people knew very little about them at the dawn of the early twentieth century. In 1927, the first live specimens of Komodo dragons were shipped from Indonesia to the London Zoo, which turned to its young, self-taught naturalist/curator named Joan Procter, who had just undertaken the task of designing their innovative new reptile house.

*Joan Procter, Dragon Doctor: The Woman Who Loved Reptiles* by Patricia Valdez tells the remarkable story of how Joan’s observations of reptiles revolutionized the world’s understanding of these misunderstood creatures. She also changed the operation of zoos worldwide when she built one of the first animal enclosures that reflected the animals’ habitat in place of a barred cage.

## Technology

Introducing a new technology should be like introducing a book. Are we asking questions, setting a child up to make predictions, and supporting critical thinking? When we connect the introduction of a new robot with a new book, we are making important relationships between digital and print literacy.

Coding a Cubetto robot to travel an assigned path across the floor is a good anticipatory reason to read the book *Grace Hopper: Queen of Computer Code* by Laurie Wallmark. After spending time working on coding with a robot and struggling with challenges when it doesn't work like they thought it would, children are ready to be asked questions.

"Do you know why we call something that goes wrong on a computer a 'computer bug' or why we say we are 'debugging' a computer when we talk about fixing things that are going wrong?" The story of Hopper can answer this question, and the mystery of "why" should ignite children's interest.

Hopper overcame gender stereotypes and even age discrimination to become a pioneer of computer programming and develop the first computer programming language to use English words, but what part of her story has to do with a "computer bug"?

Another coding robot, DASH, uses a picture-based coding language to make it easy for even very young children to code in behaviors for the DASH robot. Kids can drag and drop picture codes onto an iPad screen and soon have DASH throw a ball, chase a toy, play the xylophone, or go through a maze.

This can lead to a great discussion about how computers get their commands, and the person who wrote the first computer program, Ada Lovelace. *Ada Lovelace, Poet of Science: the First Computer Programmer* by Diane Stanley tells the story of how Ada came to write the first computer program in 1843 for Charles Babbage's Analytical Engine.

A good question to ask children is, "Did you know that computers only understand two values: 0 and 1?" This should spark some wonderment about how to tell a computer to do something using only 0s and 1s, or how to convert our language into a digital language that the computer can understand—what we now call programming.

## Engineering

One of the best ways to start to understand how things work is to take something apart and tinker with the parts, or to build something new with scrap materials. The importance of tinkering in building future engineers and innovators has led to the maker movement in public libraries and educational organizations across the United States to encourage youth to use the maker spaces to tinker.<sup>4</sup>

When Lonnie Johnson was growing up, he had no such space. In fact, he grew up in a tiny house with lots of siblings, but he still found a way to take things apart and put them back together or build and invent his own things. *Whoosh! Lonnie Johnson's Super-Soaking Stream of Inventions* by Chris Barton tells his story, especially his most famous invention—the Super Soaker water gun, with its iconic whoosh sound.

Gather a bunch of screwdrivers, fill a room with old toasters, tape or CD players, printers, or other machinery, and let the kids take everything apart and look inside. Can they build something new with the parts? Can they hook up the electronics to a circuit and make it work? Can they create something that moves?

The building of structures requires significant knowledge of engineering and how structures can be built safely and securely. Kids at the library love to build with Magna-Tiles, Keva Planks, Straws & Connectors, wooden blocks, LEGOs, and Zoob BuilderZ (and the loud crashing sound of knocking them over!).

One of our favorite activities is to give the students a building challenge with specific criteria and a set of materials and see what they design and construct. One of the easiest building challenges is having children build the tallest structures they can using only paper or index cards and some kind of fastener. After children build, we use the paper towers to see just how much weight they can support. After this challenge, we might ask children to use magnetic tiles or wooden blocks to build a structure that is both tall and strong.

Using the magnetic tiles in connection with *The World Is Not a Rectangle: A Portrait of Architect Zaha Hadid* by Jeanette Winter introduces the opportunity to talk about art and architecture. How do we design structures beyond the block form of LEGO bricks and square magnetic tiles? Another great book to talk about the intersection of function and design is *Maya Lin: Artist-Architect of Light and Lines* by Jeanne Walker Harvey. Contrast the work of architects like Frank Lloyd Wright and Maya Lin. What do the children notice?

## Art

Art and science do not exist in separate realms. Artists practice science regularly, analyzing lighting and color theory and using new technologies to produce their work. Using Javaka Steptoe's Caldecott Medal book *Radiant Child: The Story of Young Artist Jean-Michel Basquiat*, children have the opportunity to learn about pop art and the use of technology in the production of art.

After reading the book and talking about reoccurring symbols, show children some of the artist's self-portraits and photographs. In our STEAM program, we had the children take turns photographing each other. We then printed these images in black and white, making several more copies.

For the first activity, we used chalk and watercolors to draw crowns. The children then made collage work on another edition of their portrait. For the last activity, children used watercolors to create Andy Warhol–inspired portraits, leading to the creation of three personal pop art masterpieces, the iPads long forgotten after our initial photography session.

Susan Wood’s biography of Juan Garcia Esquivel, *Esquivel! Space-Age Sound Artist*, offers the perfect opportunity to provide hands-on activities combining science and art. The twentieth-century Mexican musician designed his own instruments to create his “space-age sound.”

School-age kids in our libraries often stare in awe at our Teenspace watching their older peers geek out while exploring MIDI equipment, music recording, and other instruments. With a little guidance, kids can learn some of these digital music-making tools.

Borrowing from our teens, we hooked up our Roli Blocks light blocks to create our own Esquivelesque tunes. Using Makey Makeys and Scratch, children can create all sorts of sounds with the conductivity of pencil on paper and some alligator clip wires. This program can easily go tech-free by creating flutes from straws, finger pianos and easy percussion instruments. This STEAM offering is the perfect bridge between children and teen services.

## Math

Prepare yourself for rockets blasting through your library with excited screams and predictions of whose design will travel the farthest! Several newer picturebook biographies allow us to introduce the complex science of space travel from computer coding to physics.

What does the word “trajectory” mean and how did the women in *Hidden Figures: The True Story of Four Black Women and the Space Race* by Margot Lee Shetterly plan to guide the astronauts to space and back safely? Children create straw rockets using ordinary straws and strips of paper. After reading this book, we introduced our vocabulary word *trajectory*, and blew into our straws, and measured where they landed. After testing, we asked what makes a rocket travel faster, farther, and higher.

Re-create the solar system using inflatable planets, or even just printed planets. Have children launch their rockets into the system. We paired books about each planet next to the orbs. When the spaceship landed near the planet, children could explore further using the books.

Rather than challenge each of our nineteen library locations to produce their own STEAM programming ideas connected to picturebook biographies, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh created kits of programming materials that include relevant picturebook biographies. Any librarian in the county can check out the kits, so that a children’s librarian can pull out the STEAM hands-on materials, activities, experiments, or lessons and read a relevant picturebook biography.

The STEAM kits contain lesson plans adaptive to a diversity of learning styles and audiences. The grab-and-go format makes them perfect for outreach and visiting school groups on field trips. We provide media connections and app selections using developmentally appropriate and professionally reviewed selections for our tablets while providing tech-free activities for all subjects covered.

We presently cover twenty-five topics in our circulating STEAM program kits—from game design and farming to data journalism. Most kits contain picturebooks and biographies or suggest other relevant titles.

We embrace STEAM programming from the perspective of “let’s learn and explore together,” not expecting librarians to be experts on STEAM topics but, rather, explorers.

We may be beginners to new technology or science concepts, or lacking in artistic skills, but that doesn’t act as barrier to providing STEAM experiences or integrating technology into children’s programming in our efforts to support literacy and learning in our community.

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# Sensory Play in Libraries

## A Survey of Different Approaches

KATHERINE HICKEY, TARA GOLDEN, AND AMY THOMAS

Child psychologist Jean Piaget argued in the 1960s that children enter into a developmental stage of sensorimotor development between birth and two years old. In this stage, children learn to posit their bodies in their environment and rely on their senses to gain information about the world around them. The combination of sensory perceptions and motor skills creates the earliest form of intelligence.<sup>1</sup>

This child development concept is heavily reflected in early literacy services in libraries, particularly those promoted by the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) and the Public Library Association (PLA). Indeed, popular programs like *Mother Goose on the Loose* and *Every Child Ready to Read* encourage the use of movement and sensory props, like scarves and bells, to support learning. Movement and sensory experiences are integrated with *Every Child Ready to Read*'s five early literacy skills: reading, writing, talking, singing, playing.

Sensorimotor development is also supported in unstructured, open playtime programs in libraries. There are many professional resources to support motor skills in early childhood services—collections of finger plays abound, along with many online videos of movements to popular songs and nursery rhymes. However, professional information and resource sharing on sensory play is scarce.

Library staff often rely on social media posts and blogs to cultivate ideas for sensory activities and programs. While these resources are a good start, they do not provide the optimal levels of precision or rigor to support a high level of excellence. Furthermore, they are not tailored to the unique mission of libraries, nor do they address the specific challenges faced by libraries in the form of funding and professional development.

This article reviews current sensory-centered programs in public libraries nationwide and presents a case study of three libraries within one library system increasing their sensory



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children's librarian for the Metropolitan Library System at the Edmond branch. She has a passion for passing on a love of learning and a love for libraries to the youngest of customers in her community.

opportunities for young children. The authors intend to begin a conversation within the literature on the importance of sensory play, and they initiate a discourse on best practices. It is only through information sharing and professional dialogue that librarians will be able to reach the highest levels of practice.

## Review of Existing Services

Since libraries began offering services for young children in the 1900s,<sup>2</sup> they have provided some level of sensory experiences through reading, music, and touch. However, the specific and intentional use of the word “sensory” spiked in the late 2000s as an increasing number of libraries began offering “sensory storytimes” for children. These storytimes draw upon sensory integration theories from the field of occupational therapy to provide enriched literacy experiences for sensory-seeking or sensory-challenged children, often on the autism spectrum. Author and librarian Barbara Klipper wrote one of the first books of its kind for librarians seeking to expand services to children on the autism spectrum. *Programming for Children and Teens with Autism Spectrum Disorder* (ALA, 2014) offered a standard for librarians nationwide.

Another kind of sensory-centered program emerged around the same time—sensory playtimes for children of all abilities. While there is no clear way to pinpoint when exactly libraries began offering sensory playtimes, there are website entries from as far back as 2002 describing such library playtimes.

Many, if not most, libraries offer some kind of regular unstructured, informal playtimes for children. It makes sense that as libraries began to introduce sensory storytimes, they would also begin offering unique sensory activities for children in the form of play. Sensory playtime programs often last an hour and are made up of various stations that children are free to roam in and out of, often including stations with tactile items like shaving cream, sand, water, and food.

Finally, sensory activities are also integrated into regular programs. Librarian bloggers describe adding a sensory bin or activity at the end of storytime or into their regular playtime,<sup>3</sup> intentionally purchasing sensory toys for their playtimes, and even integrating an easy sensory activity during outreach visits.<sup>4</sup>

These practices appear to have emerged from librarians’ own recognition of children’s need for sensory stimulation to support sensorimotor development, as opposed to receiving a mandate from library administration or professional organizations. Additionally, the increased information-sharing about sensory activities in libraries may also have sparked the initial inspiration for librarians to try the described activities at their branches.



Dry noodles are a common item used in sensory play.

## Sensory Play Examples

The following is a description of how three branches within the Metropolitan Library System in Oklahoma City are supporting sensorimotor development.

The Edmond Library serves the Oklahoma City suburb of Edmond, with a population of around ninety thousand. The library hosts Sensory Playtime once a month for children under thirty-six months of age. For the thirty to thirty-five children allowed in the room (preregistration is required, but walk-ins are permitted), there are ten to twelve stations they are free to explore with their caregiver for an hour.

The stations are labeled to inform caregivers of the processes and ingredients such as, for example, “Paint with Yogurt.” Caregivers are also encouraged to read the handouts that provide guidance for the program, reasons for sensory play, and ingredient lists for the centers. Greeting and interacting with the families as they come in and play also helps to explain the “how to” and “why” behind sensory play. From there, parents are encouraged to allow their children to explore the room however they choose, with the adult as their guide and protector for each experience. A bin with warm washcloths is available throughout the program for parents and children to clean up if necessary. A follow-up e-mail is sent to those who registered with some follow up information on sensory play and a request for feedback on the program.

The discovery, learning, and joy that takes place during sensory playtime cannot be quantified but should be experienced. It is beautiful, as a parent or librarian, to see these little ones figure out that their knees or feet can pop bubble wrap or that their hand can hold a big paintbrush and add color to

a giant canvas, or to watch them measure and pour cinnamon oats into pans to make “apple” pies. And no one is scolding them for getting messy; rather the child is seeing the parent giving their joyful consent for the experience, which encourages him or her to further exploration.

The Belle Isle Library serves the northern population of Oklahoma City. Staff began offering a monthly Sensory Playtime in September 2016, and it has since become a programming staple. Attendance began with approximately fifty participants and steadily grew to over one hundred, at which point staff began enforcing registration.

The program setup mirrors that of the Edmond library—ten to twelve open-ended stations are available and focus on sight and touch experiences. Certain stations became so well loved by children that they are now integrated into each playtime. This provides children with something to look forward to when they attend and contributes to program retention.

It is fascinating to see how the different age groups engage with the materials. Babies enjoy touching the shredded paper, and toddlers begin to integrate imaginative play, pretending the shredded paper is a blanket of snow. Staff take pictures throughout the program and then send them to parents in a follow-up e-mail. The pictures are stored in a private Flickr album that is only accessible to a person with the URL. The e-mail includes materials in the collection to support sensory play at home and a list of similar upcoming programs.

The Midwest City Library (MCL) is a regional library that hosts regular play and storytime sessions, averaging around twenty-five participants per session. MCL offers two sensory stations in early literacy programs—a play dough table and stand-alone sensory bin.

The first station contains dough and cutting accessories, such as cutters and rolling pins. Staff routinely make batches of dough that encompass a variety of sensory elements—colors, smells, glitter, flower petals, etc. A handout illustrating the benefits of Play-Doh in child development is posted nearby, along with prompts for questions and additional activities to facilitate conversations between caretaker and child and inspire home use of sensory activities.

The stand-alone bin is used for a rotating activity determined by setup and cleanup times, weather, holidays, etc. Because of back-to-back sessions of most programs, bin activities are kept simple during “stay and plays,” using items that make minimal mess and are simple to prepare, such as pom-poms with gripping tools, paper cutting, color sorting, tree leaves and herbs, etc.

Other times, MCL seeks out activities that are more involved and potentially messy. Because caretakers often express hesitation to engage in messy sensory activities at home, MCL provides children with activities that might be otherwise avoided, such as tapioca pearls in water, sand mixed with



Dinos in a kiddie pool? Why not?

shaving cream, paper from the confetti shredding machine, rice dyed with liquid watercolors, noodles dyed with food coloring, dig-and-find sand boxes, etc. The variety of these activities makes the sensory stations a playtime hotspot.

## Barriers to Sensory Play

While most librarians might agree that such play stations are beneficial, there can be barriers.

- **Staff availability.** Setup and cleanup often require additional staff due to the size of the program.
- **Time.** Setup and cleanup can take up to an hour each, in addition to planning time.
- **Cost.** Many sensory activities include food and other consumable items, such as shaving cream. This means staff must purchase supplies for each iteration of the program.
- **Trial and error.** Some activities present significant unanticipated cleanup challenges, depending on the building layout. For example, dumping out pools of water is a labor-intensive task and only achievable with an outside door nearby. Staff must evaluate the feasibility of activities and work with the limitations unique to their physical space.

## Suggested Best Practices

Based upon the authors’ experience with integrating sensory activities into library programs, the following practices are encouraged. These practices take into account the needs and experiences of patrons, while recognizing challenges faced by staff.

- Assess both the material and immaterial resources available, and plan accordingly.



- Accompany caregivers throughout programs by providing them with resources to reproduce activities at home and information on the developmental benefits of sensory play.
- Diversify exposure to sensory play throughout program offerings. Sensory play is a versatile activity that can be integrated into all kinds of programs.
- Develop a support network among staff for information and resource sharing. Sensory play can be an expensive and time-intensive endeavor; sharing among branches can reduce costs and planning time.
- Embrace repetition. While it may seem boring to have the same stations out every week, sensory play is open-ended and can yield an infinite amount of fodder for creativity and imagination.

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# Novel Engineering

## Students Offer Solutions for Peter in *The Snowy Day*

KRISTIN HANCOCK

A good book lets us imagine ourselves in the story—befriend the main character, explore the setting, and consider what we would do in any given event. Novel engineering brings imagination to life by giving students the opportunity to identify a problem in the story and design a solution using everyday objects. It was this very concept that brought together an unlikely collaboration between myself, a language arts teacher, and my colleague at Crestview Middle School in Ellisville, Missouri, math teacher Liz Buesteton.

As soon as Liz and I learned about novel engineering in a professional development session at our middle school, we wanted to bring our classes together. After all, I never thought I'd find common ground with the math curriculum! There was only one thing holding us back; we lacked the needed supplies to let students truly get creative in their engineering.

Call it fate or just serendipity, a few days later, our assistant principal Ali Krinski emailed staff members about a mini-grant opportunity from the Ezra Jack Keats Foundation that would be the perfect avenue for novel engineering. The annual mini-grant offers up to \$500 to fund innovative and collaborative programs that benefit children. Best of all, our students would read Keats's beloved classic picturebook *The Snowy Day* to think about ways to help protagonist Peter and collaborate on real, working solutions to his challenges.

Thoughtfully and nervously, we wrote a pitch for the mini-grant. We listed items we would order online to bring the project to life. Since novel engineering is all about encouraging kids to be creative, the possibilities for supplies were endless. A plastic spoon can be reinvented as a working catapult. Aluminum foil can be as versatile as modeling clay. Straws



A snowball slingshot was one of the winners in the novel engineering challenge.

Photos courtesy of Kristin Hancock.

gathered together become a weight-bearing tool. We couldn't go wrong with ordering a hodgepodge of ordinary things. The only essential purchase was, of course, the Caldecott-winning book.

We were awarded the mini-grant in May 2016, at the end of the school year. We had the entire following school year to implement our idea. Our novel engineering lesson took place in early April 2017.

### Putting the Plan into Action

As two people who had never written a grant before, we were over the moon when we received a congratulatory email from the foundation. We knew our students would be ecstatic too.

Liz and I combined our classes during a ninety-minute block, which allowed more than forty kids to participate. All of our students were in eighth grade.

Students rarely think of math and language arts as being compatible skills, but novel engineering challenges them to



*Kristin Hancock* teaches eighth grade language arts at Crestview Middle School in Ellisville, Missouri. She and her colleague Liz Buesteton received a mini-grant from the Ezra Jack Keats Foundation to implement novel engineering.



The book that inspired the challenge!

analyze conflicts in a story and create real-world solutions. The students were engaged, focused, competitive, and supportive of one another.

As teachers, we were able to see a side of their creativity that we do not get to see on a daily basis.

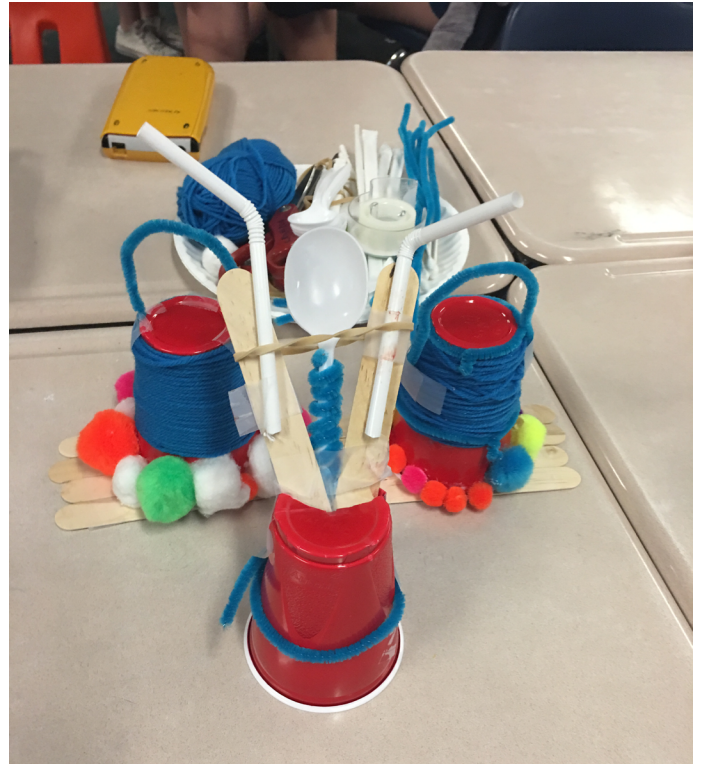
## Ready to Build!

Once our supplies arrived, we could begin. The day we brought our classes together, we had groups of students sit together at pods of desks to form teams. We explained the novel engineering challenge before reading *The Snowy Day* out loud to all students. As students listened to the story, they considered different problems Peter faced.

Some students were drawn to Peter's disappointment over not being able to join in the fun of the big kids' snowball fight. Other students wanted Peter to be able to keep his snowball from melting. Still other students were concerned about Peter keeping warm in the snow. Each team brainstormed, sketched, and discussed what they could invent and actually build to help Peter.

After carefully analyzing the story's conflicts, students were free to gather supplies from our eclectic offering of items. Many students wanted to build a snowball launcher to give Peter an advantage in the snowball fight with older, bigger kids. Even though the teams had similar ideas, each team's trial and error process looked different. Students had to consider concepts such as velocity and trajectory when creating their working catapults.

One group designed snowshoes to fit a small child like Peter using plastic cups, pipe cleaners, craft sticks, tape, and brightly colored pom-pom balls. They hoped the base of craft sticks would allow Peter's feet to walk in deep snow easily, similar to Alaskan snowshoes.



Students used many materials to engineer their solutions for Peter.

Two different groups wanted to give Peter a shield to protect himself from flying snowballs. One group built a sturdy shield out of paper plates. The other group packed handfuls of straws together tightly to form an impressive blocking mechanism. Both groups learned that problems can be approached differently to find shared solutions.

To keep Peter's snowball from melting, one group built a snowball cooler out of aluminum foil formed into a three-dimensional box with a lid. My only regret from the day was that we couldn't control the weather to provide real snow for students to test their inventions.

When the forty minutes of work time ended, each group was responsible for presenting its finished project to the class. Students demonstrated how their invention worked and explained how their design would change the story. The creativity and excitement in the room was contagious with each group wanting to outdo the next.

Even though it was a difficult decision, Liz and I declared the group that built snowshoes and a snowball slingshot the winners. The students beamed with pride.

Needless to say, Liz and I recommend novel engineering to stretch students' critical thinking and develop collaborative communication. Students of all ages can adapt their designs to their own abilities. Though the activity could be completed with any story, *The Snowy Day* is an excellent starting point for educators who are eager to try novel engineering. 🐾



# Together We're Stronger

## Helping Missoula's Families All Under One Roof

PAM CARLTON

**T**ogether we're stronger. As a community hub, libraries are the place to go for information and entertainment. So joining forces with other community partners allows libraries to reach a larger and more diverse population.

Knowing this, the Missoula (MT) Public Library (MPL) embraced the opportunity to collaborate with the Missoula Food Bank and the University of Montana (UM) spectrUM Discovery Area, with its parent organization at the university, the UM Broader Impacts Group, to create a dynamic learning center, EmPower Place, at the Missoula Food Bank's expanded facility.

Missoula is considered one of the urban centers of Montana. It is situated at the confluence of two rivers and at the hub of five valleys, with nearly seventy thousand people living in the city limits and an additional forty-three thousand residents in our service area.

spectrUM Discovery Area received \$391,000 from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) to be used over three years to create and sustain EmPower Place with the help of MPL and the Missoula Food Bank. The center is designed to enhance the quality of life for Missoula's children, with science exhibits, books for children and young adults, career and higher education role models, and literacy and STEM programming. The aim of the center is to serve children who are hungry not only for food but also for learning experiences provided by caring role models, a library of favorite books, interactive science exhibits, and, for some, simply the chance to be a child for a few hours and to forget the troubles of the day.

This exciting "all under one roof" partnership model allows the three partner organizations to collaborate and contribute



Grand opening of EmPower Place in Missoula, Montana.

their unique strengths in the creation of this shared space. Throughout the development process, partners received guidance from Glenn Paige, the evaluator on our IMLS funding. He helped us define roles and develop the communication processes that enabled the organizations to work well together to realize the project's goals.

After many months of hard work, the EmPower Place's grand opening was held in July 2017, and we had more than two hundred visitors. Local neighborhood members and food bank clients were thrilled to have a fun and inviting space to bring their families.

EmPower Place is open during normal food bank hours—weekdays from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. and late afternoons/early evenings on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday. To maximize the impact of the project and reduce the stigma that some clients and community members perceive in using the food bank, EmPower Place serves not only food bank clients but also children and families of all socioeconomic backgrounds.

spectrUM provides science activities and exhibits enriched by interaction with visiting career and higher education role models through We Are Montana in the Classroom, a partner



**Pam Carlton** is Youth Services Librarian at Missoula (MT) Public Library.



Missoula Public Library's reading nook.

organization alongside spectrUM in UM's Broader Impacts Group. MPL provides a book selection for the space's own private library, a twice a week Books and Babies program, and twice-monthly visits from its Web on Wheels Bus. The Missoula Food Bank hired an educator to help its volunteer coordinator recruit and train retired and future K-12 educators to guide activities, create a hangout for kids to do homework, and promote the Family Learning Area to clients and the community. Through the food bank's existing federal funding, free healthy snacks are always available at EmPower Place. During the summer, the Missoula Food Bank offers free lunches Monday through Friday, and EmPower Packs (backpacks filled with healthy meals and snacks) are offered for the weekend. All meals are also funded through the existing federal funding received by the food bank.

As of January 2018, we offered the EmPower Place After School Drop-In Clubhouse from 2:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays. Both school busses and public transit have drop-off points close to EmPower Place. Offering children a place to go and have a healthy snack and play with others or to do homework instead of going home to an empty house was a priority.

The collaboration continues to flourish as we learn and grow with the experience of making this shared space a community hub. When EmPower Place opened, we offered storytime two mornings a week. At first the attendance was low, but as the word spread, we saw attendance rise. We also saw that the ages of the children coming in for the program were more suited to our Books and Babies program, so we switched gears accordingly. Now we offer the Tiny Tales program two times per week with an average attendance of fifteen children and caregivers for each program. spectrUM Discovery Area also made programming changes based on attendance. Initially, they held science activities on Tuesdays and Saturdays but put the Saturday program on hold until the overall attendance in all of EmPower Place programming increased.



EmPower Place: ball wall and gathering space.

Not only is EmPower Place an example of successful cooperation and implementation of community partnerships, it also serves as an incubator for MPL's shared vision to build a new library in partnership with spectrUM Discovery Area and Families First Children's Museum Missoula. MPL has been functioning in a smaller than adequate space for many years, with plans for a new library underway for about ten years. In November 2016 a bond issue was passed to fund our new library building. Voters were very excited about our plans to have a children's floor that housed the library, spectrUM Discovery Area, and Families First Children's Museum Missoula. Both of these organizations will offer free programming and services for a one-stop, family-friendly cultural and learning experience. In addition to the bond, MPL agreed to raise \$6 million with a capital campaign that is still ongoing. Each of the partner organizations will contribute funding as well. We broke ground on our new building in spring 2018, with a projected opening in early 2020.

The lessons we have learned from EmPower Place will serve us well as we move forward in creating our new community hub. We hope that with multiple organizations under one roof, Missoula will have a larger, more vibrant, and more encompassing community hub, and families, who may have had time and financial restraints that precluded them from visiting the partner organizations, will enjoy services from all of the partners free of charge. In addition, we believe our partner organizations' strengths will enhance and provide depth to the library's programming.

With the success of EmPower Place, MPL and its partners have every confidence that this collaboration will continue to affect change in our community and provide the best environment for lifelong learning for all ages and from all socioeconomic backgrounds.

It's time to ask yourself which organizations are currently making an impact on your community's quality of life. Is there a way your library can collaborate with those organizations to enhance your efforts? 🐾

# Coded to Succeed

## A Beginner's Primer to Robots, Kids, and Libraries

LEAH HOENIG

Perhaps you've heard the stories, read the news reports, or seen it for yourself. Perhaps you let yourself lapse into daydreams—what if *my* library had robots?—but then quickly returned to reality. Perhaps the time has come to change that. This article's goal is to get youth and teen librarians excited about robots and their interactions with young patrons, provide them with resources for further investigation, ideas from other libraries, and tell what's going on in the world of kids and bots.

This article won't be discussing large-scale robots used by the library as an institution (though they are pretty awesome—libraries are using automated systems for retrieval of material, circulation, and shelf-reading within the library, especially large ones—check out the Autonomous Robotic Shelf Scanning system in use in Singapore, or NYPL's train-like retrieval system). Our focus will be on robots that interact with the public, particularly kids, and are in use in programs or available to check out.

For example, the Longmont (CO) Public Library had a friendly robot nicknamed Bibli, with large, round eyes, a book-shaped sort of head, and Roomba-like base. It was programmed to roam the stacks, joking with patrons and finding lost books.<sup>1</sup> The Chicago Public Library has added five hundred Finch robots to its collections, and they're available for checkout to any adult library card holder.<sup>2</sup> They're also used within the libraries as part of youth programming.

### Establishing Robot Contact

How do you start off with robotics programs? That's a question Sarah Kepple approaches in her book *Library Robotics*.<sup>3</sup>



The book, aimed at librarians with any level of previous knowledge, is a quick-start guide to building your program from scratch. She advises how to make the case to supervisors, what to purchase, which resources to beg and borrow from, and—this is the brunt of the book—what to do for stand-alone activities, camps, and clubs. Her focus is on integrating robotics with English Language Arts, but librarians with any goal could benefit from reading the introductory chapters.

### First Thing First: Money

The first issue is, of course, funding, and that can come from many places. Most librarians I got in touch with did not fund their robotics programs solely from their regular budget. Requests to Friends groups, grants from IMLS/LSTA, donations by local business, organizations, or charities (specifically those involved with children), special STEM budgets, and gifts from patrons made up a large part of funding for most libraries. Some Illinois libraries cited Project NextGeneration, an initiative by Secretary of State/State Librarian Jesse White, as their source of funding.

### What Can You Do?

Reach out to your local businesses and organizations. Chicago got their abovementioned Finches as a gift from Google

*Leah Hoenig is a children's librarian for the Queens Library, Flushing, New York. She received her MSLS from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 2017.*



Chicago.<sup>4</sup> You can also broaden your horizons, though, and apply to nationwide grants; one library mentioned that they funded some of their robots through a grant from Toyota. Cary Memorial Library in Lexington, Massachusetts, used the online fundraising platform Razoo (similar to GoFundMe) to raise the \$5,000 they wanted to get their program off the ground.<sup>5</sup>

## Next Up? Staffing

Who's going to run these programs? Anyone can do it, stresses Kepple; you don't need to be an expert to start experimenting and learning from your mistakes together with the kids. Especially with today's robots, which are so easy to start using from the box, there's no reason why the youth librarian can't try it. In fact, most librarians that I got in touch with say they've directed the programs themselves, learning alongside their young patrons. Staff members often used online video tutorials, relied on other departments like Tech Services or Teen/Adult Services for backup, and occasionally hired a professional to train staff or run the programs.

Another idea is using teen interns or volunteers, which works especially well for summer programs. The New Haven (CT) Library gave its teen interns a small paycheck, great job experience for their résumés and life, and city bus passes.<sup>6</sup> In addition to being affordable, there are plenty of other benefits. "During summer, we have a basic Stem2Gether program where older kids help younger children," says Emily Bayci of Naperville (IL) Library. One plus is that teens are usually comfortable with the technology: "I often have teen volunteers help out who have never seen these robots before," says Annamarie Carlson of Westerville (OH) Library.

Another option is adult volunteers, whether from local robotics and tech groups or young-at-heart retirees. Kepple advises librarians to use local enthusiasts whenever possible; contact groups, clubs, and competitions in your area. People are usually happy to help out at their local library. Librarians can also learn and teach other staff members in other branches, becoming experts of sorts with enough experience.

The next step is to identify where to source the robots. There is the option of creating a robot with the help of the kids it will serve, such as was the case with Longmont's Bibli. A group of young patrons, most on the autism spectrum, collaborated with the local company Robauto to create the autism-friendly robot.<sup>7</sup> (As an aside, robots are particularly suited to the autistic population, with their straightforward manner and lack of body language or emotions to decipher.) I spoke with Elektra Greer of the Longmont Public Library, who confirmed that the Bibli project is currently in the school district's hands; the excitement and community involvement in the project proved to be too much for the library's resources. "It grows quickly, and it's important to be sure your library's or city's leadership team can commit substantial resources to the programs," Greer advises.

While building the robots on your own sounds fantastic, it's not always so practical. Sometimes librarians need to just order the robot online, and with the wonderful variety available to us today, that option is easy and even affordable.

Some popular options:

- For the very young, Bee-Bots, Cubelets, and Cubettos seem to be a hit. They're easy to use and don't require computers or coding.
- Moving up, there's Dash & Dot, Sphero, Ollie, Finch, Ozobot, and more. These are fairly affordable, easy to learn, and come fully assembled and ready to use from the box; no robotics know-how is required. They usually support coding from several different programming languages and environments but also have the option for free-range driving and playing. (There is some setup needed to install the apps on your device and connect the robots.)
- For those who want to construct the robots themselves, there's VEX, LEGO Mindstorms, LEGO WeDo, and more. These are usually significantly more expensive and geared toward older kids.
- Other products include LittleBits (in my experience, they're just as fun and downright awesome for the staff to play with!), Makey Makey kits, and the Paper Mechatronics program. These may not be defined strictly as robots but can also be an integral part of STEAM programming.

## Planning Your Programming Programs

So you've got the robots, the staff, and the space. What's next? That depends on your collection and your patrons. If you have one or two, you'll probably want to save them for special programming. If you're lucky enough to have a lot, offering them for checkout might be a great way to let kids (and their parents and siblings) experiment with coding at home. If you already lend out items like laptops, tablets, or hotspots, it's not a far jump to add these to the circulating collection. Try creating displays with coding and CS-related books and media near the robot-checkout area to boost circulation even more.

If you're keeping them in the library, you need to create programs. The target age group depends mostly on the kind of robots you've got and your goals. Most librarians I spoke to catered to the tween population (ages nine to fourteen), but some have created programs for the K-5 sector using simpler bots. The types of programs varied from one-time sessions to intensive clubs (weekly or biweekly sessions over a couple months) and camps (daily sessions during a school break). Libraries have also hosted "Robolympics," "Robot Expo," and "Robot Rally" programs, often with a family focus and the aim of introducing patrons to the robots. If you're working with the kids toward a competition or toward integrating robotics

## Tips for a Successful Robotics Program

Based on tips from Coral Borg of Joliet (IL) Public Library's Black Road Branch

- Keep it simple. Introduce one concept at a time and review it with the kids.
- Time it right. You may need to make classes as long as an hour and a half to get it all in, and allow for a few minutes of show-to-parents time at the end. On the other hand, keep extra filler activities on hand in case they went faster than you expected.
- Discourage parents from hovering. The point is for kids to figure it out with their team and learn from their mistakes, not to be perfect.
- Collaboration breeds creativity. Progress happens faster when kids work as a team; those who go solo are inevitably left behind.
- Accept help. Teen volunteers are great for supervising, troubleshooting, and encouraging the kids. They can be someone to show off to or brainstorm with.
- Get to know your kids and be prepared to deal with classroom management issues. Giving concrete definitions of how long a turn is, providing fidget items for restless kids, or clearly delineating the day's activities can go a long way toward off-setting trouble.
- Communicate with parents: not only should recurring misbehavior be mentioned at pick-up time, but try to give praise when it's due. Parents might not hear that enough.

into an established STEM/STEAM program, then your sessions might be scheduled differently.

If you have kits, you can organize programs or clubs lasting weeks or months in which the kids design, build, experiment, and tinker. Even without the kits, there's a lot to do during clubs and camps: building obstacle courses, games, action

challenges, and more, depending on your type of robot. Robots can be great assets to passive programming as well; set up an arena (in your line of sight!), hang an inviting sign, and have kids record their scores or times on a whiteboard. There's also the option of using them for outreach and to impress patrons with how cool your library is!

Helping kids learn coding might be the greatest service we can do for our patrons. In the age of the Internet of Things, when much of the future job market seems to be in IT, valuable coding skills can make a difference in our kids' lives.

While it may seem daunting, we as a profession are proud to be embracing the future and doing the best for our communities. Try a robot yourself—you may find that it's not as difficult to work with as you may have thought, even for the non-tech type of person that many of us profess to be. And remember—you're allowed to make mistakes and have fun, mess up, and try again. Isn't that what we tell our kids? 🤖

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# A View from the Front Lines

## Remaining Fearless in the Digital Age

MAGGIE SCHUTZ

As someone who considers herself far from being a frontrunner in the digital world, I surprised myself last year when I applied for AmeriCorps and became a technology educator with the St. Paul (MN) Public Library.

I didn't even own a smartphone at the time, and yet I was going to instruct patrons on how to use their smart devices. The technology knowledge I did possess was primarily made up of self-taught material and advice I had received from my friends.

When I began teaching basic technology skills to adult library patrons, I quickly discovered that my knowledge was greater than I had previously thought. Tasks I found to be basic, such as conducting a Google search or opening my email, were concepts some patrons struggled to understand.

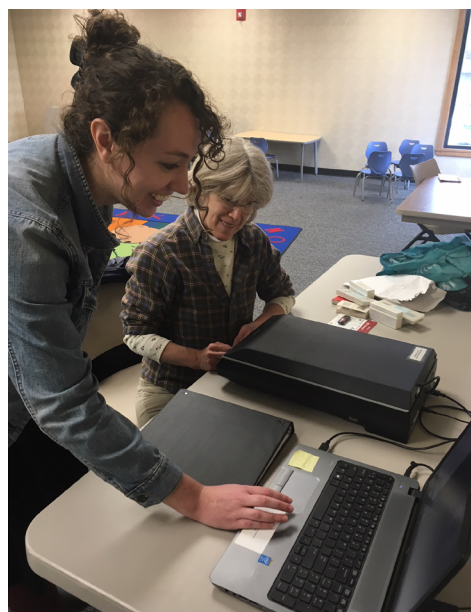
I didn't stop teaching myself about available computer software or smart devices because I had a functioning knowledge of technology; rather, I kept exploring. One of the most important lessons from that year was that I learned to problem solve and not be afraid of exploring different routes, even if they didn't lead to clear answers.

Yes, I am a millennial, and perhaps being a digital native helped me adapt to technology faster than older generations, but I think one huge barrier to technology use is fear: fear it will harm us, fear it will desensitize us to our physical surroundings, or fear we might even break it. When something

is new, foreign, or without a concrete solution, it is sometimes easier to dismiss it rather than educate ourselves about it.

Even as I work with technology at my present position at the Brown County Library, I sometimes freeze when I experience a technology issue that is outside my knowledge bank. I also experience insecurity when I am doing programming with youth I know are more tech savvy than I am. When I ask them for help, however, I am amazed at how readily they problem solve. They are so ready to explore the options before them without inhibition. I am amazed by their fearlessness.

Providing a space for patrons to access technology is only one of the many ways the library serves the community. Technology should not be an elite tool in our lives, and allowing equal education and access opportunities in our libraries will help break down technology barriers. For those who are not as fearless in the digital age, the library is at least a great place to start. ↻



The author assists a patron during a program on digitizing photos.



**Maggie Schutz** is a Library Associate at the Ashwaubenon branch of Brown County Library (WI). She obtained her bachelor of arts degree from St. Norbert College, with a double major in music liberal arts and communication and media studies.



# From Random to Ready-to-Find

## Reaping the Rewards of Board Book Organization

SHARON MCCLINTOCK

**D**o you get a sense of dread when a parent seeks a very specific board book—and you have to locate it amid the often unorganized or random collection at your library?

I don't anymore, since my library reorganized and labeled our board book collection about a year ago, and our community and staff have been enjoying the benefits ever since. As in many libraries these days, our board book collection is very popular and vital to our community. It includes more than five thousand books between our one central library and our bookmobile and is one of the most heavily utilized of all our collections.

Our parenting programs and storytimes for infants and toddlers draw large audiences, and the parents are engaged and interested in their babies' healthy social, emotional, and intellectual development. We had many reasons for reorganizing and labeling our board book collection, but the most essential was to make it easier for parents and caregivers to browse and find a book they can't wait to read to their baby.

Board books are a wonderfully diverse collection that provides a wealth of content to babies and toddlers at a time when books couldn't be more critical to their healthy development. Not only are board books sturdy teaching tools, they are also snuggling opportunities—making a strong, loving connection between parent and child and between child and book. These connections have lifelong positive consequences.

For libraries, however, board books present challenges. Besides having vigorous weeding practices, how do you deal with books that get chomped on regularly? Oral exploration



An example of spine labeling on board books.

is an important developmental stage, and infants experience books through all their senses, including, of course, taste. But does this mean that we should treat this collection like chew toys and toss them into a basket as though each one is the same as the next?

Though many libraries keep board books in baskets with minimal order, we have implemented another option that our community has responded to enthusiastically. It helps us abide by the Laws of Babies' and Toddlers' Librarianship, especially that "Children's librarians provide the right book or information for the right child at the right time in the right place."<sup>1</sup>

For a long time, the public and our staff asked that the board books be put in a searchable, logical order. Many parents want to read specific books or types of books to their babies. They come to the reference desk asking for board books to share nonfiction topics with their baby, touch-and-feel books



*Sharon McClintock is a Youth Services Librarian at Mountain View (CA) Public Library.*

for their child to explore, or board books featuring a favorite character such as Peppa Pig or Daniel Tiger.

They ask for board books to help teach concepts, like sign language, the alphabet, numbers, colors, shapes, and opposites. They look for board books featuring nursery rhymes or songs, or they look for books by a particular beloved author. As research shows us increasingly that not all books are created equal when it comes to young children and early literacy, we fulfill our mission to provide the right book for the right child at the right time by organizing and labeling collections such as board books. Since all infants are unique, we do well to help parents find books that interest their child during the child's specific stage of development.

For years, we only had a few board book categories collected into discrete, labeled sections—those included ABCs, 123s, Holidays, and Vehicles. These categories were made possible through commercially made labels. But the rest of the collection was in no reliable order. This was frustrating for staff and the public alike as staff spent a lot of time helping patrons track down specific books or topics.

After much thought and discussion, we came up with additional categories for our board books, labeling them graphically so that patrons could easily identify the category. We organize them in groups, spine-out on shelves, so they can be readily found.

This project was possible because of the creativity and hard work of our support services team. They created original labels using clip art. Each book has a label that designates its category and a call number in the catalog. For instance, *Alphabet Family Band* by Sarah Jones has the call number J BOARD ABC. We designed a legend to help staff and the public identify the labels that correspond with the category listed in the catalog. The legend is on display in several spots in the board book shelving area.

As I sit with my Mr. Rogers mug beside me, I realize I would be remiss if I didn't mention the special importance of our category named Growing. Fred Rogers helped children understand their feelings on his iconic television series, *Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood*.

For instance, his song "What Do You Do with the Mad That You Feel?" helped children recognize and manage their angry impulses. And, of course, books can do the same. The growing category covers many aspects of a child's social/emotional development, including managing feelings in constructive ways, with books such as *Teeth Are Not for Biting* by Elizabeth Verdick and Todd Parr's *The Feelings Book*. This category includes the topic of a new baby in the family and developmental tasks such as potty training. We chose an image of a

## Where to Find It

Our library uses the following categories for board books.

- ABCs
- 123s
- Character
- Concept (C for color, S for shape, O for opposites)
- Growing (social/emotional and developmental issues)
- Holidays
- Real World (nonfiction, usually with photographs)
- Sign Language
- Touch & Feel (and lift the flap)
- Song & Rhyme (traditional nursery rhymes and folk songs)
- Vehicles

young child standing in front of a growth chart to depict this category.

Everything that doesn't fall into a category is given an "alpha by author" label and rough sorted by author's name. About 50 percent of the collection at this point is alphabetical by author. As we find the need for new categories, we can add them.

It was a long and creative process to develop the categories, design the labels, and catalog and label all the books under our new system. It took about a year to fully implement and involved many departments and staff members.

But we have found the benefits to be countless. When it's time to put out books for storytime, it is much quicker to find books on a special theme or by a specific author. Parents and caregivers comment frequently that they appreciate being able to find their child's favorite character all in one spot or all the touch-and-feel books together. We get fewer questions about where a book is located, freeing us up for more in-depth readers advisory and reference questions. And it gives us more time for the vital task of looking into the eyes of our youngest patrons and their parents and caregivers and warmly welcoming them to the library. ↪

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# Talking Strategy

## A Look at ALSC's Strategic Plan 2017–2020

ALENA RIVERS, ALSC DEPUTY DIRECTOR

In February 2017, the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) adopted a three-year strategic plan for 2017–2020, which is the framework to direct how ALSC will invest its valuable and limited resources in meeting the future needs of its members and influencing the evolution of the profession.

In the year prior to the adoption of the strategic plan, ALSC gained valuable insights from focus groups, an ALSC Emerging Leader project resulting in an Environmental Scan, thoughtful feedback from ALSC members, and information from its Board of Directors planning sessions that shaped the direction of the plan. What followed was the development of a comprehensive picture that identifies spheres of transformation, goal areas, and objectives influenced by major themes that emerged from the collective knowledge of ALSC members, leaders, and children's library staff and advocates.

### Spheres of Transformation

ALSC endeavors to make significant and meaningful change within the association, children's librarianship, and the communities served by libraries to support our vision of engaging communities to build healthy, successful futures for all children. Each of these areas represent the three Spheres of Transformation that are achieved through implementation of our strategic objectives.

### Areas of Strategic Action

The three main goal areas of the strategic plan and the accompanying objectives include

- **Diversity and Inclusion.** ALSC will become more diverse and inclusive, acting to promote these values in all aspects of library service to children.
- **Advocacy.** ALSC will champion the value of library service to children and the resources necessary to deliver on our vision.
- **Learning and Development.** ALSC will actively develop new generations of leaders.

ALSC utilizes collaborative partnerships, committees, task forces, booklists, blog posts, journal articles, webinars, conference presentations, toolkits, surveys, scholarships, and awards to gather information, develop resources, and share expertise. Here are just a few highlights of the many activities generated through ALSC members, leaders, and staff in service of the strategic plan.

### Diversity and Inclusion

The ALSC Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Implementation Task Force (EDI TF) was assembled in October 2017 and has been determining strategies to implement recommendations outlined by the previous Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Task Force. The work of both groups has been a driving force that informs all aspects of diversity and inclusion within ALSC.

**Objective 1.** Increase diversity in ALSC membership and reduce barriers to participation as measured against the ALSC Diversity Within the Children's Library Services Profession survey by September 2019. *Transforming ALSC*



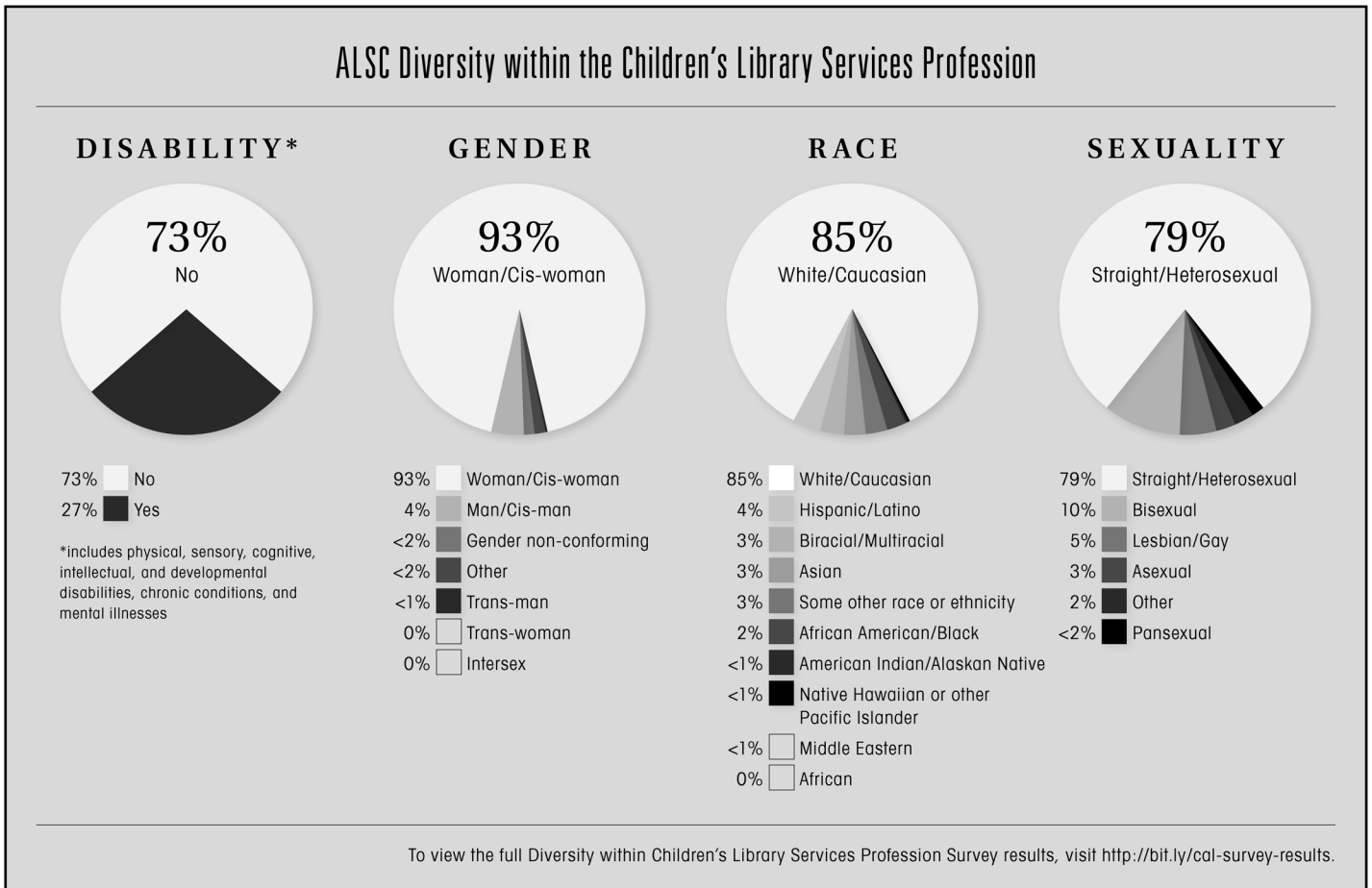
- The Diversity Within the Children’s Library Services Profession survey (<http://bit.ly/cal-survey-results>) was administered in November 2016 and explores demographic characteristics of children’s library staff and topics related to ALSC membership, including motivations and interests for joining or not joining ALSC. Survey results for gender, disability, orientation, and race are featured in this publication. A full infographic outlining all survey questions and results can be found on the ALSC website (<http://bit.ly/cal-survey-results>).
- ALSC’s 2018 Emerging Leader team worked on a project to develop a framework for cultural competency and cultural humility education and a video for ALSC members that will enhance the understanding of microaggressions—what we say and how we say it—and the impact they have on common workplace social interactions.
- ALSC has added a second ALSC Spectrum Scholarship with the 2018–2019 school year through funding from the ALSC Melcher Scholarship Endowment (<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/spectrum>). Through the Spectrum Scholarship Program, “the American Library Association affirms its commitment to diversity and inclusion by seeking the broadest participation of new generations of racially and ethnically diverse librarians to provide leadership in the transformation of libraries and library services.”<sup>1</sup>

**Objective 2.** Expand opportunities for existing members from underrepresented experiences to serve in ALSC activities, as measured by longitudinal studies and/or focus groups, by September 2020. *Transforming ALSC*

- Funds from Friends of ALSC (FoA) have awarded two scholarships for the 2018 ALSC National Institute attendance and a third scholarship specifically for a North Carolina ALSC member who identifies as part of the LGBTQAI+ community in response to ALSC’s cancellation of the 2016 National Institute due to the state’s adoption of discriminatory HB2 legislation.
- Demographic questions have been added to the ALSC Volunteer form, the Bill Morris Seminar application, and the Student Gift Membership midpoint survey to help determine if volunteer opportunities and ALSC programs reach a diverse audience.

**Objective 3.** Increase the cultural competency of library staff serving youth by developing an accessible online cultural competency training series by September 2018. *Transforming Children’s Librarianship*

- ALSC committees, including the EDI TF, Education Committee, and the ALSC Emerging Leader Team have been collaborating on the development of an online cultural



competency and cultural humility education series for ALSC Priority Group leaders, committee chairs, committee members, and general ALSC membership to increase cultural competency and cultural humility of library staff serving youth.

- ALSC Online Community Forums and webinars include topics such as Social Justice Practice in Youth Librarianship and Nurturing Empathy through Culturally Inclusive Programming.

Additional work supports the Diversity and Inclusion area of the strategic plan.

- ALSC is working with YALSA, the ALA Governance Office, the ALA Marketing and Communications Office, the ALA Office for Diversity, Literacy, and Outreach Services, and the ALA ethnic affiliate groups to include ethnic affiliates' book and media awards in the 2019 Youth Media Awards (YMA) Press Conference.
- The 2018 National Institute theme is All Aboard! Embracing Advocacy and Inclusion and features a diverse line-up of authors and illustrators for the Institute Keynotes and Breakfast with Bill panel discussion. A free networking reception at the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center will welcome ALSC members and colleagues interested in youth librarianship. The event, funded by the Friends of ALSC, will include networking opportunities with invited local non-library organizations representing the diversity of the host city of Cincinnati.

## Advocacy

ALSC will champion the value of library service to children and the resources necessary to deliver on our vision.

**Objective 1.** Establish an accessible content stream of valuation tools and research updates, including customizable content for members, by September 2018. *Transforming ALSC*

- ALSC staff, in collaboration with contributors to the 2014 Young Children, New Media, and Libraries Survey, are working to update the survey and collect new data that will inform research on media mentorship. Continuing discussions about the role of digital media in the lives of young children highlights the need for an articulated set of information to guide children's library staff in their roles as media mentors who help families make thoughtful decisions by sharing research, offering guidance with media-use plans, and modeling appropriate ways to select and use new media. Survey results and additional research will be published and presented by contributors at ALA, ALSC, and other youth services conferences.

**Objective 2.** Articulate a prioritized research agenda, including but not limited to summer learning/out-of-school time,

by September 2018, and pursue avenues for conducting and/or supporting the research by September 2020. *Transforming Children's Librarianship*

- The Research and Agenda Task Force created and disseminated a survey for ALSC membership to collect member ideas on potential research topics that will inform ALSC's forthcoming research agenda.
- Collaborative efforts from the Summer/Out-of-School-Time Learning Task Force, Public Awareness Committee, and Advocacy and Legislation Committee produced a set of talking points on summer learning for National Library Legislative Day.

**Objective 3.** Amplify librarians' essential role as information literacy experts through advocacy outputs, including communications, webinars, and establishing collaborations, by September 2018. *Transforming Communities through Libraries*

- AASL/ALSC/YALSA Interdivisional Committee on School/Public Library Cooperation has created and is promoting the Public Library and School Library Collaboration Toolkit which provides guidance to school and public librarians on how to work together to increase access and support for students.
- The Public Awareness Committee is developing a virtual toolkit, in alignment with the ALA Libraries Transform campaign, to champion the expertise of children's librarians.

**Objective 4.** Increase targeted messaging to the wider library profession and the public about the expertise of ALSC and our members to demonstrate the purpose and value of strong and meaningful children's librarianship by September 2019. *Transforming Communities through Libraries*

- This year the National Summer Learning Association celebrates its twenty-fifth anniversary and used this opportunity to expand the annual National Summer Learning Day (NSLD), an advocacy day in support of children's continued learning, health, and safety throughout the summer, by collaborating with ALSC through a marketing plan designed to engage library participation across the country. On July 12, NSLD hosted its first annual Summer Learning Ambassador, 2016 Caldecott Honor recipient Bryan Collier for a national read-aloud that libraries were able to incorporate in their existing summer programming. This collaboration amplifies messaging to the public, at a national level, about the value of children's librarians in supporting youth summer learning opportunities.
- Erikson Institute's Technology and Children Center, in collaboration with ALSC and several partner organizations, including Association of Children's Museums, Chicago Children's Museum, and National Association for Media Literacy Education, were awarded a IMLS National Leadership Grant for Libraries in April for the project Building an Alliance for

## Diversity within the Children's Library Services Profession

### A Survey by the ALSC Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Task Force

The Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Task Force (EDI TF) developed this survey as part of their task force charge—to thoroughly examine diversity within all areas of ALSC, such as membership, recruitment, award committees, and leadership, and to recommend short-term and long-term strategies for developing richer diversity within the association. The survey, the first of its kind by ALSC, was administered in November 2016 to ALSC members and non-member youth services providers.

The survey contained sixteen questions exploring demographic characteristics of children's library staff and topics related to ALSC membership, including motivations and interests for joining or not joining ALSC. The survey provided the task force with baseline data on demographics within the field of children's librarianship and identified barriers to joining ALSC. The task force considered the survey results as they developed a series of recommendations for ALSC to include in efforts to increase diversity in ALSC membership and the library profession. The survey results provide a current snapshot of children's librarianship and will help ALSC measure progress in the ALSC Strategic Plan area of Diversity and Inclusion.

The survey was available to both ALSC and non-ALSC members. There were 862 respondents, at least half (51

percent) of the respondents were ALSC members, so survey results are not exclusive to ALSC membership. Overall, children's library staff are mostly straight/heterosexual white women with no identified disability. Specifically, 93 percent of children's library staff are women/cis-women, 79 percent are straight/heterosexual, 85 percent are white/Caucasian, and 73 percent have no reported disability. Full survey results can be found on the ALSC website at <http://bit.ly/cal-survey-results>.

The survey results provide ALSC with valuable information but also inherently drive new questions. How do we increase diversity in ALSC membership? What barriers to membership exist for potential members or current members considering continued membership? Is increasing diversity enough? How do we ensure our diverse membership is included in ALSC activities and that ALSC members relate to one another with increased levels of cultural understanding? The work of the inaugural EDI TF is moving forward with the recently developed ALSC Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Within ALSC Implementation Task Force. With their guidance, ALSC is considering these questions, prioritizing recommendations and implementing activities that will move ALSC toward a more diverse and inclusive space for members.

Media Literacy in Early Childhood Informal Learning—A National Forum. In 2019, collaborators will convene a leadership forum and a consensus-building forum with practitioners to identify and implement promising practices in media literacy for young children and families in libraries, museums, community programs, and other settings beyond the classroom.

- Committees utilize the ALSC blog to post on topics ranging from the importance of summer lunch programs to fighting fake news, funding opportunities for coding, and interviews of library staff and supporters doing grassroots advocacy.

## Learning and Development

ALSC will actively develop new generations of leaders.

**Objective 1.** Build a discernible pathway, along with opportunities for training and mentorship, to develop ALSC members as leaders in their libraries, the profession, and/or the association by September 2020. *Transforming ALSC*

- The Managing Children's Services Committee has led three ALSC webinars related to management of children's services: Strategic Planning in the Youth Services Department, Program Evaluation, and Employee Engagement.
- The Student Gift Membership Task Force has facilitated a pilot program that gifted one hundred student ALA/ALSC memberships for two years, alerted recipients about opportunities to get involved in ALSC, and provided updates on ALSC Board of Directors work and professional development learning opportunities to keep recipients engaged in ALSC activities and share the value of continued membership.

**Objective 2.** Provide at least two educational opportunities in media mentorship and child development, ideally developed and/or presented with collaborative partners from other ALA units, by September 2018. *Transforming Children's Librarianship*

- In September 2017, a two-part webinar series titled From Apps to Robots: How to Evaluate Digital Media for Literacy Learning—Parts 1 and 2, was led by librarians and educators



and offered tips and strategies for identifying high-quality new media for ages fourteen and under that supports learning, literacy, inclusion, and family engagement.

**Objective 3.** Organize and promote ALSC activities to position the core competencies as central to library service to children by September 2018. *Transforming Children's Librarianship*

- The National Institute Task Force correlated Institute programming with corresponding ALSC Core Competencies so participants can align their program participation based on continued development of the Core Competencies.

**Objective 4.** Develop a toolkit of research-based best practices for out-of-school-time learning and disseminate the toolkit and practices to members by September 2019. *Transforming Communities through Libraries*

- ALSC awarded fourteen mini-grants (\$5,000 each) to ALSC members through funding from its eighth Dollar General Literacy Fund (DGLF) Grant. The grant program *Everybody Reads—Strengthening Communities Through Libraries* provides STEAM-focused learning for children during breaks and afterschool programs. Outcomes included a webinar for librarians who have implemented SCTL or similar out-of-school-time programs to share their experiences and tips. The outcomes of these grants informs the development of a research-based best practices toolkit.

ALSC members, staff, and leadership have actively engaged in thoughtful consideration of how their work can impact specific goals set for and inspired by the strategic plan. ALSC committees share their activities through quarterly reports that specifically gather information on progress toward each

of the strategic plan areas. These reports and the work of ALSC staff and leadership reveal progress in each strategic plan area. Our timeline is aggressive, and we have only just begun to consider and implement activities that support strategic plan objectives. There is a great deal more for ALSC to do to realize our goals. Careful assessment of these goals and our next steps is in order.

As part of an annual review of the ALSC Strategic Plan, at Midwinter 2018, the ALSC Board of Directors began the process of evaluating strategic plan progress and will make adjustments, as necessary, to projected timelines, resources, and deliverables. The board continues to research status on goal areas, while considering priorities and challenges that have impacted or may impact strategic plan goals.

ALSC committees, task forces, discussion groups, members, staff, and leadership are continually working on activities that move the strategic plan forward. The numerous and valuable activities that each of these groups engages in could not all be listed here. Ongoing updates on ALSC activities can be found at [www.ala.org/alsc/aboutalsc/governance/board-work/agendas-docs](http://www.ala.org/alsc/aboutalsc/governance/board-work/agendas-docs). We encourage you to follow the progress, make suggestions, and engage in activities that transform ALSC, children's librarianship, and the communities served by libraries. 📧

## Reference

1. ALA Spectrum Scholarship Program homepage, accessed May 15, 2018, <http://www.ala.org/advocacy/spectrum>.

# Thank you!

Thank you to our friends at **Google** for sponsoring the AASL, ALSC, and YALSA happy hour at the 2018 ALA Annual Conference in New Orleans. This sponsorship was received to celebrate the contributions of AASL, ALSC, and YALSA to **Libraries Ready to Code** and all the work you do to prepare our children and youth for the future.

## Libraries [Ready to Code]

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# Learning about Library Research

Betsy Diamant-Cohen and Annette Goldsmith



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

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

Since this column seeks to highlight all aspects of research, in this issue we are going on a field trip to a place where researchers gather to share their findings, collaborate, learn, and celebrate—the most recent ALISE (Association for Library and Information Science Education) conference. According to its website, ALISE “is the global voice of library and information science education. ALISE leads innovative and high-quality research, teaching, and service for educators and scholars in library and information science and cognate disciplines internationally through engagement, advocacy, and knowledge creation and dissemination.” ALISE’s membership consists mostly of library school professors and doctoral students and has a few practicing librarians with their doctorates. This column will share current research by LIS faculty and doctoral students relevant to children’s librarians and showcased at the ALISE conference in Denver.

ALISE’s annual conference traditionally takes place a few days before and in the same city as ALA Midwinter, enabling participants who sit on national committees to attend both conferences without breaking the bank, and this year was no different. Although it is relatively small, 322 attendees came from all over the world with representatives from Canada, China, Croatia (Hrvatska), Finland, Germany, India, Italy, Jamaica, South Korea, New Zealand, Oman, Peru, Puerto Rico, South Africa, Thailand, and the United States.

Many members also belong to ALSC, AASL, and/or YALSA (like the authors of this column) and within ALISE belong to SIGs (Special Interest Groups). The largest ALISE SIG is Youth Services. Each year, Youth Services SIG hosts a dinner in a local restaurant where members order and pay for themselves, enjoying the informal atmosphere while socializing and collaborating. Other SIGs relating to children’s librarianship in some way include Historical Perspectives; Gender Issues; School Library Media; and Multicultural, Ethnic, and Humanistic Concerns.

Held on the first night of the conference, ALISE’s “Works in Progress” poster session and reception enables attendees to discover current topics under investigation and to share knowledge on the topic with the researchers. Selected ALISE members display posters to highlight their research and share ideas; a booklet listing the title of each poster, the researcher(s) name(s), and the library school of each researcher is available. Conference attendees take a plate of scrumptious appetizers (and sometimes a glass of wine) and then walk around the room looking at posters and asking questions of the researchers.

This year’s “Works in Progress” posters related to children’s services included:

- “Young Children’s Individual Interest & Information Practices: Pilot Study Findings & Lessons Learned.” Sarah Barriage, Rutgers University.
- “Learning and Creation in Makerspaces: Implications for Expanding LIS Education.” Kyungwon Koh, University of Oklahoma.

- “Young People’s Information Practices in Library Makerspaces.” Xiaofeng Li, Rutgers University.
- “Neighborhood Walks and Community Talks: A Research Study Examining Public Library Family Outreach Strategies and Challenges.” J. Elizabeth Mills, University of Washington; Kathleen Campana, Kent State University; Michelle H. Martin, University of Washington.
- “The Challenge of Collaboration between Schools and Libraries.” Anu Ojaranta, Abo Akedmi University, Finland; Siinmari Tikkinen, Oulu University, Finland.
- “A Continuum of Care: School Librarian Interventions for New Teachers.” Rita R. Soulen, Old Dominion University.
- “Towards a Taxonomy of School Libraries.” Presenting Author: Stephanie Sukoff Trzeciakiewicz, Old Dominion University; Gail Dickinson, Old Dominion University.

During the daytime, conference attendees share their research. Presentations come in many different forms: panels, lightning talks in which each person gets just a few minutes to present, individual papers, SIG programs, and a President’s Program. All submissions for the conference (including posters) must pass the peer-review process in order to be accepted.

This year’s conference theme was “The Expanding LIS Universe.” Several sessions focused on media literacy—how LIS can educate people to spot and respond to fake news. In “Don’t Get Faked Out by the News: Becoming an Informed Citizen,” Dr. Lesley Farmer from University of California–Long Beach talked about the phenomenon of fake news sparking interest in media literacy. She encouraged students to use reputable sources and fact-checking sites, such as <https://mediabiasfactcheck.com/2016/07/20/the-10-best-fact-checking-sites/>. She also directed conference participants to check out her website at <http://tinyurl.com/FakeNewsLibGuide>.

Within the framework of teaching courses in library and information studies, other topics included social justice, computational thinking, curriculum design and development, research methods, education trends, data analytics, data science, open access, multiple literacies, mobile technology, STEM in libraries, history of librarianship, international education, community outreach, user experiences, race and gender issues, translated international children’s books, connected learning, transmedia storytelling, information ethics, diversity and inclusion, health literacy, reference, foundational and specialized content, grants, online education, information literacy, continuing education, archives/preservation, professionalism, leadership, faculty of color, accreditation, motivation for enrolling in doctoral education, and serving people with autism. Sessions we attended focused on innovative pedagogies for teaching, action-based research, educating creative minds, and teaching Javascript as social justice.

Unlike typical conferences, academic publishers display their wares on exhibit tables near the registration desk. Since many conference attendees have written or co-written textbooks and reference guides, a list of the attendees is sent to the publishers ahead of time. Responsible publishers check if any of their authors will be attending the conference, and if so, they bring at least one book per author.

ALISE members are eligible for a number of awards that promote and celebrate scholarship and service to the organization. There are awards for scholarly papers, excellence in teaching, leadership, service to ALISE, research excellence in young adult services, school library connections, best doctoral posters, and a few travel awards enabling doctoral students to come to the conference. A full list of the awards and their descriptions can be found at <http://www.alise.org/awards-grants>.

The ALISE conference is also a great place for networking. During the “Birds of a Feather” session, Youth Services SIG members introduce themselves and give a brief recap of the project(s) they are working on. After learning about one another’s research in this friendly, collegial atmosphere, colleagues often find ways to collaborate. For instance, our SIG members might be invited to guest lecture in one another’s classes after the conference. Some people go to the ALISE hospitality suite, hang out for an hour or so, eat hors d’oeuvres, and get introduced to one another. In fact, that is how the authors of this column met ten years ago and became fast friends.

Later in the conference, another evening reception/poster session is held. Doctoral students stand beside their posters and describe their dissertation research. This year, only a few posters were relevant for children’s librarianship:

- “The Multimodal Power of Storytime: Exploring an Information Environment for Young Children.” Kathleen Campana, University of Washington.
- “Young Children’s Individual Interests & Information Practices: Pilot Study Findings & Lessons Learned.” Sarah Barriage, Rutgers University.
- “Modeling Participatory Literacy: An Analysis of Social Reading and New Media Convergence in Vlogbrother’s Videos, 2007–2012.” Alaine Martaus, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.
- “Safe for Whom?: Censorship and Safety on the Reality Storytelling Stage.” Sarah Beth Nelson, University of North Carolina.
- “Censorship in Public Libraries: An Analysis Using Gatekeeping Theory.” Elaine Steele, University of Alabama. 📖



THE LIBRARY I WORK FOR HAS A FUNDING MEASURE ON THE PRIMARY BALLOT... SO I'VE BEEN SPENDING SOME EVENINGS **PHONE BANKING!**

HI THIS IS AMY, I'M A VOLUNTEER WITH THE YES ON MEASURE D CAMPAIGN



# AIN'T NO PHONY

PHONE BANKING IS A POWERFUL ADVOCACY TOOL BECAUSE YOU CONNECT HUMAN VOICE TO HUMAN VOICE.

HAVE YOU HEARD OF MEASURE D?

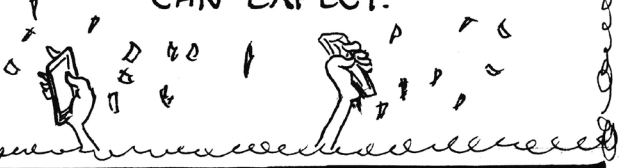
...WILL HELP OUR LIBRARIES TO...



THE FIRST TIME I PHONE BANKED WAS FOR HILLARY IN 2016. WHILE I DIDN'T TIP THE SCALES FOR HER, I DID LEARN THAT PHONE BANKING ISN'T THAT HARD.

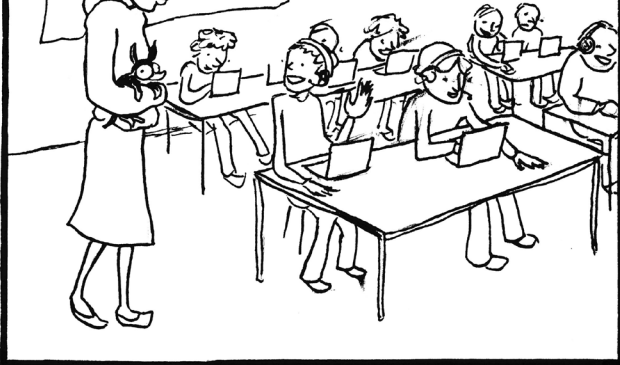
I USED TO THINK PHONE BANKING SOUNDED SCARY, BUT THEN I TRIED IT!

IF SPEAKING UP FOR YOUR CAUSE INCLUDES PHONE BANKING, HERE'S WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT.

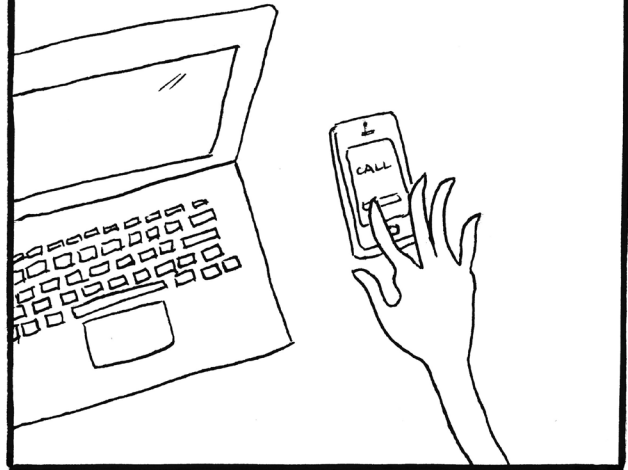


## HOW IT WORKS:

YOU SHOW UP, NERVOUS ABOUT COLD-CALLING PEOPLE WHO ARE JUST TRYING TO ENJOY THEIR DINNER.



YOU'RE CONNECTED TO AN ONLINE SYSTEM THROUGH YOUR CELL PHONE.



Amy Martin is the Member Content Editor for Everyday Advocacy, an initiative of ALSC.

THE SYSTEM AUTO-DIALS ITS WAY THROUGH REGISTERED VOTERS. IF SOMEONE ANSWERS YOU TALK YOUR WAY THROUGH A SCRIPT.

HANG UP IF YOU GET VOICE MAIL!

YOU ONLY WANT TO TALK TO LIVE PEOPLE.

IF THEY DON'T HANG UP, YOU ASK IF YOU CAN COUNT ON THEIR VOTE! YOU CAN JUST READ FROM THE SCRIPT, IF YOU'RE NERVOUS, OR GET PERSONAL.

HELLO I AM CALLING WITH THE YES ON MEASURE PAIGN YOUR VOTE WILL BE FUNDING A CHILD SENIOR ALL YOU

YO BRO LETS RAP! LIBRARIES ARE THE DOPEST HAVE YOU

**HOUR 1** **HOUR 2**

IF THEY DISAGREE WITH YOUR CAUSE, YOU THANK THEM AND END THE CALL. NO TRYING TO CHANGE THEIR MIND—YOU RUN THE RISK OF ANNOYING THEM INTO VOTING AGAINST YOU!

HANG UP

NEXT

Will this person vote?

IF SOMEONE DOESN'T WANT TO TALK TO YOU, THEY'LL JUST HANG UP. SOMETIMES THEY GET SASSY AND SAY "DON'T EVER CALL ME AGAIN." WHEN THEY DO, I PRETEND I'M ON A FANCY SOAP!

THE WORST PHONE BANKING GETS IS THAT IT'S A LITTLE DULL. MOST PEOPLE JUST WON'T ANSWER. BRING A SMALL PROJECT ALONG TO PASS THE TIME.

YES ON MEASURE D

SIGN IN

THE OBJECT OF PHONE BANKING IS: GET OUT THE VOTE! DON'T LET YOUR SUPPORTERS FORGET TO SHOW UP. LOTS OF PEOPLE ALREADY AGREE WITH YOU—THEY JUST NEED THAT REMINDER TO VOTE!

AND REMEMBER—THE EVERYDAY ADVOCACY VERSION OF PHONE BANKING IS TO CALL YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS!

USE SCALLS.ORG!

AMY MARTIN

# Love in Action

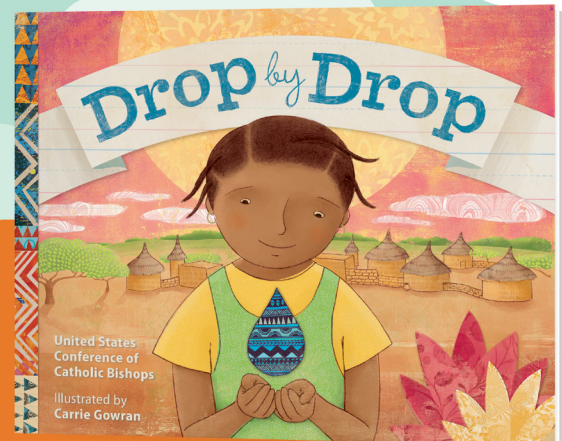
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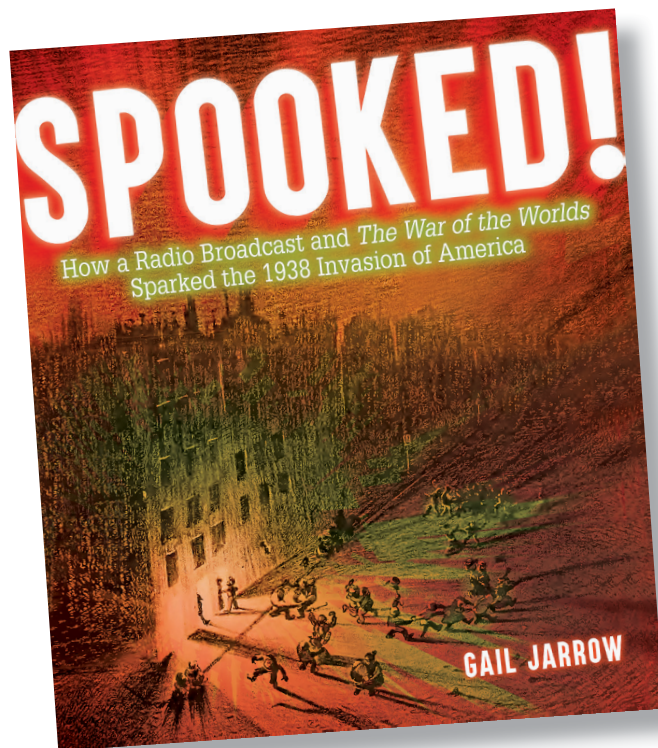
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—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

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—*Booklist*, starred review

★ “A skillfully written title that deserves space in middle and high school libraries.”  
—*School Library Journal*, starred review

★ “[A] detailed, illuminating exploration . . . Jarrow’s engrossing analysis of an earlier era’s ‘fake news’ provides timely reminders to readers.”  
—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

★ “The book does an excellent job of recreating the broadcast itself. . . . the takeaway lesson in thoughtful media consumption emerges effortlessly from this cautionary tale.”  
—*The Bulletin of the Center for Children’s Books*, starred review

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