

Children & LIBRARIES

the journal of the
Association for Library
Service to Children

Winter 2019
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Teaching Tinies: Early Literacy Efforts
Couples Who Collaborate: Jonathan Stutzman and Heather Fox
Paradigm Shift: Summer Reading to Summer Learning



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ON THE COVER: Sullivan, Jakiyah, and Teegan retell a story at the Kindergarten Readiness Station at the Public Library of Youngstown and Mahoning County (OH). Photo by Jeff Mamula.



Editor's Note Not Just a Job

By Sharon Verbeten

What does an editor and librarian do in her spare time? Read. Visit the library.

Work the book fair at my daughter's school.

I'm so predictable. At least that's what my husband thinks. He's a salesman, so all he wants to do in his free time is avoid the phone—both incoming and outgoing calls—and play hard. Fishing. Golfing. Watching sports. In short, nothing related to his job.

He just can't understand why I would go anywhere near a library on my days off. Or why, when I'm surrounded by books all day, I would pick up a book for pleasure.

Perhaps you've been there too—explaining why your career is *not just a job*—it's a lifestyle. At least that's how I feel. I certainly didn't go into journalism or librarianship to become a millionaire; both, I feel, are truly callings. You really have to WANT and LOVE what you do, I feel, to do it effectively and make an impact.

It's easy to do that when you get to read books, play with kids, sing songs, dance with a donut (!), invent games, and dress up silly as part of your job. Maybe everyone needs a dose of that in their daily lives.

It's not always possible or appropriate, I understand, but maybe just injecting a few moments of joy and silliness into everyone's day can make their job feel less like work.

Now, if you'll excuse me, I'm off to see if that Captain Underpants costume still fits . . . &

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Making the Shift to Summer Learning

Are We Reaching Everyone?

ELIZABETH MCCHESENEY

Flashback to August 2012: the Children's Services team at the Chicago Public Library (CPL) was running a successful summer reading program that was humming along across the Windy City. After years of a structure in which children read and reported on either twenty-five picture books or ten chapter books depending on their age and reading level, my team and I decided to conduct some focus groups of children and parents to find out if our program was still meeting needs. Frankly, I assumed we were.

The results changed nearly everything about summer for CPL and charted a new course for our department. A national shift from summer *reading* to summer *learning* began, and that started a dialogue about equity in summer programs by shining a light on the “summer slide” and opportunity gap for children in poverty.

Those focus groups helped us learn a hard truth: our libraries didn't always feel like a place that seemed welcoming for our families. Children on the autism spectrum and their families told us they sometimes struggled with having to follow the rules so carefully. Other children told us they wanted more interest-driven activities of which they could be in charge. Some children came to the focus groups only because we were giving out snacks and they had heard about it from a friend.

“I don't like to read, so I don't come here,” said a girl with her arms locked tightly in front of her. One little guy, perched on a chair as if he were a bird, summed it up for me when he said, “The thing is, I only want to do what I want to do.”

Bingo. *I only want to do what I want to do.* Don't we all? And don't we all learn more when we are interested in the topic?



Building a stable structure in a storybook science program.

These focus groups led us to dig into Howard Gardner's *Frames of Mind: Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (Basic Books, 1983), which states that there are eight different intelligences that help describe the “human potential” in each individual.



Elizabeth McChesney has served as the Director of Children's Services and Family Engagement for Chicago Public Library System's eighty-one locations since 2012. She has been a children's librarian for thirty-two years and has won numerous awards including the 2014 Library Journal Movers and Shakers Award for leading the work in re-envisioning summer. She is currently Chair of the ALSC Out of School Time Summer Reading/Learning Task Force. She cowrote *Summer Matters: Making all Learning Count* (ALA Editions, 2017), and a follow-up, *Summer Matters Greatest Hits* (ALA Editions, 2020) is due out in the spring. She is now consulting through LMcC Consulting and can be reached at Lizmcchesney6712@gmail.com.

This theory encourages us to learn as much as we can about each child and find ways in which they are successful as learners.

We asked each other, “How do you learn? What are your interests? What are your strengths?” We found no two of us, even on our small team, were alike. This propelled us forward into wanting to make our program individualized for our participants. If there were kids who weren’t coming to us because they saw reading as the only entry point to the library, were we showcasing all that the library had to offer? Were we reaching everybody?

Another key focus for us was the parents and the whole extended family who help raise our children. We’ve all seen the full spectrum in our libraries—from kids alone in the library to the parent pushing their child to complete activities (or even completing them *for* the child), nannies who serve as surrogates during long workdays, and extended families and others who help in child-rearing as parents work multiple shifts and times. Were we reaching them with our message of summer reading and the parent as a child’s first teacher?

We wanted to find a way that would create moments of family learning and celebrate parents and caregivers for their engagement with their child. The National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools found that children with involved families are more likely to earn higher grades and test scores, be promoted to the next grade, attend school regularly, have better social skills and adapt well, graduate, and go on to post-secondary education.¹

Clearly, we needed to lift up parents and families in our program. Using more inclusive language, thinking about a true and broader definition of family, and encouraging our kids to draw in all the many people in their lives was critical to engaging families. This led us to develop a parent engagement component that both gives parents an opportunity to log their own activities and to reflect on family learning for an opportunity to win a tech package at the end of summer. The tech package contains a laptop, digital camera, dictionary, and thesaurus to connect summer learning to the school year.

All of our thinking at CPL solidified when we traveled to the National Summer Learning Association (NSLA) Annual Conference in fall 2012. NSLA is an independent nonprofit that provides research and guidance to all who are associated with summer learning, including school districts, municipalities, and out-of-school-time providers. Their research findings show that the summer slide is real and that children, most especially those from low-income families, lose some of the achievements made during the previous school year because of lack of opportunity and access to high-quality summer programming.²

In 2007, Johns Hopkins researcher Karl Alexander and his colleagues showed a direct link between summer opportunity and academic achievement during the school year.³ This research solidified what we had been thinking about kids and learning and led us to use this research in our redesign of summer. We knew we needed to help close the opportunity gap between those children with access to high-quality programs and those who live without that access.

On top of this, more than 80 percent of Chicago’s public school children have indicators of living in poverty, so we knew that focusing on how to stop the summer slide would be important in the work of our large, urban library system.⁴ By focusing on the summer slide and the missed opportunities of so many of our children, we began to prioritize equity and call out how we seek to find ways to close that gap for our kids.

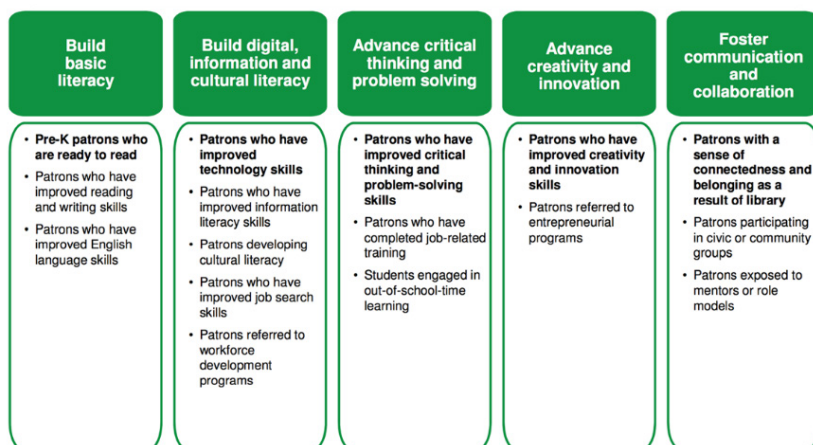
Aligning Summer with Institutional Priorities

At the same time CPL’s Children’s Services team was thinking through summer’s effectiveness, the CPL Senior Leadership Team was working to assess our core areas of impact across the city. Through an arduous process, our senior staff came up with five areas of impact that we felt stood for us at CPL (see figure 1). Using evidence, benchmark data, and stakeholder engagement, we redefined our areas of impact in Chicago.

Our new summer approach needed to align to all five areas of impact outlined in figure 1. We kept this in the forefront as we worked on the redesign of our program. We knew that an effective summer program for Chicago’s kids would need to always reference these institutional priorities, and we would need to measure it against these priorities. Keeping your own library’s strategic plan or impact areas at the forefront of your summer planning allows you to advocate for your program with internal and external stakeholders, partners, and policymakers and helps you to align your services in a meaningful way.

Another key consideration for us was how to bring in twenty-first-century learning skills to this critical out-of-school time

Figure 1. Chicago Public Library’s Five Areas of Impact



called summer vacation. Around the new millennium, an organization called P21, a group of educators, businesspeople, and civic leaders came together to think about the skills and habits of minds that children need to be successful in a changing technological world. In the quickly evolving new world, children need to be able to contribute and create content, to tinker and fix, to actively employ empathy, persistence, problem-solving, and working together.

P21 created a framework for learning in the twenty-first century. These can be distilled to the Four C's of twenty-first-century learning—critical thinking, communication, creativity, and collaboration. To equip our kids for success, we need to find the lens for twenty-first-century learning to happen within summer library programming.

While we, like many libraries across the nation, had been early adopters of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) programming, we now could see that STEM learning would also provide us with the framework through which the Four C's could readily happen. Helping children to feel comfortable with making contributions and talking about failure is an important role we play in children's learning.

Through STEM—which we soon broadened to STEAM to draw in art and artistic expression—we saw that kids built the habits that are needed to effectively navigate the changing and technological world. With STEAM learning, children are able to develop their brains to think in a way that fits the changing needs of the twenty-first century.

Twenty-First-Century Skills

Children can flex their ability to persist in the face of failure, to learn to iterate, to explore new ways of collaborating and communicating with others, and to do it in a way that is relevant to the world around them while building on school learning, without making the summertime feel like more school. We always use books as the starting point with STEAM learning because books are essential to all our work and to how children learn. Starting with the reading of a book allows us to expose a child to a book and reading time, frame a problem or experience of a character, and then build on the knowledge they have in the book.

Additionally, they are learning new literacies including coding and computational thinking, which are essential to the developing workforce. In essence, they learn how to learn, and they learn how to develop grit, persistence, teamwork skills, and even empathy while practicing the skills that will be needed in a quickly changing world. While a lot of library programs everywhere do have these skills as outcomes, calling them out helps youth build their own awareness of the importance of this and the skill building they are actively doing. Through our partnership with the Museum of Science and Industry, we promote their eight vetted Summer

Brain Games each year. These easy STEAM projects combine everyday objects with science learning to increase access to fun experiments and games. And most importantly to us, it opened our doors for new learners.

“Are we reaching everyone?” That resounding question that started our focus groups was one which led us to understand more about how people learn and are drawn to informal learning. We thought about what kids need to learn in a changing world and what our library does within the community. And all this, undergirded with NSLA research about summer slide and equity in service, how we were reaching children with varying learning styles, and what we offered for children in poverty, led us to see that we had a mandate to rethink how we promoted reading *and* all learning. All of us at CPL saw we needed to reconsider summer to meet the needs our community told us they wanted and needed.



Exploring geodesic dome building with storybooks, toothpicks, and gumdrops.

Making All Learning Count

We had been focusing on the number of books a child read and reported on each summer. In our redesigned program, we began to broaden our view of how youth are learning in our libraries, and this meant shifting what we count. With a focus on the learning that happens throughout the library, we wanted our focus to include not only reading, but also on STEAM learning and the learning children gain from making and from art. This set us on the path of broadening summer reading to summer learning and to counting three tracks of learning across the summer—read, discover, create.

Read, Discover, Create

These three tracks allow a child to have an immediate “win” when they start the program and report on something special to them. Make a piece of art, attend a program about reptiles, build a solution to the age-old problem of the little pigs’ straw-and-stick houses, or read a book. There is now an entry point to the program for multiple types of learning and learners. We believe it is up to us to then take that entry point and help the child access the other types of learning they can do. This means that the child who comes to us for an art program or for LEGO Club can then find their way to a book that we recommend.

Additionally, each child directs their learning—they can set their own goals and make choices about what they want to pursue. We give each child a booklet, our annual Explorer's Guide, which is filled with activities, puzzles, engineering design challenges, STEM activities from the Museum of Science and Industry, and art prompts to complete. Parents report that this approach to tracking multiple styles of learning has helped many children be more enthusiastic about coming to the library, to “own” their own learning development and to be motivated to continue to learn—all of which we see as a great win for our program, our system, and Chicago children.

All of our programs are now aligned to learning outcomes—what you want each child to know or learn at the end of each program. We start each program plan with an objective statement so we can keep in mind what the desired impact is and why we are conducting the program. It's easier to get to a destination using a navigation tool, and this helps you do just that. For us, that means we are more intentional in our programming. We now make sure that there is some rationale and a specific learning effort. It also helps us to choose our activities.

Reflection and book reporting have always been important and distinctive features of CPL's program. Book reporting has been a part of our summer program for more than forty-five years, and we knew it needed to continue for many reasons—it gives children a chance to talk about their reading and to make connections between their reading and the summer theme, it allows our staff to provide invaluable reader's advisory for children and families, and it helps build healthy social-emotional learning as we celebrate the books kids read.

Reflection in its many forms (oral, written, acted out, video production . . . the list goes on!) also allows you to check on the learning outcomes for which you planned and hope to see in your participants. We now promote videos as a form of reflection and encourage families to submit short videos that we share on our website. Other children love to watch these and connect with fellow learners.

Through immense research in learning theories, we know that reflection is an indispensable part of knowledge acquisition. John Dewey himself referenced this in 1910 when he defined reflection as the “active, persistent and careful consideration of a belief.”⁵ Learning can be thought of as a cyclical process, and the way we close that learning loop is through reflection—actively thinking and talking about what has been learned.

We see that talking about learning of all kinds (book reading, STEAM learning, art, and maker activities) gives children a chance to organize their thinking, synthesize what it means, and then apply it to their real life. Good reflection allows children to transfer new learning to what they already know of the world and make real-life connections (think of it as the “Aha!” moment). Drawing these conclusions helps to contextualize

school learning with out-of-school learning and makes each child a more engaged and thoughtful lifelong learner.

Better Together, or, How an Effective Partnership Can Amplify Results

Partnerships are widely discussed in libraries. How do we form them? How do we keep them? What do we do once we have them? A partnership is, essentially, a union formed between organizations with a mutual understanding about a common goal. Because of this, a partnership to accelerate your summer program may be easier to form than others. Practically speaking, both institutions must agree to the shared outcome of supporting children's learning in the summertime.

One you have identified your library's learning goals, you can think about who in your community can support those goals alongside you. Are your goals about self-expression and social-emotional learning? Perhaps an arts-based organization can best help you. Are your goals about advancing computational thinking or the engineering design process? Once you have a clear focus, you can then ask yourself who can lend tech support to your program?

In Chicago, our goals were clearly about STEAM learning as a gateway for twenty-first-century skills. The Museum of Science and Industry (MSI) was—and still is—a natural partner for us to reach these goals. Together we shared our missions and our vision and we found there was a lot of overlap. As major institutions serving Chicago's youth, we both wanted to:

- maximize our summertime reach into communities;
- help stop the summer slide for kids through quality out-of-school-time educational opportunities offered with a stretch and a depth into each community; and
- provide high-quality STEAM experiences.

It is important to articulate your goals. This allows you to develop a memorandum of understanding (MOU) or to draft a letter of intent that clearly outlines the facets of what you have mutually agreed to do. In Chicago, we entered into a five-year MOU with the MSI. At this writing we are now entering our eighth year of working together and, while no longer a formal MOU, an annual letter between institutional leaders is exchanged to keep the work and the relationship mindful and a priority for both the library and museum. This partnership has many facets and has grown and changed in the last eight years. MSI now trains CPL librarians and offers about forty hours a year of free professional development to our staff each year. We partner on a number of other initiatives including Sensory STEM for youth on the autism spectrum, school year

science clubs, a new middle grade STEM initiative led by the Urban Libraries Council, and preschool maker programs.

When seeking out a partnership for the library, remember that you are not just asking for help; YOU have a lot to offer, too! Your partner will gain the credibility of the library's name for their work. They will get access to the footprint of the library through your programmatic materials. They will also gain exposure of their work to parents, teachers, and other constituents who vote, sit on boards, and otherwise defend organizations within their communities. These are important for you to articulate. The give and get of a partnership means the relationship is a two-way street. You should always find ways to support your partner.

In Chicago, we provide booklists for MSI's museum exhibits, we train staff on books, databases, and information retrieval, and we now cross-train our staffs on things like evaluation of STEM, best practices in youth development, and social-emotional learning. We've conducted themed story hours near museum exhibits and are collaborating on professional development models that put STEAM and literacy together. Growing together in a partnership means that you continue to work at the relationship and find new ways to talk about your work together.

Gains for Chicago Kids

Summer is a time of high stakes for all public libraries. Children and families need us and we respond. We all run some of the largest programs in and for our communities, and they are funded by Friends' groups, boards, and in our case, the CPL Foundation. Using data to help tell the story of the impact on Chicago's kids is essential for us and for our foundation. Evaluation allows us to assess our programs' strengths and weaknesses; share our impact with our board and our funders, government, and other stakeholders; set goals for the future, and double down on our partnership roles.

Outcomes-based evaluation has changed the way we create and measure our programmatic success in Chicago. We use a logic model to help us build out the planning process of our program and to give us a path through evaluation. A logic model is a graphic organizer that allows you to chart a course for reaching your desired outcomes and ultimately your goals.

Consider a logic model as a chain that connects events to the ultimate goal. Start with your goals, which are aspirational and should address a need you are trying to fill. Next, you create your inputs, or all the things that are invested into your program. Watch out—it may surprise you how long this list becomes!

Now, list your activities, or all the things you do with those inputs to help you achieve success. This is followed by a list of outputs. An output is the quantifiable, direct product of a program activity. And finally, add your outcomes. They

are the desired results of your program and can be measured in short-term, intermediate, and long-term outcomes.

You can now use this logic model to share your programmatic strategies and to help you evaluate your programs. First, you must determine your indicators, or the measures of how you have achieved your stated outcomes. For example, one of our outcomes is that children read twenty minutes a day for a target of at least five hundred minutes. The indicators used to measure this outcome are the total number of minutes children read.

One of the most tried-and-true methods of evaluation we use at CPL is surveys. We survey parents of early learners, parents of school-age children, school-age kids themselves, our tween and teen corps of volunteers, and our library staff. We make these surveys accessible and offer them in a variety of languages. We have also found it's useful to administer the surveys to people; a survey left on a table is just one more piece of paper. Taking the time to ask people their opinions and answers gets at deeper information.

There are many forms of assessment available. The Weikert Center has an effective tool to look at the quality of programming. Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA) is widely known and used because of its flexibility and ease of use. NSLA worked with the Weikert Center to adapt this tool for use in summer programming. Additionally, NSLA's *Summer Starts in September Program Planning Guide* (2018) has a comprehensive planning guide you may find useful.

We evaluate our STEAM programming based on an Out-of-School-Time STEM evaluation tool called Dimensions of Success from Harvard University. This tool allows us to examine how we are deepening our science learning and knowledge acquisition and determine whether we are doing it in a way that aligns with what we know of best practice in youth-centered programming. There are twelve domains against which we now analyze our programs and observe our librarians in the development of their own programming. Brett Nicholas, MSI community initiatives manager, said, "The Dimensions of Success Tool is used by both MSI and CPL to give us a common language and tool to effectively measure the efficacy of our work. This tool helps us analyze where we are and where we want to go with our STEAM learning."

Chicago is also lucky to have connections to the University of Chicago (U of C). We have a data-sharing partnership



Homemade earthworm "wormery."

Summer DOES Matter

In spring 2020, *Summer Matters Greatest Hits* will be released by ALA Editions. It will highlight more than fifty great science experiences we have used and loved through the years with our STEM partner, Chicago's Museum of Science and Industry.

Summer reading for children is a longstanding and cherished tradition in public libraries across America, but today's kids need to master new skills and competencies. Today's summer programming needs to move beyond reading to engage children with hands-on activities, thus keeping their brains active even when school is out. In this work, the Chicago Public Library and the Museum of Science and Industry present a guide based on the award-winning, STEM-inspired approach. Readers get outlined practical steps for libraries and cultural institutions to partner in creating a sustainable summer learning program that's both fun and educational.

with U of C's Chapin Hall Research Collaborative, which is a research and policy center focused on improving outcomes for children and families in the city. We share information about our participants' read, discover, and create activities and Chapin Hall analyzes it against CPS student data. This is all anonymized, but it does allow us to know by ZIP code and school how children are doing because of their participation. The research findings are very clear, too: When children participate in the Summer Learning Challenge and show fidelity to the program (by reaching our target of five hundred minutes read, conducting hands-on learning, and completing a STEM, art, or maker activity) they score higher academically. In fact, children who participate score 20 percent higher on standardized math tests and 15 percent higher on standardized reading tests.

Using data from the Chapin Hall Research Collaborative, we can see that, with our redesigned program, the Summer Learning Challenge achieves our intended goal of helping stave off summer slide, and when kids participate to the recommend levels of learning, participation actually accelerates school-year gains. This is an important statistic to be able to share and shows the impact of our summer program on our communities. I encourage you to dive into your data; it will tell an equally important story about your library program.

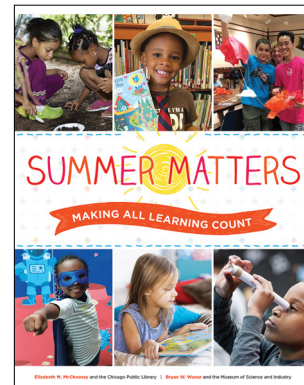
Current State of Summer Learning

Since those initial focus groups in 2012, much has happened to advance the conversation about summer learning and the critical role of libraries in the out-of-school-time landscape.

In 2016, ALSC board members deemed summer reading and learning as an area of strategic significance and formed the Summer Reading and Learning Task Force. They issued final recommendations in 2017, and this led to ALSC's formation of the Summer/Out-of-School-Time Learning Task Force, which has advanced the work through national webinars and sessions at NSLA. This task force will conclude work in January 2020 with the goal of handing off recommendations to an implementation team.

Summer Matters: Making All Learning Count

My CPL team, in partnership with MSI, published a book, *Summer Matters: Making All Learning Count* (ALA Editions, 2017). This book is a how-to guide that provides the rationale for change, walks through setting up logic models and outcomes-based evaluation, and gives tricks and tips about different types of partnerships. In 2018, the formidable research pair of Natalie Cole and Virginia Walters published



Transforming Summer Programs at Your Library: Outreach and Outcomes in Action (ALA Editions, 2018), which offers readers a solid vision of change in action through case studies and details the principals, strategies, and evaluation framework that the State of California has used to transform summer learning in their institutions.

NSLA has developed a deep and abiding partnership with libraries and actively works to promote the learning happening in our institutions all summer. In 2015, NSLA awarded Chicago Public Library the first ever excellence award, the Founder's Award, for an informal summer learning program and has now created the Land's End Love Learning Award to honor excellence in out-of-school-time programming such as in libraries. In 2018, NSLA featured reading and library learning during Summer Learning Day. Seven libraries from across the country served as Pillars of Summer Learning, celebrating summer reading with NSLA's National Summer Reading Ambassador Bryan Collier:

- CPL
- King County (WA) Library System
- Nashville Public Library
- New Orleans Public Library
- New York Public Library
- San Francisco Public Library

■ Salt Lake City Public Library

NSLA continues to build out work to promote the role of libraries. In 2019, they expanded Summer Learning Day to Summer Learning Week. This change allowed libraries across the country to register their events and help highlight the critical role of learning in summertime. National Summer Learning Association CEO Aaron Dworkin said, “The role of libraries in advancing and accelerating summer learning is clear, and we are happy to partner with libraries across the nation to help close the critical learning and opportunity gap in summer.”

In October 2019, NSLA offered a preconference day for librarian professionals at its annual conference, Summer Changes Everything. This first-ever gathering included representation from ALSC, the Urban Libraries Council, multiple publishers, and museums, as well as practitioners from a variety of American libraries. Librarians from across the country came together to deepen understanding of how summer learning can impact children, families, and communities. With sessions led by librarians on STEM; equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI); and evaluation and data analysis, along with a partnership panel of both rural and urban library leaders, this day marked an important inflection point in this movement.

The Urban Libraries Council (ULC), in partnership with NSLA and with an IMLS grant, developed a well-used toolkit with a wide breadth of tools (available online at www.urbanlibraries.org/initiatives/summer-learning/summer-learning-resource-guide). ULC continues to explore and deepen the national thinking on summer learning in libraries and has hosted numerous convenings to help practitioners in the field understand the shift and make sense of it for their own library system. Through research and best practice from the field, ULC offers a deep clearinghouse of summer-learning resources for all libraries to access.

Here in Chicago, as I watch kids in our libraries learning by doing, I am reminded of that little boy who—half his childhood ago—said to me, “I only want to do what I want to do.” Our numbers, which have doubled in the seven years since

we started this transformation, reflect that he is not alone. In summer 2019, we went back to hosting focus groups of parents from around the city. We asked parents if the programs are meeting their needs, if they like the STEAM learning, and if the programs are fun and engaging. We asked if our Explorer’s Guide works for them, what they want changed, and how the program works for them. The results were humbling and gratifying as we heard profound thanks for including science learning and artistic expression. We heard that children are motivated by the programs and moms have deeper trust in us for this work we have been doing. We learned that families become friends and strengthen their neighborhood ties and relationships while laughing and learning together. Parents appreciate a place that is safe for them to just have fun while everyone learns together. And while I thought maybe we would have major changes to make like we did eight years ago, what we heard was what I have been fortunate to see myself: the shift from summer reading to summer learning has allowed us to help pave the way for children who may struggle with reading, it has allowed us to keep up with the changing needs of our kids, to celebrate new and multiple literacies, to keep summer relevant and interest-driven in the twenty-first-century context. All of this together effectively positions our library and the Summer Learning Challenge as the city of Chicago’s largest framework for serving children in the summer and keeping them learning.

I like to think that in Chicago, we have demonstrated what children’s librarians have always known: that kids want to learn and are hungry for new experiences and connections. Our personal connections with children matter to how they learn. And, when we employ new ways to bring books and learning together in our communities, we prove that all learning counts. &

The success of the Chicago Public Library’s transformation is possible because of the tireless work led by the Children’s Services and Family Engagement Team and all the Children’s Services staff, along with the CPL Foundation staff, board, and funders. Thank you to the entire staff of Chicago Public Library past and present, and to all who make summer learning possible for children.

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More than Just Making

The Ezra Jack Keats Bookmaking Competition

DEBORAH POPE, MELISSA JACOBS, AND KAREN ROSNER

Making students happy while they learn is a core mandate of the Ezra Jack Keats Foundation (EJK), as is the support and enrichment of public schools, libraries, and the educators within. For more than thirty years, the Ezra Jack Keats Bookmaking Competition has realized our mandate by providing librarians and teachers with an inclusive activity that students on every level of proficiency enjoy even as they improve all of their literacy skills.

Such a program is only possible through collaboration and the extended efforts of administrators and educators. For many years, we at EJK have worked with the New York City Department of Education (DOE) employees Karen Rosner, director of visual arts (from the Office of Arts and Special Projects) and Melissa Jacobs, director of library services. The third institution instrumental in realizing the program is Brooklyn Public Library (BPL), which, under the leadership of President and CEO Linda E. Johnson, provides a home for the jury deliberations, the exhibition of winning and honorable mention books, and the award ceremony. Kimberly Grad, the BPL Bookmaking coordinator, is a critical member of the team.

The EJK Bookmaking Competition includes students divided into three groups—elementary (grades 3–5), middle school (grades 6–8), and high school (grades 9–12). Within these



Grades 3–5: Dasha and Mariana work on bookmaking (all photos by Diane Vozza).

groups, the activity engages students, from reluctant to motivated, allowing each child to excel at their own pace and level.

Any number of students or classes in one school can participate; one book is chosen to be the school winner and submitted to the DOE for consideration as a borough or city winner. This gives every school an equal chance at having a winning entry. City-wide winners receive a medal and \$500; borough winners get a medal and \$100; and the teachers or librarians who advised them receive a gift certificate for new books. Each school is encouraged to have a celebration of all the books made, and every student who completes a book receives a certificate of commendation. The school winner's books all receive medals, as well as certificates.

Once submitted, the school winners are judged by a panel assembled by Kim Grad at BPL. The panel includes librarians, children's book authors and illustrators, and experts from schools of education and trade periodicals. The winners receive a check, as well as a medal at an award ceremony at the end of the school year during which honorable mention books are also celebrated. Along with the creation of a stunning catalog, there is a three-week exhibition featuring the winning and honorable mention books at the Central Branch of BPL.



Deborah Pope, Executive Director of the Ezra Jack Keats Foundation, focuses on increasing diversity in children's literature, enriching public education, and making reading and learning fun for kids. **Melissa Jacobs** is the Director of Library Services for the New York City Department of Education. **Karen Rosner** is the Director of Visual Arts for the New York City Department of Education, supervising initiatives that support visual arts educators and professional development for K–12 art teachers citywide.

Bookmaking engages students by giving them control over their learning experience. The subjects tackled by the students range from the loss of a parent to how to tie your shoelaces, from a voyage through a mythical kingdom to the number zero's journey to a sense of self-worth, from the joy of playing the violin to dealing with bullies.

Each child creates their book for a different reason. For some it is a way of working out an emotional issue, such as what fourth grader London Sims says: "This book is very dear to my heart. Every part of making this book reminds me of my dad."

For others the activity is the beginning of realizing a life goal, such as for twelfth grader Alex Trinidad: "One day I would like to be a city planner, and as I worked I imagined what it would be like to visit these buildings and landmarks."

Then there are the students who want to create a book that will send a message they would have liked to receive. Alicia Lee, an eighth grader, said, "The idea of writing something I would've wanted to read as a child made me grow more attached to [my book] and to its main character. . . . It's important for me to teach young readers to value and be proud of themselves."

Bookmaking motivates students to rewrite and revise, to improve their grammar, spelling and syntax, because they want to tell their story clearly and effectively. Then, having written or illustrated their own book, the student's perspective changes. Their experience makes them more analytical and thoughtful readers.

Sabrina Aquilone, grade 8, said, "Book-making was a long process that I enjoyed. It was an experience that made me realize that the plotline and illustrations must follow from the beginning to the end."

In addition to building self-esteem and confidence through achieving a difficult goal and having their work appreciated by others, the program strengthens a sense of community within the classroom. Undervalued students become successful participants in a class project and have their talents recognized by the group, perhaps for the first time.

Librarian Kathleen Fleischmann and teacher Maria Panatopoulou, who have collaborated on EJK Bookmaking for four years at PS 63Q in Queens, New York, offered a wonderful description of how students benefit from the work:

As part of the process, they learn to be disciplined and responsible for their creative process. They also learn time management. These are wonderful skills that they take into adulthood. Additionally,



Grades 6–8: Sofia works to get it just right.

those working on nonfiction books hone their research skills. Whether working collaboratively or not, they form bonds with and support each other, share ideas, and give feedback. By going through this process, whether they win or not, there is a huge benefit and potential impact on their future.

"I was able to dig deeper into my thoughts and worries. It helped me build up my confidence about myself."

Dyanara Banana, grade 12

Fleischmann and Panatopoulou agree that their collaboration has made a huge difference. This dedicated team also makes it very clear they wouldn't be able to succeed without the buy-in and support of their principal, Diane Marina.

This school-wide collaboration reflects the team effort this program inspires, from the top down. Jacobs and Rosner clearly share this inspiration, as demonstrated by their description of their experience of the program. Jacobs said,

As a school librarian, there are always those exhilarating projects you wait all year to lead with your students. For me, that project was bookmaking. I fell in love with the writing, creativity, and innovation that bookmaking had to offer. In my first year as an elementary school librarian in a NYC public school, I was delighted to learn about the citywide competition offered by the EJK Foundation and pleased the Foundation offered a monetary incentive to winners.



I kicked off my initial program by collaborating with the art teacher and developing an after-school Bookmaking Enrichment Club. I promoted bookmaking as a part of the classroom curriculum, tied it to the library curriculum, and organized a school-wide event to

select the winner that would go on to the city-wide competition. The EJK Bookmaking Competition helped me create a culture of writers and artists in the school while enriching the school's literacy-focused environment.

Two decades later . . . I have developed a new program to help sustain the competition for future generations and connect bookmaking to the makerspace initiative in school libraries. A makerspace is a type of learning lab where students gather to create, innovate, do-it-yourself, invent, learn, design, explore, and discover. Makerspaces can be low-tech or high-tech, are limited only by one's imagination, and tie-in perfectly to the arts and bookmaking.

The EJK Bookmaking Makerspace Grant is a part of the NYC School Library System's INNOVATION! Makerspace Program. The objective is to provide instruction, supplies, and create a sustainable program in the school library that encourages bookmaking, writing, and the arts throughout the school year. The grant provides makerspace materials and professional development to school librarians serving grades 3–12.

Each grant winner receives a customized assortment of art supplies, a professionally curated collection of books that included art-centric and diverse picturebooks, as well as interactive pop-up books, and an art cart to organize the makerspace. The full-day, hands-on, professional-development workshop was facilitated by Dr. Zetta Elliott and artist and art consultant Jo Beth Ravitz. Participants learned how to engage and empower students through creative writing, how to encourage students to write a story, and how to turn their stories into an illustrated picturebook.

Each participating school librarian submitted one student-created picture book to the competition. As a result, the number of entries increased this past year with an additional thirty submissions. Next year, we hope to have sixty additional submissions and are scheduled to offer another grant with an added bonus for the librarians who've already participated. These experienced librarians will attend the professional development session in the afternoon, share their expertise and "shop" for additional art supplies ordered by the NYC School Library System. Rosner added,

I am dedicated to this program for many reasons. It emphasizes the important role of picturebooks in a child's education, the deep learning students experience as they engage in the creative process of making their own books, and the



Grades 9–12: Annie perfects her illustrations.

“At first I thought it would be easy to create a book, but it turned out to be much more difficult. . . . I worked in class and on the weekends at home. The book took me about a month to complete. . . . I want to thank all my teachers and especially my art teacher, Ms. Skopp, for all the inspiration and help.”

Solomon Birmakher, grade 4

sense of satisfaction students derive when they recognize how they persisted and achieved their goals. In addition, recognizing how collegiality is so important to a school's environment, I am dedicated to a program that promotes true collaboration.

The Office of Arts and Special Projects has facilitated many aspects of the Bookmaking Competition for over three decades, including professional learning experiences for art teachers, classroom teachers, and librarians, outreach to schools, the gathering and return of all submissions, the editing of student entries for the catalog, and involvement in the year-end celebration.

Beyond the creation of a final entry, the one book chosen by the school to be entered into the competition is a dynamic engine at work that involves so many individuals. Participating schools often have an entire class, and sometimes more than one class, involved in the writing and illustrating of picturebooks. This often translates into thirty to fifty students per school immersed in analyzing picturebooks, engaged in author studies, and sharing work with peers. Frequently, a celebration of student presentations is the culmination of the bookmaking program at the school level.

The school level team may include partnerships among the art teacher, classroom teacher, and the school librarian, along

with the support of school administrators, making the Ezra Jack Keats Bookmaking Competition a true collaborative effort.

Bookmaking makes that excellence something you can hold in your hand and show to others to prove you've done your

work well. We look forward to more and more educators bringing this program into their classrooms. &

For more information about the EJK Bookmaking Competition, including a video about the process, visit www.ezra-jack-keats.org/section/ezra-jack-keats-bookmaking-competition/.

Taking Great Photos . . . And Getting Them in Print

Everyone can benefit from free publicity, right? And *Children and Libraries* (CAL) is pleased to serve as a venue to promote your libraries' programs and practices. In fact, we'd like to run more photos of library events in CAL, but we need the help of our readers to provide us with good, usable photos.

To that end, we've prepared this guide for taking photos at your library—photos that will not only serve your library and local media but can readily be used in CAL as well.

1. **The Camera Counts.** Almost everyone now uses a digital camera or has access to one. But all digital cameras (and smartphones) are not created equal. Generally, those with a higher megapixel count will provide the clearest images with best resolution. A digital camera of 7 megapixels or more should be able to take a photo with high enough resolution for print reproduction.
2. **What's DPI?** For photos to be reproduced in magazines such as CAL, we require digital images of 300 DPI (dots per inch) or higher. It may be hard to tell on your camera what the end resolution will be, but here's a handy rule of thumb. Just set your camera to take photos on its highest resolution setting. That's usually the setting that will take the FEWEST photos. That's one common mistake most libraries make; they set the camera to take the MOST photos, but those are generally too small to use in print.
3. **Print vs. Internet.** There are different requirements for photos used in print publications and on the web. We cannot download photos from a library website unless they are already high enough resolution.
4. **Composition Matters.** When you're taking pictures at an event (such as storytime, book signings, etc.), keep an eye out for what would make a nice photo. Don't just snap away. Consider that a photo with two or three smiling children will make a much better photo than a group of forty kids. While it's important to take photos of the entire group to document the success of the program, snap a few closeups of kids' faces; these will often make the biggest impact, especially in a magazine spread. Candid shots are especially good, too, such as catching the little child paging through a board book or building a block house.
5. **Seek out Photographers.** If you're too busy the day of a library event to act as photographer, seek out someone who can and will document the event. This might be a willing parent, a library volunteer, or even a local high school or college student looking to get some photography clips for their portfolio. They will likely capture things you might miss or overlook during the event.
6. **Get Permissions.** In this day and age, getting permissions to take and use photographs of children is essential—both for libraries and for publications. CAL cannot run any photos of children without having a signed permission/release form from the child's parent or guardian. Most libraries now regularly have such release forms available during their events; if your library doesn't, you may want to consider this. It's easier to get the permissions during the event than tracking the parents down later. The release forms don't need to be full of legalese, just short forms noting that the parent/guardian gives permission for the child's photo to be used in any publication/publicity connected to the library and its programs.

Document those special moments at your library, and send them to us; we'd love to use them in an upcoming issue of CAL! &

Libraries at the Table for Kindergarten Readiness

Experiences and Tools to Grow On

PAM BROCKWAY AND SAROJ GHOTING

“The training I received from PLYMC’s Kindergarten Readiness Workshop didn’t simply help me to understand the number of ways our libraries are striving to support school readiness, it enabled me to effectively communicate with and engage parents and caregivers as to how they can be active participants in this endeavor as well. The workshop group activities created a dialogue that allowed me to internalize what we learned from the assigned readings by coming up with and discussing the different ways learning domains can be implemented in practice.”
—Marnie Alvarez, Readers’ Services Librarian, Main Library

The growth articulated here is the result of the Public Library of Youngstown and Mahoning County’s (PLYMC) Kindergarten Readiness Initiative. Mahoning County (OH) has a long history of supporting early literacy. After reviewing kindergarten readiness assessment results for our county, we realized we could strengthen our value in the community by articulating how we support all school readiness domains and look for ways to increase support to families who most need kindergarten readiness support.

PLYMC identified three components to our plan for improving kindergarten readiness in our community—boosting school readiness domains in storytimes and programs; creating kindergarten readiness stations with activities for parents and children to complete together in the library; circulating early learning backpacks with books and activities to support kindergarten readiness development at home.

The key to all of these is helping staff recognize how they already support kindergarten readiness, how intentionality can strengthen this support, and how they can become stronger advocates for the public library by articulating how we support kindergarten readiness. The same pillars that we learned about early literacy based in Every Child Ready to

Read (ECRR) and Supercharged Storytimes became the structure we applied to kindergarten readiness. These include knowledge of skills and practices, intentionality, interactivity, early literacy tips, and community of practice.

While the school readiness domains vary from state to state, have different structures, and have a variety of names including early learning guidelines or early learning standards, the content of the knowledge needed is similar. Ohio, like most states, bases their measures on the five domains of early learning, outlined by the US Department of Education:¹

- Social and Emotional Development
- Approaches toward Learning
- Cognition and General Knowledge
- Language and Literacy
- Physical Well-Being and Motor Development



Pam Brockway is the Early Learning Team Leader at the Public Library of Youngstown and Mahoning County (OH). **Saroj Ghoting** is an Early Childhood Literacy Consultant who

presents face-to-face and online trainings on early literacy, kindergarten readiness, and storytimes.

Entering kindergarten with a strong foundation in all five domains of early learning positions a student for continued success. Studies have shown that a student who starts kindergarten without kindergarten readiness skills is more likely to struggle with the third-grade reading assessment and is less likely to graduate.² Ohio school districts administer the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) in the first few months of the school year. Results from 2017 show only 36.3 percent of Mahoning County students demonstrated the foundational skills and behaviors that prepare them for instruction based on kindergarten standards.

PLYMC, located in northeast Ohio, made the intentional choice to become a community resource in improving kindergarten readiness. As an informal learning center where all are welcomed, the library is positioned to fill this early learning gap and provide modeling and support to students and their parents so that students can arrive at kindergarten ready to learn. By targeting our resources on improving kindergarten readiness skills in our community, we can affect long-term benefits for the education of our children.

Our first step was to provide our youth librarians with the knowledge, skills, and tools to intentionally support parents in preparing their children for kindergarten. While many activities in the library support the early learning domains and kindergarten readiness, we weren't intentionally making the connection between the activity and kindergarten readiness.

With the support of an LSTA Grant through the State Library of Ohio, we offered three workshops reaching approximately ninety librarians from thirty library systems throughout the state. Saroj Ghoting led the workshop providing foundational knowledge in the five domains of early learning, as well as hands-on practice in communicating the connections between activities, early learning standards, and kindergarten readiness.

With much information to be covered, participants were asked to complete a series of assignments prior to the workshop. Readings included foundational knowledge on each learning domain from *STEP into Storytime: Using StoryTime Effective Practice to Strengthen the Development of Newborns to Five-Year-Olds* (ALA Editions, 2014) by Saroj Ghoting and Kathy Klatt, as well as the State of Ohio's Early Learning and Development Standards and Implementation Guides.³

Workshop participants were asked to think of and write down a book or activity for each of the early learning domains. By requiring this advance work, participants came to the workshop with a common understanding and knowledge of Ohio's five child development domains. This allowed the workshop to build on what was learned and provided participants more time to share ideas and to practice articulating that information and experience to parents, other staff, and community members. They became more comfortable saying early learning tips aimed at adults and elevator speeches aimed at community partners and families.

We developed the following tools for workshop participants. After the final workshop, these were shared via Ohio Ready to Read Task Force and through our library's website (www.libraryvisit.org/kids/resources-for-librarians).

- Graphic for the five domains of early learning (see figure 1). This visual depiction of the domains can be posted in the children's department to encourage and support discussion with caregivers.
- A crosswalk linking ECRR to the Language and Literacy domain of Ohio's Early Learning and Development Standards. This tool connects the familiar practices of ECRR to kindergarten readiness.
- Implementation guides for each of the early learning domains. Ohio offers guides with implementation strategies for teachers for each of the early learning standards. Using these as a basis, we, with the help of Ohio Ready to Read

Figure 1. Five Domains of Early Learning for Kindergarten Readiness



Task Force members, created guides with implementation strategies specifically targeted for storytime activities. These guides break down each kindergarten readiness domain into subcategories called strands and topics. For example, under the domain Social and Emotional Development, Strands include Self and Relationships. Topics under Relationships include Attachment, Interaction with Adults, and Peer Interactions. Within each topic, there is an age breakdown for infants, young toddlers, older toddlers, and preschoolers with strategies to support that strand and topic (see figure 2).

- Sample kindergarten readiness tips for parents/caregivers.
- Sample “elevator” speeches to articulate how we support kindergarten readiness.

All workshop participants also received a copy of *The Early Literacy Kit: A Handbook and Tip Cards* (ALA Editions, 2010) by Betsy Diamant-Cohen and Saroj Ghoting. This kit contains a handbook and 104 reusable tip cards with activities coordinated to the early learning domains.

These workshops allowed us to recognize what we are already doing and to find new ways to support kindergarten readiness. Sharing between libraries was especially helpful as we learned from each other how we are and can be supporting kindergarten readiness.

Ultimately, training will result in librarians using this knowledge to incorporate kindergarten readiness skills into storytimes and other services. A post-workshop survey will be sent to participants six months after the training to realize specific ways the skills are being integrated into library programs and services.

Storytimes and Programs

Although we are still training staff, we are already beginning to see some changes as a result of the kindergarten readiness training. For example, librarians have offered a Get Ready for Kindergarten program, which included a book and song and then stations with activities for parents and children to complete together, including water beads, Play-Doh, and

Figure 2. Sample Page from the Social and Emotional Development Implementation Guide

Ohio Early Learning and Development Standard (Birth to 5): Implementation Guide Domain: Social and Emotional Development		
<p>Self Awareness and Expression of Emotion</p>	<p><u>Older Toddlers</u> Show awareness of own emotion and use nonverbal and/or verbal ways to express complex emotions such as pride, embarrassment, shame and guilt</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sing and say songs, chants, rhymes, poems and fingerplays. • Verbalize and use a broad range of pictures representing cultures, ethnicities, etc. to help children understand appropriate ways to express emotions. • Verbally recognize complex emotions and support children as they go through them, especially during transitions. • Offer opportunities for children to draw to express emotions. • Read and talk about children’s books about feelings, but not limited to “books about feelings.” • Talk about feelings of characters depicted in books and stories even if feelings are not noted in text. • Articulate to parents/caregivers the importance of these activities for social/emotional development and school readiness.
<p>Self Awareness and Expression of Emotion</p>	<p><u>Pre-Kindergarten</u> Recognize and identify emotions and the emotions of others</p> <p>Communicate a range of emotions in socially accepted ways</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sing and say songs, chants, rhymes, poems and fingerplays. • Read books that communicate socially accepted ways to express emotions recognizing that there are cultural differences in what may be “acceptable” ways to express emotions. • Relate emotions of characters in books to children’s experiences. • Offer opportunities for writing/drawing to express emotions. • Articulate to parents/caregivers the importance of these activities for social/emotional development and school readiness.
<p>Self Self-Concept</p>	<p><u>Infants</u> Begin to understand self as a separate person from others</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place mirrors at infants’ eye levels when they are on the floor. • Offer playtime where infants can see each other. • Provide nametags for infants in order to call them by name. • Model actions and facilitate interactions between parents/caregivers and infants to point to body parts, first adult’s, then infant’s. • Facilitate having infants touch adults’ faces, hair, ears, and give them language as they explore. • Use songs, rhymes to focus on body parts and actions. • Articulate to parents/caregivers the importance of these activities for social/emotional development and school readiness.
<p>Self Self-Concept</p>	<p><u>Young Toddlers</u> Recognize self as a unique person with thoughts, feelings and distinct characteristics</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model talking about own feelings and children’s feelings; encourage parents/caregivers to talk about their feelings. • Provide mirror so children can see themselves and describe what they see. • Use photographs and books of photographs of faces, encouraging children to compare their own faces with those of others. • Allow children to have comfort objects when needed. • Encourage parents/caregivers to notice children’s non-verbal actions, gestures, facial expressions and preferences, narrating what they observe. • Share books that offer opportunities to talk about feelings. • Provide opportunities for adults to talk with children to connect what is happening in book or story to the child’s experiences; adult may be articulating the connections. • Offer craft/activity opportunities that use children’s photographs, and to articulate distinct characteristics. • Articulate to parents/caregivers the importance of these activities for social/emotional development and school readiness.

rice sensory bins. They were better able to articulate how the activities support kindergarten readiness.

A familiar theme during workshop discussion was how to reach non-library users in our communities. Our mobile services librarian attended April's workshop and is able to talk about kindergarten readiness and present storytimes supporting kindergarten readiness in the community. Our branch librarians are more confident as they continue to reach out to community groups and schools to find out how we can best support kindergarten readiness needs.

Looking forward, we will discuss next steps and changes to programming, including changing our storytime handouts to reflect kindergarten readiness, not just language and literacy. We are also moving to a comprehensive plan—where all storytimes in a month feature the same domain of early learning (the same domain as stations).

Kindergarten Readiness Stations

"I think The Kindergarten Readiness Stations are terrific tools to have on display. The different activities provide the perfect platform in which to discuss our early literacy efforts in an informal manner, and in conjunction with the Library's Early Learning Backpacks, empower parents by giving them the tools to further strengthen their child's school readiness. As a result, I am a stronger and more competent advocate of our library's Kindergarten Readiness Initiative and can effectively implement and discuss these services with our patrons."—Marnie Alvarez, Readers' Services Librarian, Main Library

Because many families are not able to attend storytimes and other library programs, we added Kindergarten Readiness Stations, which provide activities to support kindergarten readiness any time a family visits any of our fifteen branches. The stations include easy and fun activities for a parent and child to enjoy together. They are rotated monthly. There are five "copies" of three different stations for each strand of an early learning domain. A station may focus on different topics within the strand. For example, the domain may be Social and Emotional Development. The strand may be Self, so all station activities will focus on Self. The activities may support different topics within the strand such as Awareness and Expression of Emotion, Self-Concept, Self-Regulation, or Sense of Competence. Signage at the station provides instructions as well as the connection to the early learning domain and kindergarten readiness (see figure 3).

Ideas for activities to do at home to support the skill have been included on the signage as well. Going forward, the ideas for at home may be moved to a bookmark that the family can take with them—reducing the wordage on the sign and providing a physical reminder for parents. Our monthly newsletter includes an introduction to the stations and the targeted domain or strand.



Canfield Public Library Get Ready for Kindergarten Program (photos by Jeff Mamula).

Beginning in January 2020, early learning tips in storytimes will also support the domain targeted in the station, communicating a cohesive message to families. The stations are targeted to preschoolers. The coordinated early learning tips will be shared at all storytimes, including baby and toddlers, in developmentally appropriate ways. We may develop additional stations targeting parents and children ages

Figure 3. Kindergarten Readiness Station Sign

KINDERGARTEN READINESS STATION
A fun early learning activity that will help your child get ready for a strong start at school.

SCIENCE: Encourage children's curiosity, let them explore and discover the world around them.

LIFE SCIENCE

Match the baby animal to the adult. Make the connection that all living things grow and change over time.

- How does the baby animal look different than the adult?
- How do they look the same?
- Say both the adult and baby name to build vocabulary!
- Compare the animals- sort into animals with four legs, animals with feathers, etc.
- Talk about times or places you may have seen some of these animals.

Science is part of the Cognition and General Knowledge Domain of the Early Learning and Development Standards. Life science includes the exploration of living things. Before kindergarten, children should be able to identify physical characteristics and simple behaviors of living things, understand that living things change over time, and recognize the differences between people and other living things (with modeling and support.)
(Source: Ohio's Early Learning and Development Standards and Implementation Guide)



Canfield Public Library Get Ready for Kindergarten Program.

newborn to age three. Posters that have already been developed are included on our website at www.libraryvisit.org/kids/resources-for-librarians.

Early Learning Backpacks

In another effort to reach the families who do not or cannot attend library programs, we purchased sixty-two Sprout Early Learning Backpacks from the Early Childhood Resource Center (www.ecresourcecenter.org/WBA/Content/community/sprout-learning-backpacks), also supported by the LSTA grant through the State Library of Ohio. They include books and activities that were designed specifically to support Ohio Department of Education's Early Learning and Development Standards. There are thirty-one unique kits available in two age ranges: infants and toddlers (ages 0–2), and preschool/early learners (ages 3–8). Each kit is aligned with a specific skill from the standards and includes an activity guide. Activity guides provide easy-to-follow instructions, along

with tips for in-home connections and a variety of ideas to stimulate conversation that support targeted learning.

By circulating these backpacks, we are providing parents with the tools to continue to develop kindergarten readiness skills at home. Brochures are available at every branch and on our website so that families can easily request backpacks (www.libraryvisit.org/kids/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2019/07/Early-Learning-Backpack-Handout-PDF-1.pdf). These backpacks circulate an average of once per month at our larger branches, with smaller branches at about half that rate, but growing. Results from surveys included in the backpacks show that 95 percent of respondents strongly agree or agree that the books and activities inside the backpacks should help teach their children the skills needed to succeed in school.

We continue to work together with staff to find ways to support kindergarten readiness in our communities. Our librarians are equipped to use storytimes and programs, the kindergarten readiness stations, and early learning backpacks as tools to share information on kindergarten readiness with families in our community. These resources become vehicles for building relationships that are at the center of learning. They combine to make us a more intentional and comprehensive resource in kindergarten readiness.

We are better able to articulate the value we bring as we share enjoyable activities in library programs. Workshops provided the opportunity to share information and ideas across library systems. Kindergarten readiness information and activities are now available both in the library and for families to check out and take home. Information about kindergarten readiness and links to the Ohio Department of Education website are included on our website for parents to access (www.libraryvisit.org/kids/kindergarten-readiness). As we boost our efforts and articulate our contributions, we help all in our communities to see how public libraries are here to help families as their children enter kindergarten ready to learn and to love learning. &

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Tiny Tech

A Pre-Coding Primer for Preschoolers

KATIE CLAUSEN

I grew up in an artistic family—creativity is in our DNA. As a child, I did everything from ballet to theater to writing camp.

Did I do computer science as a preschooler? No.

Did I learn how to code? Surely not—it was the '80s!

However, after studying early childhood education and developmental psychology, I've learned this—coding isn't far from my art background. In fact, coding itself is creative and engages both sides of our brain. In fact, that National Association for the Education of Young Children states, "Early coding, or precoding, offers children experiences that integrate communication, thinking, and problem solving. These are twenty-first-century skills that are valuable for children's future success in our digital world."¹

So, what is "precoding" and why is it important to teach children before they enter kindergarten? Coding, also called programming, is simply telling a computer what you'd like it to do. A computer program is a list of specific, step-by-step instructions that tell a computer what to do. Think about this—when you instruct a child to sit down cross-legged on the carpet for storytime, children instinctively understand what to do because the steps are in the muscle memories of their bodies. However, there are many steps involved—placing two feet hips-width distance apart, bending one's knees slowly, crossing one foot in front of the other, and then releasing one's bottom to the ground. The order of these steps is also important. What if a child released her bottom before bending her knees? Ouch! Fortunately, we don't have to code our bodies in order to achieve a desired goal of sitting down.

However, a computer doesn't have the same innate knowledge that our bodies do. A computer needs step-by-step



Preschoolers practice binary coding by making bracelets with their coded initials (photo by Debbie Roycroft, KidSpace staff member at GBPL).

instructions in order to perform the task you want. These step-by-step instructions are a computer's *language*.

Coding encourages preschoolers to think about efficiency and something called *decomposition*—being able to articulate a problem and think logically to break it down into smaller steps. What happens when a child makes a mistake? Coding *encourages* kids to make mistakes because learning comes from trial and error. Just like learning choreography for a dance or the correct finger positions for the flute, coding is about finding the right steps in the right order to find the desired result. In this way, coding is creative! Coding is experimenting, playing, and designing.

Preschoolers in 2020 are digital natives. They learn systems in tablets and phones right alongside reading, writing, and math. A coding foundation will help preschoolers begin to think like problem solvers, critical thinkers, even detectives. How can we break down this mystery to discover the answer? How do we fix a computer "bug" or a technical problem?

Douglas Rushkoff, professor of Media Theory and Digital Economics at Queens College, City University of New York, believes that code literacy is a twenty-first-century requirement. He argues that it not only develops skills like critical thinking and problem solving, but also "learning code—and



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doing so in a social context—familiarizes people with the values of a digital society: the commons, collaboration and sharing. These are replacing the industrial age values of secrecy or the hoarding of knowledge.”²

Most precoding or early coding is done collaboratively, which encourages socioemotional skills such as distress tolerance and emotional regulation. Globally, I wish we fostered more encouragement and collaboration with each other, rather than fueling ourselves with competition.

So, where do you start pre-coding with preschoolers? There are many options. You truly don’t have to be a computer whiz! If you are new to coding, my suggestion is to start tech-free, and then purchase a few tech toys that are non-intimidating and relatively inexpensive. Please know that there are *many* toys and several companies that sell products. I am not endorsing any specific brand; here are some of my current favorites.

For Toddlers and Preschoolers: Directional Language and Patterns

We learn coding just like we learn any language—through understanding a language’s alphabet, organization, and order. For example, letters are set in an order to form a word; words are set in an order to form a sentence. Sentences make a paragraph, and paragraphs make a book! Thus, using directional language and practicing simple sequencing is a great way to begin teaching preschoolers coding. Using concept words like forward, backward, up, and down give preschoolers the framework for understanding a sequence. Playing pattern games, such as making a sequence with Skittles or M&M’s (red, blue, red, blue) builds the foundation for understanding that coding is a list of actions in a predetermined order.

Screen-Free Coding Activities

In a group discussion, ask children how they do a variety of activities, such as put on their pajamas, read a book, or go potty.

They may describe the activity, tell a story, talk about what they do. But as you discuss with them, break the story down even further into a step-by-step sequence. This uses directional statements, such as “then.”

For example, for putting on pajamas:

- a. First, you find your pajamas.
- b. Then, you pick up your pajamas.
- c. Then, you lift one leg into the pajamas.
- d. Then you lift the other leg into the pajamas.

- e. If you can’t get you leg in the first time, you try again.
- f. You button or zip your pajamas.

You can take this even further and ask the kids to break down each step even *more*. To find your pajamas, you need to walk to your dresser, reach your hand down, open the drawer, etc. The possibilities are endless. You can also get silly and ask, “What would happen if you buttoned your pajamas before you put them over your head? This would be called a “bug” in the coding, and you would have to “debug” the code by putting the steps in the correct order.

Another Screen-Free Coding Activity Is If/Then or While/Do

Computers will perform your instructions *only if* a certain condition is fulfilled. This is called conditional coding. You, the caregiver or teacher, will be the coder. The child will be the computer. Then state, “While I do ____, you do ____.” For example, “While I do the dishes, you brush your teeth.” Or “While I rub my tummy, you jump up and down.” Then, let the little one be the coder! This teaches children that the computer will *only* do a task if you tell it to in a language it understands.

If/Then is similar. “If I’m rubbing my tummy, you jump up and down.” This game is very much like Simon Says. You can make this as complicated or simple as you’d like. The object is for the “computer,” AKA the child, to only do what you tell them *if* you are doing the first part of the code. So, in the example above, if you are rubbing your ears or simply doing nothing, your child should not be jumping up and down.

Sharing Coding Books in Storytime

There are many books specifically about coding, such as *How to Code a Sandcastle* by Josh Funk or his new book *How to Code a Rollercoaster*, but I like to think of coding books in storytime more broadly. Picturebooks about problem solving and directions are great options. Any books that involve predicting what happens next or looking at patterns (think about fairy tales, like Goldilocks, that repeat patterns like “not too cold,” “not too soft,” etc.) are great choices. Bringing in books about robots and other technology is another way to introduce coding. Truly, you can use any book as a baseline and integrate the coding how it best fits you and your storytime style. Here are some of my favorites:

If You’re A Robot And You Know It by David Carter

Pete the Cat: Robo-Pete by James Dean

Boy and Bot by Ame Dyckman

Stuck by Oliver Jeffers

Doll-E 1.0 by Shanda McCloskey

A House in the Woods by Inga Moore

Because Amelia Smiled by David Ezra Stein

Beep! Beep! Go to Sleep! by Todd Tarpley

Coding Bracelets or Chains

Computers read code in a system of zeros and ones and translate it to a language called ASCII. A specific string of code determines what numbers, letters, and symbols the computer understands. The reason it is called “binary” code is because there are only two options for coding language. For this project, kids spell out their initials or name, using binary code. They choose one color for 1s and another color for 0s, write out their initials or name according to the ASCII alphabet, and then use the two colors of beads they chose to “code” their initials with those colors on a bracelet.

Using Pre-Coding Technology, Such As Coding Robots and Games

There are many precoding games and toys to purchase. None of them are perfect, and have mixed reviews, but I will share my favorites.

- **Bunny Trails by Future Coders Alex Toys.** In this game, you help Bunny find a path through the garden. You set down tiles with black lines on a board to create a path to find a delicious carrot. However, there are obstacles, such as bees, foxes, and gates along the way. Kids must strategize and thoughtfully plan out the bunny’s course to be successful. Best part: If the path is incorrect, kids simply take off one tile and replace it! This is much different than other robots with buttons, because *you don’t have to start over*. You just change out a tile.
- **Robot Races by Future Coders Alex Toys.** This is like a large motor version of Bunny Trails. In this Twister-like game, YOU are the robot! You put on a robot headband, place arrow cards on a large mat, and then walk the path you’ve coded, avoiding obstacles along the way. Both of these Future Coders games come with cards that range from level 1 to level 20, each getting progressively more difficult.
- **Code-a-Pillar by Fisher-Price.** This robot has segments that attach to each other using a simple USB port. You can

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Open exploration is a great opportunity for kids to learn coding. These kids wrote the code for the Code-a-Pillar to go through their legs!

make the Code-a-Pillar go forward, left, and right, and each segment lights up when the robot does the movement, so kids can “see” the code they created. There are more than a thousand possible combinations, and this toy encourages experimentation and open play. The one thing that drives me little nuts about this one is the sound. I haven’t found a way to turn the sound off, and it can be quite loud.

- **Bee Bot by Lakeshore Learning and Robot Mouse by Learning Resources.** These two products work very similarly. Kids enter a “code” pressing directional buttons (forward, back, left, and right). Pressing the green GO button starts the Bee Bot or Robot Mouse on its way! I’ve used both of these robots in drop-in programs, as well as at the end of storytimes. I love to give the kids a visual goal to go to, such as a piece of play cheese for Robot Mouse or a giant Beehive for Bee Bot. Giving a visual goal allows kids to problem solve along the way, to get the robot to the target in as few steps as possible.

What’s the best way to use these ideas? It’s up to you! My favorite thing is a drop-in open play program, such as something we’ve had at Gail Borden Library called Tiny Tech. You can circulate coding robots, keep them behind the desk for in-house use only, or make STEM kits with interactive activity ideas. I think the most important thing is to give it a try. I’m definitely more of an artist than a scientist, but it wasn’t until I gave coding and robots a try that I realized that I needed creativity in order to code. &

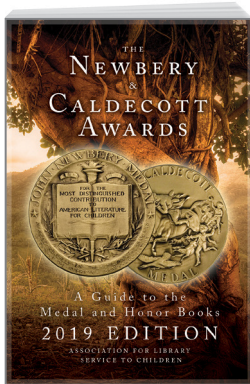
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Featuring a new interview with Caldecott Medalist Allen Say and updated with the 2019 award and honor books, this perennial

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Create an award-winning display with giant Caldecott and Newbery medals!

These two-sided decorations are perfect for hanging or for window display.

Where Are We Now?

The Evolving Use of New Media with Young Children in Libraries

KATHLEEN CAMPANA, J. ELIZABETH MILLS, MARIANNE MARTENS, AND CLAUDIA HAINES

The topic of using new media with young children (zero to five years old) in the library has been a focus of conversations in the field for several years.¹ An Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) survey, administered to children's library staff from across the United States in 2014, provided a foundation for these conversations by revealing how library staff were using new media with young children and their families. The results of the survey, which revealed widespread inclusion of new media in library spaces, along with the innovative work of library staff and community needs, spurred profession-wide initiatives to apply research-based practices to how libraries support the literacy and media needs of families.

Building on this survey, in 2015 the ALSC Board of Directors responded to the growing use of new media with young children, and the expanding role library staff can play in the lives of families, by adopting the white paper *Media Mentorship in Libraries Serving Youth*. The white paper provided a definition of media mentorship and articulated why this work is an important aspect of library service to children. To further guide library staff who work with children and families, ALSC, Cen Campbell, and Claudia Haines published the book *Becoming a Media Mentor: A Guide for Working with Families* (ALA Editions, 2016).

During the same period, staff trainings on the use of new media in the library with young children increased

nationwide. Several states and library systems have since created local and regional programs to provide ongoing professional development, grants for new technology, and family support campaigns. These include libraries in Arizona, Massachusetts, Maryland, Washington, Alaska, California, New York, and Ohio, among others. ALSC and many library systems now incorporate media mentorship and new media into their youth services professional competencies to reflect the needs of libraries. Furthermore, master of library and information science (MLIS) programs at Kent State, San José State, the University of Washington, and others have integrated new media into core courses, recognizing the evolving role of future children's librarians.

In 2015, then ALSC President Ellen Riordan compiled a task force to examine how ALSC could recognize new media. Based on their recommendations, ALSC established the Excellence in Early Learning Digital Media Award, first awarded in 2019, recognizing producers of excellent digital media for kids ages two to eight years, and the Notable Children's Digital Media list, first released in 2018, selects exemplary, interactive media that provides accurate content, entertains, and supports active learning and joint media engagement for children fourteen years of age and younger. Both the award and the notable list provide children's library staff and families with recommendations for high-quality media designed for young children.



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Apps and other new media, like the programmable Code-a-Pillar or Cubetto that allow young children to learn about coding and computational thinking, are finding their way into public library family programming. These new tools are incorporated into library initiatives that support STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) and STEAM (STEM + Art). This follows an increased focus nationwide on supporting literacy and learning across academic fields in informal learning centers like libraries.

Given these changes, ALSC commissioned an additional survey in 2018 to find out what has changed with new media use in the library with young children. In light of these library initiatives, growth in the quantity and kinds of new media available for young children and widely available media mentorship training, the goal of the survey was to understand how, if at all, the use of new media in libraries with young children and their caregivers has changed since 2014.

Literature Review

When research began on using new media in the library with young children in 2014, there were already conflicting views among parents, caregivers, teachers, and librarians about the use of technology (at the time, mostly tablets) with young children. While many saw benefits in multimodal learning tools, others felt that new media was a distraction that interfered with young children's early literacy skills. Since then, while conflicting views remain, more has been uncovered. Parents and caregivers use technology with young children for a variety of reasons, such as they are avid users themselves and share it with their children; they feel it is an important part of school readiness; or they have found benefits with new media as assistive devices for children with a disability.

As of 2019, whether those who interact with young children are pro- or anti-tech, new media is here to stay. Screens are pervasive in everyday life in the United States. In fact, according to the Pew Research Center's 2018 Mobile Fact Sheet, in 2018, 95 percent of adult Americans owned some type of smartphone, 73 percent owned a desktop or laptop computer, and 53 percent owned a tablet.²

In addition, the 2017 Common Sense Media Census found that 95 percent of zero to eight-year-olds have a smartphone in the home, 78 percent have a tablet in the home, and 42 percent have their own tablet.³ Furthermore, a 2016 study by the Erikson Institute found that 85 percent of parents surveyed allowed their children under the age of six to use new media.⁴ Schools are increasingly using new media for testing—as early as kindergarten—and many parents feel that using new media at home is an important part of school readiness.⁵

In addition to playing a role with school readiness, new media devices are frequently being used to support the needs of children with a disability. In several studies, tablets, such as iPads, were found to have benefits when it comes to serving the literacy needs of children with a disability.⁶ In addition, certain iPad apps have been found to be helpful literacy tools for students struggling to learn to read.⁷ Finally, Paciga and Donohue found that technology and interactive media could support whole child development.⁸

When the first survey was conducted in 2014, merely four years after the launch of the first iPad, new media in libraries usually referred to tablets or to AWE Learning stations.⁹ However, by 2018, other new media tools also encompassed tangible and programmable tech, such as Code-A-Pillars and Snap Circuits, in addition to tablets. A move toward including computational thinking in early literacy programming makes these tools perfect for challenging library staff to explore the relationship between early literacy and computational thinking skills when working with young children and their caregivers.¹⁰

Background

The original Young Children, New Media, and Libraries survey was conducted because a team of researchers determined that an initial snapshot of the landscape of new media use around the country, in library programs and services for young children, could provide powerful material for advocacy and development. This led to the launch of the first nationwide survey of public libraries to investigate emergent technology use in programs and services for children aged zero to five and their families. The survey was conducted in collaboration with ALSC, LittleeLit.com (once a blog, now a web-based think tank), and the iSchool at the University of Washington.

The overarching research question guiding the 2014 study was, *What is the landscape in public libraries around the country with respect to new media use with young children and their caregivers?* The goals of the study were to understand to what extent new media was being used in libraries and what types were being used, if it was being used in programming for young children, what kind of funding and selection strategies librarians were using in procuring new media, and plans for the future with regards to new media use.

To achieve these goals the survey included questions on topics related to new media use with young children in the library. The survey was administered in August of 2014, was available for participation for eighteen days, and drew responses from more than four hundred library staff from around the country.¹¹

The 2018 Survey

In late 2017, due to recent changes in research-based new media practices and guidelines from the field of education, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), and persistent debates among librarians about using new media with young children in the library, we were asked by ALSC to readminister the 2014 Young Children, New Media, and Libraries survey. The overarching research question guiding the study remained the same as it was in 2014: *What is the landscape in public libraries around the country with respect to new media use with young children and their caregivers?* We also added a second research question: *What changes are present in the data from 2018 when compared to the data from 2014 in terms of new media use with young children?*

As one of the goals for the 2018 survey was to determine if there had been any changes in the landscape from 2014 to 2018, we repeated the original 2014 survey questions. In addition, we decided to add some supplemental questions to gain insight into other aspects of new media use with young children and their caregivers in the library. The final survey design included twenty-nine questions, consisting of both the original questions from the 2014 survey, as well as additional questions on topics such as librarians' attitudes toward providing access to new media for young children and their caregivers, the challenges librarians face in using new media, and more.

However, this article will focus on the findings that emerged from the original questions in the 2018 survey and the comparison of the findings from the 2014 to 2018 surveys.¹² Most of the original questions were multiple choice with some short answer boxes where participants could add additional detail.

The second survey was administered in August of 2018. Prior to opening the survey to the public, it was pilot-tested with a variety of children's library staff across the country. Following the pilot-testing phase, we opened the survey to all library staff at the beginning of August and left it open for the entire month. The survey was initially distributed through various public library listservs and groups with regular reminders to complete the survey being sent out through the same channels.

When the survey closed, we had 262 responses.¹³ The respondents represented libraries of all sizes. However, the highest number of respondents represented libraries serving 10,000 to 24,999 individuals. The second highest response rate came from libraries serving 25,000 to 49,999, followed by libraries serving fewer than 5,000. We also saw a bimodal

distribution, with an initial peak among respondents serving fewer than 5,000—curiously the same distribution we saw in 2014 (see figure 1).

One factor we learned about in 2014 that may be influencing this distribution is that many libraries in the under-5,000 category were often able to get grants, because of their size, to obtain the funds to purchase new media devices for their libraries.

Results

The data from the 2018 survey provides insight into the landscape of public libraries' new media use with young children. Overall, the respondents were using several different types of new media with their patrons through a variety of methods. In the sections that follow, we first present the 2018 findings from each question more in-depth, according to each library's reported size. To more clearly present this data from across the different sizes of libraries, we collapsed the libraries into three broader size categories based on legal population: small (0 to 24,999), medium (25,000 to 249,999), and large (250,000 to 1,000,000). We presented the data in this way because different-size libraries have access to varying amounts of resources, have fluctuating constraints, and serve communities with different characteristics.

We then explored how the data from the 2018 survey compared to the results from the 2014 survey, looking at overall response frequency for this comparison. For this data, we wanted to examine the differences and similarities in terms of use and access across all our respondents, regardless of library size, in order to emphasize the specific findings under each question. This broad look enabled us to understand how the field as a whole has changed since the 2014 survey in terms of the use of new media with young children and their caregivers.

Figure 1. Participating libraries by legal service population

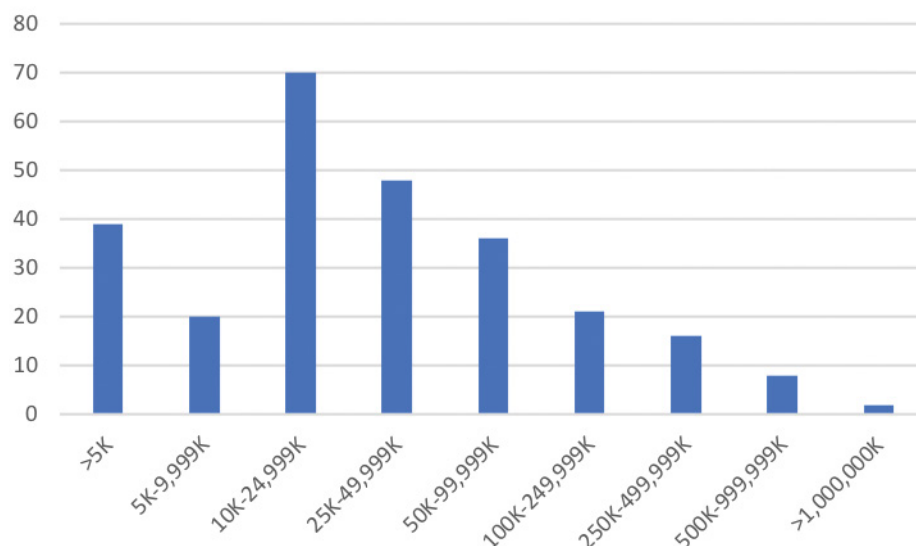


Table 1. Percentage of Libraries in 2018 that Reported Using Each Device Type with Young Children and Their Caregivers

Device Type	Percentage of Small Libraries Using the Device in 2018	Percentage of Medium Libraries Using the Device in 2018	Percentage of Large Libraries Using the Device in 2018
Children's tablet (e.g., Nabi, LeapPad)	25.58	30.47	19.23
Combination e-reader/tablet (e.g., Kindle Fire or Nook Tablet)	10.07	9.52	0.00
Digital recording device (e.g., digital camera, Flip Video, GoPro)	3.87	6.66	3.84
MP3 players (e.g., iPod or other music player)	14.72	16.19	7.69
Devices that are multilingual for non-native English speakers	12.40	14.28	26.92
Programmable tech (e.g., Beebots, Code-a-Pillar, Cubetto)	30.23	39.04	53.84
Projection device (e.g., device to display song lyrics)	18.60	28.57	23.07
Proprietary institutional devices (e.g., AWE or Hatch stations)	55.03	53.33	61.53
Tablet (e.g., iPad, iPad Mini, Galaxy Tab, Nexus 7, etc.)	42.63	53.33	46.15
Tangible tech (e.g., Makey Makeys, Osmo, Squishy Circuits)	33.33	40.00	46.15

Table 2. Comparison of Responses from 2014 to 2018, Ranked in Decreasing Order by 2018 Percentages

Device Type	Percentage of Libraries Using the Device in 2014	Percentage of Libraries Using the Device in 2018
Proprietary institutional devices	43.77	53.82
Tablet	47.68	46.18
Tangible tech	n/a	37.02
Programmable tech	n/a	35.88
Children's tablet	10.76	26.72
Projection device	n/a	22.90
MP3 players	10.76	14.89
Devices that are multilingual for non-native English speakers	10.76	14.50
Combination e-reader/tablet	22.49	8.40
Digital recording device	10.27	4.96

Types of Devices

To understand the types of devices that libraries are using with young children and their caregivers, one of the questions asked the participants to select all of the different types of devices they use with this population. Several different types of devices were provided as multiple-choice options, as well as the option for “none” or “other.” Many libraries indicated that they were using more than one type of device with young children and their caregivers. Across all respondents, the average number of different types of devices used with young children and their caregivers was three.

When looking at devices used across the different sizes of libraries, there are some clear trends that emerge (see table 1). Across all three groups, proprietary devices (i.e., AWE stations and others) were the most popular type of device. However, for the libraries in the medium size group, tablets were equal to the proprietary devices in terms of use. For small libraries, tablets were the second most popular device type. For the larger libraries, tangible and programmable overtook tablets

in popularity. This could indicate that for larger libraries, with larger budgets, tangible and programmable tech devices are becoming more prevalent in programming and are more well-known to the patrons, who then want to see them and use them in the library. Children's tablets, projection devices, MP3 players, and multilingual devices were also moderately popular across all three size categories. In addition, 18 percent of respondents selected the “other” option to indicate they used devices not covered by these categories, such as laptops and desktops, gaming systems, iPhones with virtual reality available, and multilingual CDs which were mostly used for language learning. Finally, 11 percent of the respondents indicated that they did not have any new media available to young children and their caregivers.

There are several points of comparison between the 2018 and 2014 findings (see table 2). In 2018 and 2014, proprietary institutional devices and tablets were the two most popular devices. In 2018, tangible new media and programmable new media were a close second, but they were not included in the 2014 survey because they were not yet prevalent in library

Table 3. Percentage of Libraries in 2018 that Reported Offering Various Methods of Device Access to Young Children and Their Caregivers by Size of Library

Method of Device Access	Percentage of Small Libraries Offering Each Method of Access	Percentage of Medium Libraries Offering Each Method of Access	Percentage of Large Libraries Offering Each Method of Access
Checkout for use outside of the library	28.68	37.14	19.23
Checkout for use within the library	27.13	39.05	19.23
Device used in library program (other than storytime)	51.16	65.71	61.54
Device used in storytime	45.74	54.29	69.23
Mentoring families	17.83	21.90	11.54
Mentoring families with bilingual content	1.55	1.90	7.69
Tethered or mounted devices	58.91	59.05	57.69

Table 4. Comparison of Methods of Device Access from 2014 to 2018, Ranked by 2018 Percentages

Method of Device Access	Percentage of Libraries Using Each Method of Device Access in 2014	Percentage of Libraries Using Each Method of Device Access in 2018
Tethered or mounted devices	40.7	58.5
Device used in library program (other than storytime)	30.6	57
Device used in storytime	40.2	51.7
Checkout for use outside of the library	19.5	31.9
Checkout for use within the library	25.7	28.8
Mentoring families	21.6	18.6
Mentoring families with bilingual content	2.1	2

settings. Looking across 2014 and 2018, there were increases in several types of new media, including proprietary devices and children's tablets, multilingual devices, and MP3 players. Finally, use of e-readers and digital recording devices dropped off significantly from 2014 to 2018.

Device Access

To provide insight into how libraries are using new media with young children and their caregivers, the participants were asked to indicate all of the different ways they provide young children and their caregivers with opportunities to access these types of new media. Various common methods were provided as multiple-choice options, as well as the option for "none" or "other." Many libraries indicated that they were using new media in multiple ways with young children and their caregivers, and some common themes emerged in the data (see table 3).

Tethered or mounted devices were the most popular way to use new media with young children for small libraries, followed closely by using new media in storytimes and other programs. Alternatively, using new media in programs, both storytimes and other programs, was more popular in medium and large libraries, though having tethered or mounted devices was almost as common. Across all three size groups,

device mentoring and offering devices for checkout to use outside of and inside the library were the next most frequent responses. The remaining options—other, none, and mentorship for multilingual devices—were selected at very low rates.

In 2018, libraries most commonly provided access to new media devices through tethering in libraries, use in storytimes, and use in other programs besides storytimes. This mirrors the findings from 2014 (see table 4). Looking across the 2014 and 2018 responses there were increases across all of the methods except for device mentoring, which decreased from 2014 to 2018. There were also significant increases in the responses of offering tethered devices and devices in programs *other* than storytimes. We saw smaller increases in devices being used in storytimes and devices available for checkout outside of the library. Providing devices for checkout outside of the library can be crucial for young children and families who might otherwise not have access, so this increase is a step in the right direction of providing access to new media for all families.

Funding Sources for Devices

The survey included a question on how libraries are funding the devices they use with young children and their caregivers. A list of common funding sources was provided, and

participants were able to select all of the various sources they had used to acquire the devices they were using with young children. Overall, many libraries were using multiple funding sources to fund the devices they were using with young children and their caregivers (see figure 2). Across all of the size categories, the most common funding source was the libraries' operating budgets, followed by grants and monetary donations from groups such as the Friends of the Library. Staff-owned devices and in-kind donations were not as common, having been indicated in only a small percentage of responses. Finally, only 7 percent of respondents across all library size categories selected "other," sharing that they acquired their devices through promotion, through checkout from the state library or district office, or that they weren't sure since the devices predated them at the library.

The comparison between the 2014 and 2018 data once again yielded similar results (see figure 3). The 2018 and the 2014 data both revealed that a library's operational budget, grant funds, and other monetary donations were the three most common sources of funding for new media devices. Looking across the 2014 and 2018 results there were increases in all of the funding source categories but one. The largest increase was in funding through the library's operational budget, which jumped from 56 percent to 76 percent. At the same time, staff use of their own personal devices in programming decreased from 2014 to 2018. When combined with the increases in the operational budget and grant funding, this decrease suggests that libraries may view these devices as an important part of their services and are working to fund them through their own budget and other funding streams so that staff do not need to use their own devices.

Resources for Selecting and Using Devices

A question was included in the survey to understand what resources library staff are using to inform their selection and use of new media with young children. A multiple-choice list was provided of the types of resources, including options for "other" or "none," and respondents were allowed to select all that apply. The data from the question revealed that library staff are using a variety of resources to understand what devices to use and how to use new media effectively with families of young children (see table 5). For medium and large

Figure 2. 2018 Percentages of Library Funding Sources for Purchasing New Media, by Library Size

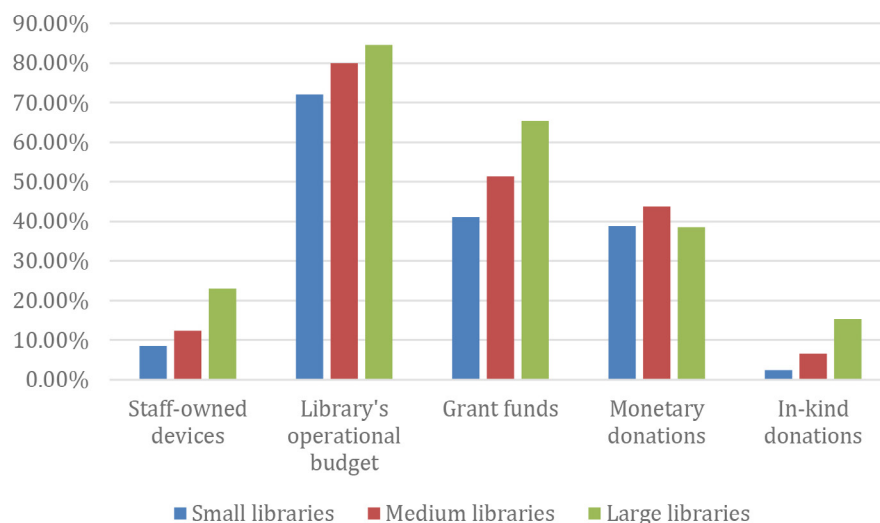
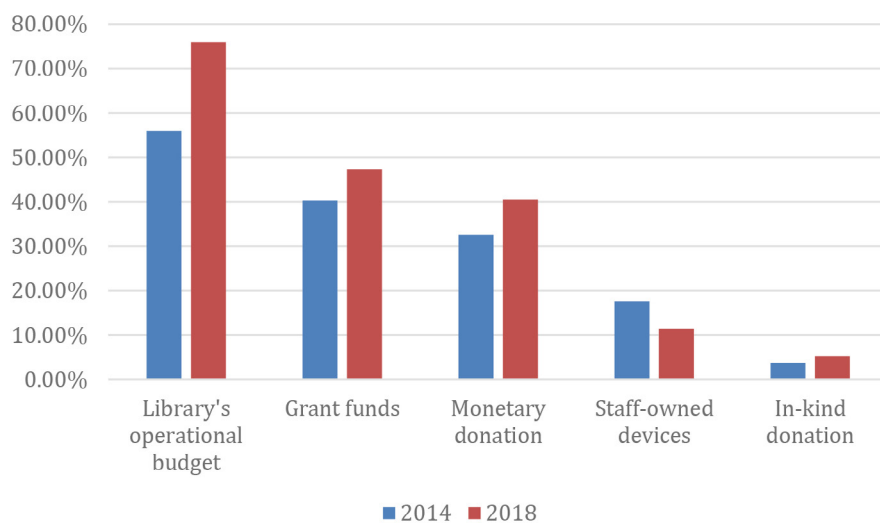


Figure 3. Comparison of 2014 and 2018 Funding Sources



libraries, professional journal articles and professional organizations received the highest number of responses, but for small libraries, recommendations from colleagues received the most responses, followed by in-person training and websites. These findings suggest the power of peer networks in this kind of decision-making process as well as the need for a continued role for ALSC and its committees to develop and offer trainings related to children, technology, and media mentorship to guide the field. Finally, 25 percent of participants selected "none," which could suggest that these library staff don't feel the need for resources to guide their new media practices or are unaware of the existence of such resources.

When comparing the 2018 data to the 2014 data, the findings were fairly similar (see table 6). The largest increase occurred in recommendations from colleagues, which jumped from 26 to 37 percent. This may be due to more library staff gaining

Table 5. 2018 Types of Resources Consulted by Size of Library

Types of Resources	Percentage of Small Libraries Using Each Type of Resource	Percentage of Medium Libraries Using Each Type of Resource	Percentage of Large Libraries Using Each Type of Resource
In-person event and/or training	26.36	33.33	34.62
Online event and/or training	10.85	13.33	23.08
Professional journal articles or books	21.71	47.62	50.00
Professional organizations	16.28	37.14	50.00
Recommendation from colleagues	33.33	29.52	26.92
Social media (e.g., blog, Facebook, Twitter)	10.85	18.10	7.69
Websites	26.36	25.71	19.23

Table 6. Comparison of 2014 and 2018 Resources Consulted, Ranked by 2018 Percentages

Types of Resources	Percentage of Libraries Using Each Type of Resource in 2014	Percentage of Libraries Using Each Type of Resource in 2018
Recommendation from colleagues	26.8	37.9
Professional journal articles or books	30.6	35.1
In-person event and/or training	28.1	30.3
Professional organizations	n/a	27.8
Websites	23.0	24.3
Social media (e.g., blog, Facebook, Twitter)	15.8	13.9
Online event and/or training	n/a	12.4

experience and familiarity with using new media with young children, to the point where they are comfortable providing guidance to their peers. The relatively even distribution of the responses in both 2014 and 2018 suggests that staff are still using a wide variety of resources to decide what to purchase for their library.

Future Plans for New Media Use with Young Children and Their Caregivers

The survey also included a question to understand libraries' future plans for the availability and use of new devices with young children and their caregivers. A multiple-choice list, including options for "other" and "don't know," was provided; respondents could select only one answer. Regarding future plans for new media use with young children, libraries seem eager to continue using new media devices with young children and their caregivers, with a majority of small, medium, and large libraries indicating that they plan to increase the availability of these devices in their community (see figure 4). Some libraries in these categories indicated plans to stay at the same level of device availability and usage. This may be because they have only recently introduced devices in their library and want to see the impact. None of the libraries across all three size categories indicated plans to eliminate usage, and only one library across all three size categories indicated a decrease in availability.

Across both the 2014 and 2018 surveys, the findings regarding future plans for new media remain almost the same (see figure 5). There was a small decrease from 2014 to 2018 in the amount of responses indicating plans to increase the availability of new media devices, while there was an increase from 2014 to 2018 in responses planning to keep the availability of devices roughly the same. These findings together suggest that, because new media is no longer as novel as it was in 2014, some libraries may have reached a saturation point in the amount of new media that they want to make available, and as a result they plan to keep their availability at the same level.

Discussion

These findings provide insight into the two research questions guiding the study:

- *What is the landscape in public libraries around the country with respect to new media use with young children and their caregivers?*
- *What changes are present in the data from 2018 when compared to the data from 2014 in terms of new media use with young children?*

The findings from the 2018 survey demonstrate that the landscape of public library new media use with young children and

their caregivers is abundant. Libraries continue to use a variety of different devices with young children and their families in many different ways. This is important because we know that caregivers are using technology with young children and that their usage has increased since 2014.¹⁴ Given that caregivers often feel uncertain about how to use new media with young children effectively and what to use, libraries are well-positioned to support families with young children in their community by helping them understand how to use new media with their young children in an effective manner.¹⁵

The results from the survey questions on funding sources, resources consulted, and future plans for new media all provide further insight into public library new media use with young children and their caregivers. The fact that libraries are predominantly funding new media devices through their operational budgets speaks to the emphasis they are placing on these devices as an important part of their collection and services. These findings also demonstrate that library staff are using a variety of resources in making their device and usage decisions. This suggests that library staff want to be better equipped to select and use new media with young children. However, the fact that library staff are having to turn to a variety of sources for guidance also seems to indicate a need for additional, more comprehensive professional development that helps children’s staff understand how to select and use new media with young children and their families. Additionally, as a majority of respondents indicated that their use and offerings of technology in youth services will increase in the future, it is reasonable to conclude that this topic—new media in library services for young children—will continue to be an important one for the profession.

Looking at the 2018 data alongside the 2014 data provides insight into any changes that occurred in between the two surveys. Given the similarities between the results of the two surveys, it appears that libraries have continued to move forward with the new media efforts that were first uncovered with the 2014 survey. Furthermore, some of the increases in the 2018 survey suggest that libraries have worked to grow and expand their new media use with young children and their caregivers. In particular, there were large increases in the percentage of libraries who had devices tethered in their spaces for families to use, were using new media in their storytimes

Figure 4. 2018 Future New Media Plans by Library Size

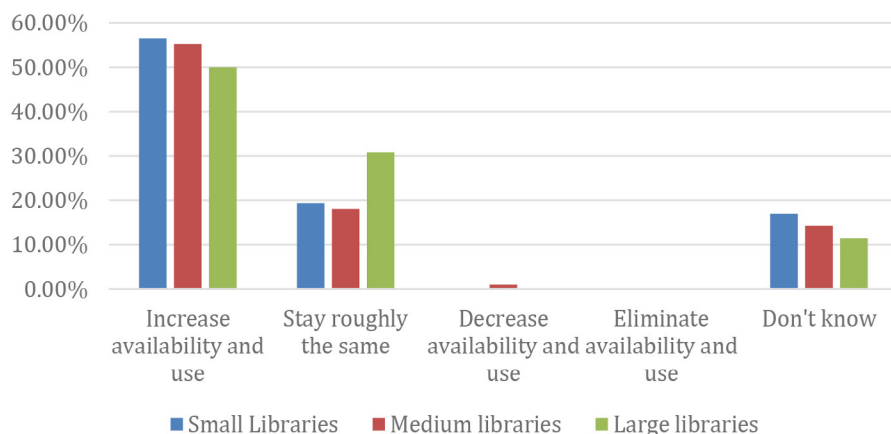
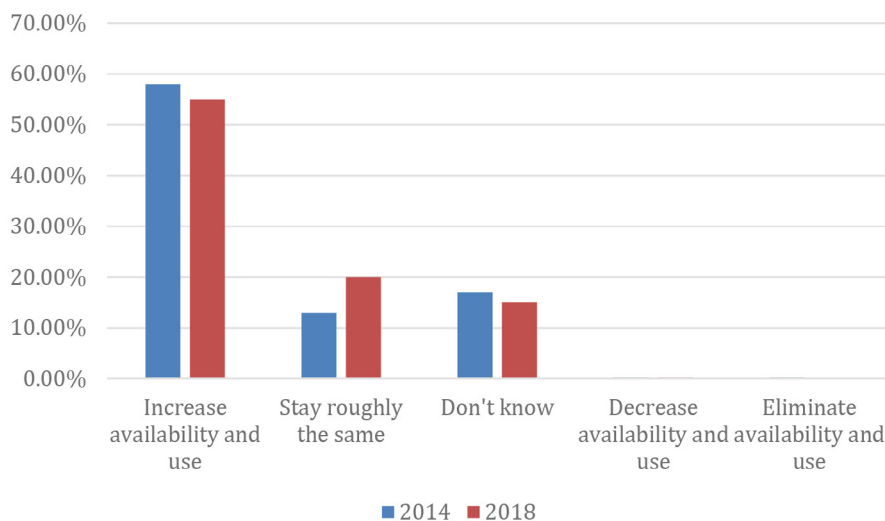


Figure 5. Comparison of 2014 and 2018 Future Plans for New Media Availability and Use with Young Children and Their Caregivers



and other programs for young children, and were checking out new media for use outside of the library. This suggests that libraries are recognizing the importance of providing access and exposure to these new media devices for families in their communities.

The fact that libraries are providing access to new media devices for young children and their families is important because many children and their families cannot afford to have these devices at home. The 2018 findings suggest that libraries appear to have recognized their role in meeting the needs of these families by increasing the tethered devices they have in their spaces and the devices that they have available for checkout outside of the library. In examining media use by children ages zero to eight for Common Sense Media, Rideout found that while “the digital divide has narrowed, [it] still remains an issue.”¹⁶ By providing access to these devices, libraries are helping to narrow this divide and give children exposure to these devices and the content supplied by them

so that the children have similar opportunities to their peers to learn from and build proficiency with new media devices.

While the libraries who participated in the survey have been successful with providing access to devices for young children and their families, mentorship remains an area of growth for libraries in new media use with young children, with the 2018 survey supporting one of the main findings from the 2014 survey:

Libraries are in a position to be digital hubs, apparent in [the] data by the quantity and scope of new media device use and availability. However, there is less evidence of mentorship being provided currently by library staff within these emerging hubs, despite data that show widespread use of tablets and media players in storytimes with young children, as well as other device use outside of library storytimes.¹⁷

The number of participants who indicated they were providing mentorship decreased from 21.6 percent in 2014 to 18.6 percent in 2018. Furthermore, in the 2018 survey, mentorship ranked last in terms of frequency of responses for how libraries were using new media with their families. These results may be due to a variety of reasons, but given that Livingstone, Blum-Ross, and Pavlick found that “Parents have few resources to turn to either when they or their children run into problems *or* when they want positive recommendations,” we know that there is a need for families to have a place to turn when they need guidance on using new media with their young children.¹⁸ Libraries are well-situated to play this role, so the question then arises—how can libraries effectively position themselves to take on this role in terms of staff preparation and in the eyes of the families in their communities?

References and Notes

1. A variety of terms can and have been used to refer to the various digital devices and content that have become prevalent in our society. For the purposes of this study we chose to use the term “new media” to refer to these devices, as that is the terminology that was used in the 2014 survey.
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Conclusion

This article provides insight into the landscape of new media use by libraries with young children and their caregivers. The findings demonstrate that the landscape is rich with a variety of new media use and has grown somewhat since 2014. In addition to offering insight into the new media landscape with libraries and young children, the survey findings also point to important areas for further research. While libraries are using new media with young children and their families, research is needed that explores the impact of digital tools on young children’s early literacy and learning development so that libraries and families can be more effective with their new media use. Research is also needed to provide depth to, and an expansion of, the findings discussed here. Given that the survey revealed an increased usage of new media in programs for young children, it would be useful to understand more about how libraries are using new media in programs. It is also important to understand what families want from the library with regard to new media use and how libraries can best support families with their new media needs.

This survey, along with the one done in 2014, offers important evidence of how libraries are using new media with young children. Having this baseline understanding is crucial for the field to understand what is being done and what still needs to be done. The types of new media and the ways that families and young children are using them are only going to continue to grow and evolve in the future. By stepping to the forefront of guiding families in using new media with their young children, libraries will meet a crucial need in today’s society and continue to demonstrate the relevance and value they bring to their communities. &

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Couples Who Collaborate

Jonathon Stutzman and Heather Fox

MARY-KATE SABLESKI

The up-and-coming husband and wife duo of Jonathon Stutzman and Heather Fox are already making a splash in the literary world with their funny, unique picture-books.

Heather is a graphic designer, illustrator, and “doodler.” Her first picturebook was *The Elephant’s Nose* (2015), a collaboration with Jonathon. The couple has worked on several other picturebooks together, including *Llama Destroys the World* (2019) and *Don’t Feed the Coos and Butts are Everywhere*, both scheduled for release in early 2020. Jonathon began his career as an award-winning filmmaker, receiving multiple accolades for his short films. He recently wrote *Tiny T. Rex and the Impossible Hug* (2019), the first book in a series with illustrator Jay Fleck.

Heather and Jonathon live and create in Pennsylvania. The couple met while in college and began working on books together right away. They shared their thoughts on working together as a couple, and their upcoming projects, including their upcoming wedding.

Q: How did you two decide to start making books together?

JS: We talked a lot about creativity when we were first introducing ourselves to each other. I think that’s one of the things that originally drew me to Heather, her creativity and her love of art, because that is something that is very important to me, too. We hadn’t really discussed making books at that time, but a little later on in our conversations, one of our things we wanted to do together, just as a dream, we made this list, which included for example, “Let’s go travel to this place” or “Let’s do this thing.” One of the things on that list was “Let’s make a book together.”

HF: Around the time that we met and started hanging out, I was a sophomore in college, and I had just started taking



Heather Fox and Jonathon Stutzman

a children’s book illustration course. The whole premise of one of the projects for the course was to take an existing folk tale and illustrate it. I picked an older, outdated folk tale, and I said, “Hey Jonathon, would you want to rewrite this and make it more fun?” I wanted to put some more whimsy in the book. So, that’s how that whole process started. He wrote something, and then I created illustrations and it turned out to be really fun! We ended up self-publishing that project, and we did a few local school and library visits (*The Elephant’s Nose*, 2015). Being self-published was so much more than we were willing to take on, with marketing and the PR stuff. We decided at that point that we were going to try and write an original story and try and get an agent so we could try and sell a book.

Q: Tell us about your process of working together to bring a book from the idea stage to completion.

JS: I have a lot of weird ideas! I’ll just write a bunch of stuff like kind of scattershot ideas, things that pop into my head, then I’ll throw them Heather’s way before they are actually molded or formed. Heather will take the ideas, and if something clicks with her, she will create a character, or some art, and then that will inspire me to finish the story. I’m not sure if every book starts like that, but I feel like most of them have been that way.



Mary-Kate Sableski is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Teacher Education at the University of Dayton, where she teaches courses in children’s literature and literacy methods. Her main areas of research interest include diversity in children’s literature and struggling readers.

HF: Or, sometimes I'll just like draw something like a character, and he's like, "Oh that's great do you want to write a story around this character?" So, that's another way.

JS: In *Llama Destroys the World* (2019) I was just thinking of fun titles because titles are some of the hardest parts of writing a book. . . . Heather had already drawn this cute llama character, and I thought it would be an awesome juxtaposition, if I use some kind of character to destroy the world accidentally. Llama just fit that bill; he is so cute!

Q: As a couple, how do you work with your editor?

HF: Before we even try and send out a story, we try and edit to the best of our abilities. Right now, we've been working on a story that our editor is just sending us notes and letting us work together. So, that's been nice, too, being able to work through the problems that we're having on the book. It is no longer just me working on mine separately and him working on his manuscript pages separately. Now, I feel like it is becoming more of a collaborative process.

JS: We definitely edit as we go and try to create the best book that we can before we send it to our editor. We also get feedback from our agent. We'll send her the story first, and then some of the art, and she'll give some nice feedback. After it's ready to go, we send it to our editor. Our editors are so creative and bring so many great ideas to the table. It really is such a collaborative process, making picturebooks, not just with us, but with the team together. That's been awesome, too, because I think our editors have given us so many great ideas. So, it's really fun when we get edits back, and we think, "This is a great idea, why didn't I think of that?" I think sometimes when you are creating something, you are in this space of your mind where it's hard to look outside of it and get a different point of view. I think that is the important part about publishers and editors, because you can make a better product, a better book.

Q: Can you tell us about the space that you work in?

HF: We normally work better when we're not at our house. We like to go to Starbucks, and we just grab a table and sit down, and we usually talk for a while. I feel like when you're writing you're just writing. We'll bounce some ideas off each other, but for the most part it's just getting ourselves in a different environment so that we're able to focus better. There are tons of people around, but it seems to work for us that way.

JS: I'm always thinking about stories all the time, anything can trigger some kind of connection in my head that will inspire me for a new story or something I'm working on. So, it's really hard to make sure we find that balance. I can't go to sleep at night if I'm working in my room all day because I'll just go with my adrenaline and thinking of ideas and I won't be able to sleep. So, it's really important for us to give our home a little space from where we're working. We just

moved and we have this office space. We might try to see how it works, like having a specific designed office in our home. But I think a lot of our stories came from our late night diner sessions where we would just meet up at 3 a.m. or 5 a.m. We would just brainstorm so many ideas and draw doodles and sketches. I am a big proponent of play and creativity. That's how you create fun art! So, it felt like we were kids again, we were playing make believe and I really love that. So, hopefully we can continue to incorporate that into our lives.

Q: How do you maintain that work/life balance and work through any creative differences?

HF: I feel like are always thinking creatively, so I feel like our work is always a part of our conversations. I think when we're working through a book together, one of the difficulties that we face is trying not to offend each other when we have differences. If I draw something and he thinks that it should be a different layout or something, then we have to be sort of gentle with each other, because we both take offense to things. It's tricky to figure that out.

JS: It's hard, I think, in any creative space. I was a filmmaker before I started writing picturebooks. It's hard to know where the line is, of just trying to make the work better, but when is it time to say something, when is it time to just let it go, especially since Heather's the illustrator and I'm the writer. The illustrator illustrates, and the writer writes. When is it my place to have a suggestion on art? That's difficult for me because I storyboard when I write, and I think very visually.

I also know that she's the illustrator, so it's difficult for me sometimes if I have something in my mind. I'm sure that's the same with other writers when they send their work off to an illustrator, and they have no idea what's going to happen. It's like magic when the art comes to life and brings those words to life, but there's also the things that take a little adjusting to. I think that's one of the things that makes picturebooks awesome, is just like the collision of two different creative people.

Q: How is it different to work with Heather, as compared to an illustrator you do not know well?

JS: We came in the industry together, so I feel like we're a team. As far as working with the other illustrators, it is a completely different process because I don't know any of them. I met Jay Fleck for the very first time in Chicago for the release of *Tiny T. Rex*. It is just strange that he had done a whole book with me and I had never met him. I work with Heather, and we see each other every day. So, it's a completely different process.

HF: It's nice for me because he had his big book release, and I just stood in the shadows and watched everything unfold, and I knew that our book was coming two months after that. I could see how things might go for us when our book finally came out. I could step back and watch him go through the process first.

Q: Can you talk about your experiences sharing your books with children?

HF: One of the best things is to see kids latch on to the book and try to create their own llamas. We went to a second-grade class and the kids didn't know we were coming. That was really exciting because they were all screaming, "Oh my gosh! This is awesome!" We read our books to them, and it was really cool because they had so many ideas! They wanted to know, "Are you having a second llama book?" I told them, "You can take these characters that we created and you can go home and you can write your llama sequel," and they were just so excited. That was so encouraging, I think, for the two of us because we are doing something that is impacting these kids' lives and helping them create things and draw and write stories.

JS: The best part about what we get to do is being able to create something that kids can identify with or find joy in. I remember as a child, books were a part of my life, and they were important to my creativity, and my relationships with my parents when they would read to my brothers and me. We get to create things that impact kids in that way, which is amazing.

We enjoy talking to children, and just seeing their joy in an author and illustrator and seeing that these people are just humans who created this book. I think that actually encourages them, especially one of the big things for them is seeing that we're a couple. I think that humanizes us even more, it's not just some weird figure head out there in the world. These are just people, and they have a relationship.

One of the factors of being a creator is that you encourage kids, and a lot of kids don't feel encouraged, or don't think that they're good enough as a writer or creator, so just getting to tell our stories helps. We were their ages once, and we used to draw really silly drawings, and we got better over the years. I think that's a really amazing thing.

Q: What's next?

HF: We just released our cover for our second book that's coming out in February 2020, *Don't Feed the Coos*. That one is finished on our end, so currently we are working on the sequel to *Llama Destroys the World*.

JS: We have *Santa Baby*, which will come out the winter of 2020. This one is a really funny take on a Christmas story. Santa's feeling old; he wishes to be young again. He turns into a baby and the elves have to kind of rush to try to fix Santa so he can save Christmas.

Q: I can tell you two have a lot of fun thinking of these ideas together!

HF: We are really excited to have a Christmas book because Christmas is our favorite season.

JS: We love the magic, decorations, lights, and music, so it will be fun to have a book that's about the holiday season. But then we have a couple of other new books coming out next year and later, including *Butts are Everywhere*. We have a graphic novel series called Fitz and Cleo, about two characters who are brother and sister, who are ghosts and go on fun adventures together. That's one of the books that I'm most excited for because I was such a reader of comic books growing up, so this is kind of an ode to *Calvin and Hobbes* and *Peanuts*, comics that I loved reading as a kid. There's something about comics that is so fun, and that challenges us to do something different which I think will be fun.

HF: I think we both went through a period of our childhood that we dreamt of being a cartoonist so that's going to be fun. I haven't started working on anything yet for it, and I have not done a large format graphic novel, so it's going to be challenging, but I am excited for it.

Q: How do you see your work fitting into the We Need Diverse Books movement?

JS: We both feel humbled that we get to make picturebooks because it is so important to the education and entertainment of children. I really latched on to books as a kid, so there is a lot of power there. We really have to be cognizant about the messages that we tell in our stories. So, that's something I always try to do when I write something, even if I write a silly book. I know I'm also coming from my own perspective, and Heather is as well. I'm always telling stories that I find funny. I write what I enjoy reading, and I think that's an important part about creating too because, when creators are telling personal things, that's when you get to the best books and best works of art. It is always important to be empathetic and to be thinking about the whole world because, it's not just me as a child reading this book. There are so many different children around the world. Our book is in the UK, which is awesome, and *Tiny T-Rex* is in Korea and China. That's the great thing about cute animals or dinosaurs. They can reach such a big audience, just because all kids can relate to animals. I think our only book that has a human child is *Don't Feed the Coos*. I just love people, so whatever I am writing, I want it to reach someone in some way, and make them laugh. I think when we are creating, we try to focus on that—how will this bring joy to someone's life?

One of the biggest things with picturebooks is they are such a shared experience, more than any other media form. With books, it's normally a librarian or a teacher or a parent, or another adult, reading to the child. Or, if the child can read it themselves, they may be reading it to a friend or a sibling who cannot read it. It is such a beautiful shared experience.

I think that's why it is important to make sure books have different viewpoints, characters, and perspectives in them, because we can then empathize with each other. We are all just people, the same human race. I think that is one of the most powerful things about picturebooks; we share them with each other and that is a great way to connect with each other. &

Tips to Ease a “Terrifying” Congressional Visit

Joel Shoemaker



Joel Shoemaker is a member of ALSC'S Advocacy and Legislation Committee. He is the Library Director for the Illinois Prairie District Public Library, with six branches in rural Woodford County, and has been a magician for twenty-eight years.

They say that any chance to demonstrate the value of our services to our local congressperson is invaluable and, really, must be taken. They say to always have your “elevator speech” with you, should the need for declaration arise. And they say that as long as you study your talking points and memorize the materials you are leaving behind, you’ll be fine. No pressure. Among other things, that’s what they say, anyway.

So, when the Illinois Library Association (ILA) invited anyone going to ALA’s Annual Conference this past June in Washington, DC, to make an appointment with their congressperson’s office, I said yes. And, in the spirit of full disclosure, I had been to Capitol Hill once before, for National Library Legislative Day (NLLD).

Really, this should be easy by now. Yet, no matter how much you prepare, no matter how well you know your facts and figures, no matter how much they prepare you for this invaluable experience—and I believe it is an essential one, at this point—there’s something inevitably terrifying about all of this, isn’t there?

Just Me?

In case it’s not just me, in case there’s someone else out there that, in the future, finds themselves signing up for the simultaneously necessary yet terrifying assignment, here’s what I know from doing it twice.

The office is run by interns who, in some cases, are more terrified than you are. I follow instructions. It’s one of my favorite things to do. So, when ILA’s executive director tells me to arrive thirty minutes early, I do it. Shockingly, at least on this particular day, it takes twelve seconds to go through security. It takes fourteen seconds to put your belt back on. And suddenly you are in front of the giant door and you are twenty-nine minutes early for your appointment and, after pretending to be on the wrong floor and going up and down a few times to eat up some of that time it is still twenty-six minutes until your appointment, and you have nothing else to do but enter.

There is a sign outside congressman Darin LaHood’s (R-IL) office. It says something to the effect of the office belongs to the taxpayers and I am a taxpayer, so I walk in acting like I own the place because the sign says I do. There I am greeted by four people, significantly younger, all standing. And the office is the size of two walk-in closets.

They offer me Skittles and a cup of coffee. And I accept both because I’m not going to be rude, and because I deeply adore both of these things and maybe, just maybe, these are my people. And the Skittles and the coffee and the casual conversation make me feel at ease as I wait my turn.

They will listen to you. And then promptly move on. When it comes time for my appointment, I am led into a different office and I quickly realize

that this is a photo op for the congressman and, really, he's very busy and he tells me he's supportive and appreciative and they take my papers.

Of course, this is a bit of an overstatement. They do listen, and they are incredibly friendly. And, after you state all the memorized talking points, if there is time left, there is a wonderful opportunity to mention all of the wonderful things we do every single day.

Turns out, it is fairly easy to fill that small amount of time. After all, how easy is it to brag about our libraries!

Regarding the photo op, a piece of advice. Dress in a way that makes you feel comfortable. I wore a bowtie for marriage equality. It was a very subtle way to make a small political statement that didn't even come up in conversation and, it didn't need to. It offered me some kind of confidence. It put me at ease, if only just a bit. Plus, it made for a great photo.

Following up is basically the only thing that matters. And here is where I really believe we win. Both times I have been

to Capitol Hill, I have promptly followed up with a thank you e-mail and asked for a visit to my library. There is something to meeting them in person in DC first that makes them say yes, I think. Of course, I am more comfortable and confident in my own space, as I assume we all are. At the first visit, with a different congressman, at a previous library, I invited the newspaper and printed a 3D model of the White House.

Upon entering, that congressman said, "This is the loudest library I've ever been to." How great is that?

For the most recent visit, I invited therapy dogs and hosted an open house for local homeschoolers—again, just to make sure we were really, really busy.

Both times, a great relationship was formed. I can't say I changed the minds of a rural, conservative congressman to vote for any increased library funding, but at least I know they saw vibrant, vital institutions. Taxpayer money very well spent. &

Child Development Conference Has a Lot to Say

Betsy Diamant-Cohen



Betsy Diamant-Cohen is a children's librarian with a doctorate who loves to present workshops for educators, programs for children and families, and presentations at conferences.

American Library Association conferences involve a lot of walking since sessions are presented in numerous venues in huge convention centers and surrounding hotels. Even the exhibits are massive! Because of this, librarians are often distinguished from local residents by the comfortable shoes they are wearing. At the Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD) conference earlier this year, however, attendees could also be recognized by the portable poster holders slung over their shoulders.

SRCD works to advance developmental science, promoting its use to improve human lives. Every two years, SRCD holds a conference where researchers disseminate their most recent findings. Since child development research informs and supports our practices as children's librarians, I attended the SRCD conference in Baltimore in March 2019.

During 5,133 presentations, scholars and researchers from sixty countries presented glimpses into their work through paper symposiums (where they describe papers they are writing or which have recently been published), conversation roundtables, poster sessions, invited addresses, lunches with leaders, professional development sessions, and TAD talks (fifteen-minute lightning talks similar to TED talks). There were 6,586 presenting authors and 17,816 non-presenting authors. The conference focused on three themes:

1. **International** work to advance “understanding of children's development in diverse international contexts.”
2. **Interdisciplinary** work to cover “a wide ranges of areas related to children's social, emotional, cognitive, and neurobiological development.”
3. **Relevant** work dedicated to “improving the lives of children around the world.”

Congressman Elijah E. Cummings (D-Maryland) was an inspiring guest speaker, with a standing-room-only crowd. He spoke about the importance of providing a good education to all children, lauding researchers for being both smart and passionate about their topics. Then he issued a call to action, telling the audience to contact their legislators, introduce themselves, and share their expertise. In addition to getting exposure for their research, Cummings said that creating connections with government representatives would enable the researchers to position themselves to help provide enlightened formation of policy.

Economics and Child Development

When talking about the benefits that positive early childhood experiences have on the amount of vocabulary words a child knows when entering kindergarten, on graduation rates from high school, on success at long-term relationships, and on lower rates of incarceration, the

first published research study on this, The HighScope Perry Preschool Project, is usually mentioned.

In the early 1960s (before Head Start), in a poverty-stricken, crime-ridden neighborhood of Ypsilanti, Michigan, a group of educators set up a HighScope Preschool in the Perry Elementary School. This special preschool had low student/teacher ratios, included home visits to families, and followed a creative curriculum that took students' interests into account. Half of the children in this neighborhood were invited to attend the preschool for the two years before kindergarten. This often-quoted study followed both sets of children, the ones who attended preschool and those who did not, throughout their lives.

The evidence from the HighScope Perry Preschool Project is widely cited to support the economic argument for investing in early childhood programs, since it showed the positive effects that high-quality early childhood experiences had on lifelong health, economics, and social outcomes for individuals and society as a whole.

James J. Heckman, a Nobel Prize winner in economics who is currently at the Center for the Economics of Human Development at the University of Chicago, presented a session entitled "Perry Preschoolers at Late Midlife," focusing on interdisciplinary research. The original group of children who attended the preschool are now in their mid-50s and they are still being followed by researchers (as are other local children who did not attend the preschool).

Heckman is an expert in the economics of human development, and the room in which his presentation was scheduled was packed. He said the positive results from the original study are still relevant today, and then told us about findings based on new research he had just completed with Ganesh Karapukula.

The new research looked at the impact attending the HighScope Perry Preschool had on the original study participants as well as the significant gains in personal and family life outcomes that provided their children with positive second-generation effects on education, health, employment, and civic life.

The results showed that early childhood education resulted in stronger families and significantly contributed to upward mobility in the next generation. Heckman concluded that high-quality early childhood education is an effective tool for lifting families out of poverty and breaking cycles of poverty. To read more about the study, visit <https://heckmanequation.org/resource/perry-preschool-midlife-toolkit>.

Resources

The National Center for Education Statistics (nces.ed.gov/training/datauser) was an exhibitor promoting their free resources. If you are writing a report, a grant proposal, an

Poster Sessions Dive Deep

Many poster sessions were held throughout the three-day conference, describing recent and ongoing research. Each poster session lasted for seventy-five minutes, and at least one member of each research team described the research. The minimum number of posters displayed during a session was 232 and a total of 3,114 posters and 14 federal agency posters were displayed, so browsers had to be selective with their time.

While the broader shared topic of the poster sessions was child development, the clusters covered the following:

- attention, learning, and memory
- biology processes; neuroscience and genetics
- biology processes: psychophysiology
- cognitive processes
- developmental disabilities
- developmental psychopathology
- diversity, equity, and social justice
- education and schooling
- family context and processes
- health, growth, injury
- language, communication
- methods, history, theory
- moral development
- parenting and parent-child relationships
- perceptual, sensory, motor
- prevention and interventions
- race, ethnicity, culture, context
- school readiness/childcare
- sex, gender
- social cognition
- social policy
- social relationships
- social, emotional, personality
- technology, media, and child development

article, or a blog and you want some statistics to put your comments into perspective, this federal entity that collects and analyzes education-related data in the United States is a great place to go.

One of their cool resources is DataLab, an online tool for making tables and charts using federal education datasets. QuickStats allows users to create simple charts and tables, PowerStats allows users to create complex tables, and TrendStats allows users to create complex tables using data

from multiple collection years. This can be accessed at nces.ed.gov/datalab. &

The next SRCD conference will be held in Minneapolis April 8–10, 2021.

Congressman Elijah Cummings died in October, while this issue was in production. I join many others in mourning his passing. He was a library champion, a fellow Baltimorean, and a wonderful human being.

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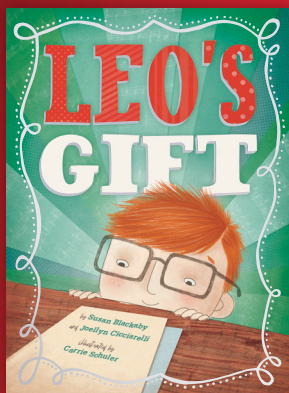


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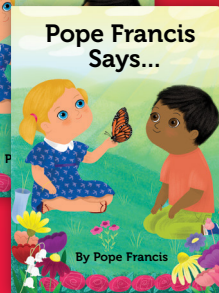
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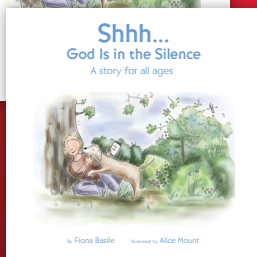
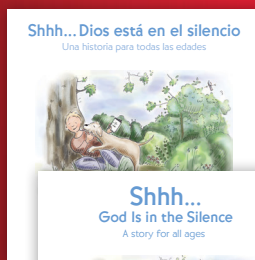


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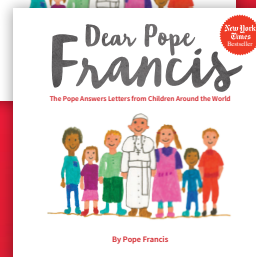


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